

# EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily  
Reflect Or Represent The Views Of  
The Portland Observer

## Civil Rights Journal: Death Row Countdown

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON  
**I** imagine a steam engine moving steadily down its track. Once it gets rolling, it's nearly impossible to stop that train.

The machinery of death row is like that steam engine and that machinery is rolling down the track in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The question is whether Governor Thomas Ridge and the state of Pennsylvania will stop the train of death.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a respected African American journalist and an advocate for racial and economic justice. He describes himself as a journalist, husband, father and grandfather who lives in the fastest growing public housing tract in America. He is a man living on death row and scheduled to be executed on August 17 for a crime he probably did not commit -- the murder of a Philadelphia police officer.

Yet death penalty machine rolls on, impervious to the many irregularities of Abu-Jamal's trial, to the probable misconduct of the Philadelphia police and prosecutors in his case. Irregularities such as the 125

eyewitnesses who gave statements to the police at the scene of the crime, the prosecution used only two of them, both of whom had previous convictions and pending charges against them and both of whom identified Abu-Jamal as the shooter. Irregularities such as the reports by at least four witnesses that they had seen the shooter run away, while Abu-Jamal, who was also wounded and unable to run, was found sitting on the curb at the crime. Irregularities such as the fact that the police department did not do ballistics tests which could have eliminated Abu-Jamal's gun and hid other evidence concerning the bullet's trajectory and the caliber of the gun used. Irregularities such as the fact that while a police officer who had been with Abu-Jamal after the incident had made a deposition saying Abu-Jamal had made no statements, an alleged confession was reported by other officers only several months after the shooting occurred. There are other legal irregularities as well.

Yet, the death penalty machine rolls on, unswayed by the fact that Abu-Jamal had a long history of po-

litical activity in Philadelphia, which meant that he had been targeted by law enforcement officials in the city and had been under constant surveillance and harassment by that city's police department for many years. Indeed, the judge who presided over Abu-Jamal's trial, Judge Albert Sabo, is called the hanging judge because he has sentenced more people to death than any other judge in the United States, all but two of whom are people of color.

Yet, the death penalty machine rolls on, uninfluenced by the factor of race in this case. Half of those on death row in the U.S. are people of color -- African American men alone make up 40 percent of death row prisoners although they represent less than 6 percent of the population. In Pennsylvania, 61 percent of death row is African American. Almost all are poor and most receive inferior legal assistance since only about 80 of Philadelphia's 8,000 lawyers both qualify and are willing to represent defendants in capital cases as it takes months or years to get paid. In addition, poor defendants do not have access to the funds needed to do their

own investigations to dispute the prosecution cases.

It's no wonder that after hearing dozens of death penalty cases during his years on the Supreme Court that former Justice Harry Blackmun wrote, "Even under the most sophisticated death penalty statutes, race continues to play a major role in determining who shall live and who shall die." It's no wonder that another Supreme Court Justice, William O. Douglas, once said, "One searches our chronicles in vain for the execution of any member of the affluent strata of our society."

All direct appeals have now been exhausted and Abu-Jamal's appeals are before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the clock ticks and the death penalty train rolls for Mumia Abu-Jamal. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court can stop the train. Governor Ridge can stop the train. Write him and ask him to stop the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Write him, in the name of justice. Write him. (Governor Thomas Ridge, Main Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120. Fax: 717-783-1396.)

## Vantage Point: Universal African Flag Day Takes Shape

BY RON DANIELS

**F**or several years I have been promoting the idea that August 17, the birthday of the Honorable Marcus Garvey, should be Universal African Flag Day.

Marcus Garvey was the greatest mass leader that the Pan African Nation has ever produced. At a time when only three African nations in the world, Egypt, Ethiopia and Liberia, were semi-independent, Garvey boldly proclaimed that African people must rise up to liberate our homeland to create a base for global Black Power -- "Europe for the European, Asia for the Asians, Africa for the African at home and abroad."

Garvey created the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL) to promote his philosophy of African redemption and to create the infrastructure for an emerging Black Nation. The UNIA held its first International Convention of the Negro People's of the World in Harlem beginning August 1, 1920. On August 2, Marcus Garvey addressed 25,000 Africans in Madison Square Garden. At Garvey's urging, this historic convention adopted the Red, Black and Green Flag as the official flag of the African race: Red for "the color of the blood which men must shed for their redemption and

liberty, "Black for "the color of a noble and distinguished race to which we belong," and Green for "the luxuriant vegetation of our motherland." 1995 marks the 75th anniversary of the Black Liberation Flag.

Last year, the idea of Universal African Flag Day began to take hold as the December 12th Movement in New York embraced the idea and organized a series Flag Day activities on Garvey's birthday. The Garvey family also took note of the concept and expressed an interest in spreading the idea nationally and internationally. This year Garvey's sons, Dr. Julius Garvey and Marcus Garvey Jr. have taken the initiative to create a Committee to Promote Universal African Flag Day. The Committee is vigorously working to use the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Red, Black and Green to institutionalize the idea of Universal African Flag Day. A commemorative journal has been prepared with articles from prominent African scholars and activists including: Dr. John Henrik Clarke, Tony Martin, Molefe Asante, Elombe Brath, Dr. Julius Garvey and Marcus Garvey Jr.

Though the focal point for the Universal Flag Day organizing is in New York City, where Garvey established his headquarters and developed a formidable base, the Committee is anxious for Black organizations in other cities in the U.S. and

other countries to embrace the idea and hold Flag Day ceremonies and other political activities. Among the organizations which have endorsed Universal African Flag Day are: The Universal Negro Improvement Association, The National Black United Front, The National Malcolm X Commemoration Commission, The National Coalition for Reparations for Blacks in America, The December 12th Movement and Campaign for a New Tomorrow.

On August 17, in New York, the Universal Flag Day activities will begin with a Flag Raising Ceremony in the Africa Court in Queens Park. The Ceremony will be broadcast live on the Drive Time Dialogue Show on radio station WWRL. Other Flag raising ceremonies and Flag Day activities will follow in Brooklyn and Harlem. On the same day, a Flag Raising Ceremony will also occur in Jamaica, the birthplace of Marcus Garvey, where he is recognized as a national hero. Hopefully, Africans all over the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean and Africa will get busy promoting/building Universal African Flag Day as a cultural and political event to promote the philosophy of Marcus Garvey.

Garvey intended that the Red, Black and Green serve as a unifying symbol for African people the world over and as an expression of Pan African Self-reliance, self-determi-

nation, and Nationhood. Nothing more than the current rise to hegemony of the radical right, the proliferation of racist hate groups and militias and the overt assault on the "civil rights" of Africans in America demonstrates the urgent need for African people to have unifying symbols to catalyze the Black Liberation Movement. That urgency is rendered more real this year because the racist Governor of Pennsylvania, with the blessing of the racist U.S. Government, has signed the death warrant for the execution of the freedom fighter Mumia Abu Jamal. This insult is merely indicative of the low regard with which Africans are held in the U.S. and the world.

It was to correct this condition that Marcus Garvey advocated Pan African Nationalism and developed an organization and the Red, Black and Green as concrete contributions to a Black Nation in becoming. As we organize to stop the murder of Mumia Abu Jamal and prepare to celebrate Garvey's birthday, let the Flag that Garvey gave to African people, the Red, Black and Green be in evidence everywhere like a mighty river determined to reach its destination - freedom, self-determination, nationhood. "Up you mighty race, you can accomplish what you will."

For further information about Universal African Flag Day call: 516-759-6631.

## Celebrating The 30th Anniversary Of The Voting Rights Act

BY DON FOWLER, CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE

August 6 marked the 30th anniversary of the passage of the historic Voting Rights Act. But there would be no celebration of this anniversary of the tremendous accomplishments of the African-American community had it not been for the man who made it all happen: President Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Millions of Americans have benefitted from this momentous milestone enacted 30 years ago, but few realize how much President Johnson used the power of the presidency to advance the cause of civil rights.

After using all of the political resources at his disposal to ensure that Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the specific provision that prohibited discrimination in employment based on race and sex, President Johnson still was not satisfied.

Countless demonstrations erupted in the South to protest rigid barriers imposed by local jurisdictions to prevent blacks from voting. Many of the frustrations felt by African Americans at not being able to vote freely came to a head in the march from Selma, Ala. As the nation watched in horror, civil rights marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, were viciously attacked.

The violence inflicted on the marchers on that historic trek to Montgomery on March 5, 1965, was a sight that many Americans would never forget. Neither would President Johnson.

One week later a somber but determined President Johnson spoke before a televised joint session of the United States Congress on the civil rights crisis facing America and his legislative remedy for the situation. This was a special moment in history. I remember that night very well. As I watched the President from my

home in Columbia, South Carolina, I was aware of the situation in South Carolina for I was actively working with leaders of the NAACP and the Southern Voter Education Project.

In his remarks, President Johnson said: "Many of the issues of civil rights are very complex and most difficult. But about this there can be no argument. Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote."

There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right. Wednesday I will send to Congress a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote."

The president then ended his moving speech by uttering a familiar refrain: "And we shall overcome."

It was a difficult fight, but five months later, President Johnson invited civil rights leaders to the White

House for what proved to be a significant turning point in the struggle for equal voting rights: The signing of the Voting Rights Bill!

At that ceremony, attended by Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., of SCLC, Whitney Young of the National Urban League, and leaders of both parties, President Johnson in a moment of great pride, said: "Today is a triumph for freedom as huge as any victory that has ever been won on any battlefield."

To emphasize that he meant business, President Johnson announced that he had directed the U.S. Attorney General to file lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the poll tax in the states of Mississippi, Texas, Alabama, and Virginia. He also ordered the Justice Department to work all through the weekend to designate counties in these and other states where experience showed that federal action was necessary.

## perspectives

### "Oregonian Shakeup" Are We Training Gatekeepers?

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

**A**s is usually the case -- and as reported here last week -- the question of "viable leadership" quickly arises whenever a cultural group feels that its welfare has been threatened.

And in the particular case, an implied threat to the precarious economic situation of Portland's African



By Professor McKinley Burt

American Community has seen last week's "spirited discussion" acquire "leadership" focus.

This sort of assessment is difficult at best in respect to the black community for it has never recovered (healed) from the traumatic social and economic disintegration occasioned by the "Great Society Urban Renewal". It is not that often mentioned that this is when the grand 'removal' saw the personal urban planning and the wealth-building dream of black people go down the drain (and into the coffers and bottom line of the corporate giants that straddle the 'Coliseum' area).

So it is a difficult matter, especially for the younger generation, for some residents to understand why others are so perturbed over a single newspaper article and become so apprehensive that there may not be a continuity of effective leadership. Others, who have memories or family histories of yesterdays black urban planners" who built and developed housing and business establishments for the innercity. In the past, I've described the process here in detail; "Acme Business Club, Pullman Porters, Red Caps - Wilbur Marshall, Cliff Jackson, Clarence Ivy, et al."

Belatedly, it has penetrated the most abuse brains that there is a reason that 'they' don't permit blacks to write the textbooks used in Schools of Urban Planning. Especially important in that a meaningful analysis of black leadership in any city must determine how effective it is in dealing with the "planning" establishment -- how well the heads of the traditional social agencies (imputed with reader-ship qualities by the establishment and daily media) understand or neutralize the machi-

nation of the typical urban planning triumvirate of City Government, the Bankers and the Real Estate interests.

But, therein we find the very fly in the ointment, don't we? For those blacks who are most knowledgeable in these matters are employees of the very public sector that we have described as endangered, a classic 'Catch-22'.

So those "spirited conversations" centering around a lack of leadership often taper off to thoughtful frowns.

It was with great interest that I noted the ethnocentric attention (comprehension?) paid to the writer's race-based economic niches emphasized in that Oregonian article, "Affirmative Action In Public-Sector Jobs May Damage Blacks": "Jews in law and teaching, Italians in trucking and construction, Chinese in restaurants and apparel, blacks in the Public Sector". A discussion of this has come to the fore wherever the article has been discussed. "It will be that way as long as the banks and real estate interestests have anything to do with it".

I noted with interest that the occupants of those ethnocentric economic niches do not have blacks sitting on their boards of directors -- or in any other key advisory positions. Since a number of young blacks were sons and daughters of former students and acquaintances of mine and were aware that part of my outreach contracts with the U.S. Forest Service required interaction with other minority groups (recruitment), I was asked "how their organizations handled 'outsiders'".

I was able to inform them that none of these groups Koreans, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, etc. Permitted the kind of oversight and direction (control) that blacks cheerfully endured, and often solicited. They do not train gate keepers and plantation managers.

To be continued.

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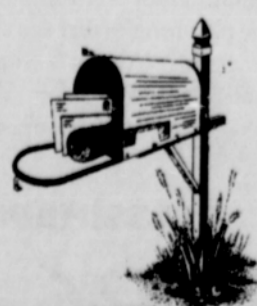
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