

# EDITORIAL

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**N**ow that Labor Day has come and gone, what is the state of working women and men? Workers are facing economic insecurity, and they are anxious about their jobs, their families and their future.

The 1990s have engendered a new form of economic violence.

Companies like ABC and Walt Disney, Westinghouse and CBS, Viacom and Paramount, Chase and Chemical Bank (whose merger will cost workers 12,000 jobs) are merging capital, purging workers and submerging the economy. Billionaires and millionaires will be made in this process. Let us not be misled, though, millions more will lose their jobs, displaced by the concentration of capital and power.

Illinois is a good example. Workers around Illinois are working harder and earning less. Job security is evaporating, as each working day 70 Illinoisans are threatened with layoffs and plant closings.

Workers are paying more for benefits like health insurance while wages in most parts of the state are falling. Across Illinois, jobs with high wages, reasonable raises and good benefits are disappearing. Instead, new jobs pay bare bones wages, and offer few chances for advancement,

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

The State Of Workers Working More, Earning Less

no health insurance and no pension plan.

Workers in 61 Illinois' 102 counties saw their wages decline after inflation between 1989 and 1993. The number of Illinoisans employed for wages has not grown as fast as the adult population. Most new jobs pay bare-bones wages and offer few benefits. Highly profitable companies, like AT&T, Xerox, Motorola and First Chicago Corp., have laid off thousands of Illinois workers.

Despite the claims of NAFTA proponents, workers in industries with a heavy volume of exports to Mexico face a layoff rate that is 3 times the rate for non-NAFTA related industries. Union members consistently earn higher wages and have better benefits than do non-union-

ized workers.

Illinois workers are getting squeezed on all sides. More and more workers need second jobs or overtime at their regular jobs to make ends meet.

This extra work puts food on the table, but it leaves less time for family activities. Reduced wages combined with higher spending on health insurance puts a significant burden on personal savings. And Illinoisans are worrying more about retirement, as employers-sponsored pensions are asserting their rights within the economy.

There are three fundamental problems with Illinois' economy. First, it is not producing enough jobs to employ all adults. Statewide, the adult population is growing twice as

fast as employment for wages, and many adults are being forced out of the labor market. Second, the number of jobs with good wages and decent benefits is falling, while low-paying jobs are proliferating. Third, in most of the state, wages are failing to keep pace with inflation.

By comparison, on average, Illinois' 100 highest-paid corporate CEOs took home in four days what the typical worker earned all year long. Adding insult to injury, workers are well aware that companies are enjoying record profits. Illinois is home to 40 Fortune 500 firms, which made a combined profit of \$14 billion in 1994.

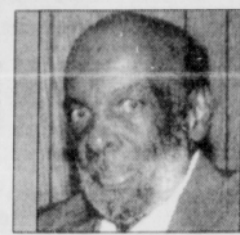
What should be done? Some things that can be done include: (1) Give economic incentives to industries that provide workers with decent wages, reasonable raises and good benefits, and deny them to companies that transfer good jobs out; (2) Ensure fair and equitable compensation for injured workers; (3) Protect workers from retaliatory discharge in the event they refuse excessively hazardous work assignments; and (4) Leaders in both the legislative and executive branches should recognize that NAFTA and GATT have contributed to lay-offs and eroded wages. Expansion of these international trade agreements should be opposed.

## perspectives

### Education: What Took You So Long?

Last Friday's Oregonian newspaper featured an education article with the big bold headline, "A New Magnet For Students: The Portland District Is Getting \$4.2 Million For A Biotechnology Program At 3 Schools."

"For us, this day is totally awesome" is a quote attributed to Jefferson principal Alcena Boozer who further commented,



By Professor Mckinley Burt

"We're now positioned to offer extraordinary opportunities for our children". Well said madam, and those words from a sincere and dedicated educator reassure us that there are some committed personnel on the firing line in this district.

Unfortunately, neither you nor many others with similar motivation and intentions for our community are part of the hierarchy that drives the district machine. The first comment around the table at our weekend gathering place for neighborhood dissenters was, of course, "here we go again!" And then, as the calculators and laptops came out, "surprise, reprise! There was the New Math, Metric, the Mathematics Scope And Sequence and the Science Scope and Sequence, the supporting structure of Multicultural Blue Books, the Scope And Sequence Curriculum Guides, and the respective Time Lines for all of the above."

"Stop the music," one veteran teacher cried, "I'm up to 43 million dollars, already yet, and we haven't got into the Baseline Essays or In Service Sessions even--or outside contracts." Another complained, "All this special stuff has been going on for over twenty years, yet today, we have School Supt. Norma Paulus describing the math and science scene as 'unacceptable.'"

A youth social worker strove to make a direct connection to the depressing statistics derived from his case loads during the years. His passionate litany described the untaught and the unmotivated, the dropouts and the forced-outs, and all the half-literate truants who had hit the streets during the past 25 years. He further detailed the em-

ployment difficulties for the semi-literate products of the school system -- many further hampered by resulting disordered psychic or behavioral states. The psychology of the gangs was to be understood in this context.

I related his comments to my recent observations in Portland Observer articles where I forecast increasing trauma for minorities due to the rash of both industry and public sector layoffs. But it was suggested that perhaps I had not sufficiently emphasized this double-whammy of educational disabilities which had carried well into the second generation right here in Portland.

After pointing out that the now-defunct Adams High School should have been added to the dollar value of exercises in educational utility, I stated how disheartening it was to have many of the semi-literate graduates in classes at Portland State University and suddenly realize that I knew three generations of the family; And things were going downhill fast. All the while, of course, the district's public relations department was achieving new heights in rhetoric and the teachers union strove mightily to prevent parents from having any meaningful impact on their child's education.

The social worker made a distressing projection of how many of the community youth had been caught up in the criminal justice system in consequence of their educational disabilities, how many were in the penitentiary and how many were likely to be there at year 2000. The other commentaries were not much more favorable.

I can remember when I had 10,000 Sq. Ft. of floor space and tens of thousands of dollars of electronic and reproduction equipment for producing innovative but proven educational curriculum and demonstrations. I, too, though "We're now positioned to offer extraordinary opportunities to our children". That was in 1969 and 1970, but as one of my former students said, "This system is a mean mother", continued next week.

## Civil Rights Journal

### On The Occasion Of The United Nations Conference On Women: An Open Letter To My Black Sisters

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON  
**To My Beautiful and Broken-hearted and Awesome and Devalued and Forgiving Sisters.**

The whole world turns now to look at the status of women. As for African American women, we know that Sojourner Truth's century-old question about us, "Ain't I a Woman?" still rings true.

The sad truth is that for too many, African American women still are less than human, less than woman. As we look at the pictures being painted of welfare mothers -- who are assumed by many to be black women even though there are more white women on welfare -- we see those age-old pictures of lazy, cheating black women. We hear only the stories of those black women whose families have been caught up in generations of poverty and welfare, not the stories of those black women working at minimum-wage jobs while attending school and raising their families alone.

The sad truth is that for too many

white Americans, African American women are still thought of in only stereotyped fashion. So we are thought of as lazy, when it has been our mothers and grandmothers who cleaned other people's houses and raised other people's children or who worked in the fields and then went home and cared for their own families. So we are thought of as promiscuous, when so often our grandmothers and mothers and we were the unwilling partners of men who forced themselves on us not because of our desire or anything we did. So we are thought of as domineering, castrating, aggressive matriarchs when so often we have had no other option but to be the anchor for our families as our husbands were sold away during slavery and urged away during the Great Migration north.

The sad truth is that too often our own fathers, our brothers, our husbands and our sons have accepted the ugly stories about African American women. So we have found ourselves victims of incest, of domestic violence, of rape and murder.

For too many black men, black women have no value or respect. How else do you explain the lyrics of gangsta rap which demean women, calling us bitches and whores or how else can you explain the mugging of Rosa Parks in her own bedroom last summer?

The sad truth is that too often we have accepted the ugly stories about ourselves. Too often we have accepted society's view that black is not beautiful and therefore we can never see our own unique beauty and love ourselves. Even those of us who have achieved much too often have hidden deep within ourselves a negative self-image.

Some of us become co-dependents in dysfunctional families, we turn to alcohol and drugs to cover up that negative self-image and in the process we destroy ourselves and our families.

We are wounded in spirit, wounded in body, wounded in mind.

The good news, my sisters, is that we come from strong stock. We come from spirit-filled and spirit-led

women who believed in themselves and in their Creator. Through our veins runs the blood of Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth and Fannie Lou Hamer and Mary McLeod Bethune and Bessie Coleman and Madame C.J. Walker.

The good news is we come from a people who understood self-help and self-healing and we can be helped and we can be healed. But first, we must forgive ourselves and forgive each other. First, we must let go of the bitterness and the self-denigration. First, we must stop judging each other and start lifting up each other. First, we must love ourselves and love each other.

Then, we must call ourselves back into the Spirit.

We must call our brothers back. We must call our children back because in the Spirit there is hope. Hope for our families, hope for ourselves.

Just as Harriet Tubman led 300 slaves to freedom, so, too, can we take our destiny in our hands and reach the promised land.

### "Along The Color Line" Million Man March: An Analysis Of Black Protest

BY MANNING MARABLE  
**Part One of a Two-Part Series**

**U**ndoubtedly, within weeks, the national media will launch a campaign among national black leaders in politics, business and entertainment, demanding that they publicly "denounce" the Million Man March.

The March will be attacked as an action of "self-segregation", because it is all-black. Prominent blacks will be humiliated and pressured to step forward, to deplore the anti-Semitism of Farrakhan, to condemn the questionable leadership of Chavis, to tell patient, long-suffering black folks to "stay home."

We may experience a replay of the sad and sorry events surrounding the June, 1994 African American Leadership summit in Baltimore, when a historic meeting of black representatives reflecting a wide spectrum of interests and constituencies was stereotyped and smeared solely due to Farrakhan's presence. Last year, only two members of the forty-member Congressional Black Summit even attended the Summit. When asked why Caucus members abandoned the Summit and retreated from an honest dialogue with Farrakhan, at least Congresswoman Cynthia A. McKinney was honest: "Because weak-kneed politicians can't stand up to some heat."

Let's clear the air, once and for all. Anti-Semitism has never been a widespread movement of bigotry among African Americans. That's not to say that anti-Semitism doesn't

exist within the black community. When one listens to Khalid Abdul Muhammad of The Nation of Islam describe Jews as "bloodsuckers of the black nation", that's anti-Semitism. Over the years, Farrakhan has vigorously denied being anti-Jewish. Yet he continues to make statements which seem to many as blatantly anti-Semitic. For example, Farrakhan made this statement in a New York City speech in 1986: "Jesus was hated by the Jews. Farrakhan is hated by the Jews. I am your last chance, Jews. You can't say, 'Never again' to God, 'cause when He puts you in the oven, you are in one indeed."

As deplorable and detestable as anti-Semitism is, as well as white racism and all forms of intolerance and prejudice, that doesn't negate Farrakhan's enormous power and prestige among significant sectors of black America. Black people don't listen to Farrakhan because of this anti-Semitism. They listen to him partially because the traditional civil rights establishment and most black elected officials have failed miserably in providing any effective leadership or vision. They listen because the economic and social conditions are so oppressive within our communities, that they are desperately searching for solutions. They listen because the white political establishment and the media constantly attack Farrakhan, and in doing so, reinforce the aura of his legitimacy among many black folk.

In the aftermath of last year's Baltimore summit, journalist Carl T. Rowan spoke for millions of African

Americans who were disgusted with the media attacks against black leaders like Chavis who engaged in a dialogue with Farrakhan. Jewish protest against the 1994 National Summit "sends a signal that some Jews will cripple or destroy anything that is black in their zeal to punish anyone black who expresses anti-semitic and racist views." Hardly a black radical, Rowan for years has been identified with coalitions with whites and conservative integrationist. But even Rowan was embittered by the fact that "many blacks, I among them, resent the repeated suggestions that to avoid being considered anti-Semitic they have to give a speech or write a column disavowing every anti-Jewish tirade by every black demagogue... A black-Jewish coalition for justice," Rowan concluded, "is being poisoned, tragically undermined, by the gross overreaction of a few Jews who want to decree who can speak on a black college campus, or who can attend a meeting of black leaders, or how much affirmative-action black job-seekers can enjoy."

Rowan's comments are illuminating, but inaccurate.

The primary political opponents of the black freedom movement are white conservatives in the political system and the corporate establishment, some of whom happen to be Jewish. But Jews as a group have consistently been far more supportive of African American candidates for public office, for example, than non-Jewish whites. Anti-Semitism works against the best interests of the black community, in part, because it undermines the ethical and moral

foundations of our historic critique against injustice and intolerance.

Nevertheless, black people cannot afford the political luxury not to talk to one another, and we should never apologize for doing so. If black nationalists, moderate integrationist and blacks favoring political transformation and radical democracy can agree, for example, on strategies to uproot deadly drugs within our community, then we must work aggressively in concert. If we determine strategies to pool our resources to build strong black institutions, let us proceed.

No one should have a monopoly of how "blackness" is defined. And no one should be condemned for frankly stating, in a principled manner, where we may agree and disagree.

One of the most frequently-raised questions concerning the March are finances--who will profit from the transportation arrangements for the thousands of participants, and who is actually providing the funds for staffing the national mobilization effort?

The Nation of Islam clearly is carrying the greatest financial burden to make the March a reality. But we need to ask what permanent contribution the March can make toward black economic self-determinations.

The Million Man March is right in expressing the desire for us to go to Washington, D.C., inspired by struggle and resistance to our oppression.

There's a need to go to Washington, to denounce the Republicans' "Contract on America."

## The Portland Observer

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