

EDITORIAL

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

While many of the politicians running for President in our country are arguing that we should be, and now have become, a color blind society--thus, the anti-affirmative action madness, the anti-setaside mania, the anti-majority/minority political districts, and the anti-immigration laws--the O. J. Simpson verdict has once again placed race and race justice in the center of American political debate.

In fact, it was a racist police officer that probably resulted in Mr. Simpson's acquittal.

The debate following the verdict is clear about one thing--blacks and whites view the criminal justice system from two different vantage points. Whites see it from the top down. Blacks see it from the bottom up. Whites essentially see it as working (generally) fairly in their interests. Blacks see it as stacked against them and working against their interests--indeed, as oppressing them. Whites see the criminal justice system as essentially color-blind. Blacks

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Simpson Verdict High-Lights Need For Race Justice

see it as essentially discriminatory toward people of color.

That brings us to the current post-Simpson debate over race and racial justice. It also brings us to the central question of remedies for racism: "Should race play a role or at least be a factor in remedy?" That is at the core of the debate over affirmative action, setasides and majority/minority political districts. Most whites, it seems, currently say no. Most blacks currently say yes. Each says so from their vantage point--i.e., whites see hiring, job opportunities and economic development as essentially fair and open; blacks see

those same things as stacked against them. That is central to understanding the post-Simpson debate and the role that race plays in our society.

Beyond race, in the O.J. Simpson trial was not about glitter and celebrity, but central to this case was the strain and pain of blood. There are two people dead, families in grief over lost loved ones, careers destroyed and reputations tarnished. There are no winners.

We, as a nation of laws, must accept and live with the verdict, and the battle must remain in the courtroom, not taken to the streets. The legal process has run its course, with

top-notch legal teams performing their professional duties with excellence, and a jury carefully chosen to reflect the local community of peers.

There were apparently many factors in this verdict. The prosecutor did not establish proof beyond reasonable doubt for this jury. They never found the smoking gun--or knife(s). Plus, they found no eyewitnesses. That, compounded by former Los Angeles Police Detective Mark Fuhrman, whose credibility was held high by the prosecutors, but destroyed by the defense team.

Race, sex, drugs, money, violence--all of the nation's "hot button" issues--played a role in this case. If there is a central lesson to be learned in this tragedy, it is this: we must stop the violence. In this period of atonement, we as a nation must search our souls and pray for all the families involved--and the nation.

There are no winners in this case and, based upon the verdict, the murderer or murderers remain free. Therefore, the case is not closed. Much agony, anxiety and doubt remain. We must remain prayerful.

Civil Rights Journal

The Death Penalty: The South African Perspective

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

For many years the United States was second only in the world to the racist apartheid government of South Africa in its incarceration rate.

The government of South Africa's high levels of incarceration could be attributed to its habit of jailing political prisoners and opponents of apartheid as well as criminals.

But with the fall of apartheid, things have changed in South Africa. Most, if not all, of those political prisoners have been released and South Africa no longer incarcerates its citizens at the world's highest rate. Meanwhile, more and more Americans are being incarcerated, with latest statistics showing a million and a half Americans in federal, state and local prisons and another 3.5 million on probation and parole.

In the new South Africa the death penalty is no more. In its first major ruling, South Africa's supreme court unanimously abolished the death penalty. In announcing the decision of the Constitutional Court, its pres-

ident, Arthur Chaskalson, said, "Everyone, including the most abominable of human beings, has a right to life and capital punishment is therefore unconstitutional." He added, "Retribution cannot be accorded the same weight under our Constitution as the right to life and dignity."

The court's decision was met with both joy and derision. Most South African blacks applauded the decision, even though they are most often the victims of violence in that country. On the other hand, many white South Africans cited that as another example of a gradual slide away from law and order.

We could learn something from South Africa. We could learn that the abolition of the death penalty as a respect for life and the dignity of life does not show that a country is weak, but that it is strong. We could learn that responding to a public frenzied with fear about crime and demanding the quick fix is not ethically or morally correct. We could learn that a country which finds most of its death row inmates to be poor and black is probably a country which

has an overrepresentation of wrongful arrests and convictions.

Take the Chain of Rocks bridge case in St. Louis. Two young white sisters were raped and killed in 1991 in an incident which occurred on an abandoned bridge. They fell or jumped off this 90-foot bridge; one body was never found. Their cousin, who was with them, was originally charged with their murders after he gave several different stories. In one version he was responsible for the girls falling; in another he jumped from the bridge himself, although he suffered no bruises or injuries and his hair was not even wet.

Then the cousin accused four other young men, although he testified he only saw an arm come out of the dark and could not tell if it was even a black or white arm. Three of the young men were black; one was white. The one white man was given a plea bargain if he testified against the three young black men. The three black men now sit on death row.

Reginald Clemons, one of the accused is currently seeking a reversal for a new trial due to the beating

he suffered while in police custody, lack of evidence, and insufficient and false statements by the police department and their witnesses.

There are dozens, perhaps hundreds of cases like this on death rows across America. Cases where young men, most often young African American men, have been poorly represented. Cases where unreliable witnesses have turned state's evidence to save themselves. Cases where little or no investigation has been done on behalf of the defendants. Cases where some innocent people may well be executed in the name of retribution, not justice.

The New York Times reported that Archbishop Desmond Tutu called the death penalty an obscenity, saying that it in effect says to criminals, "We want to show you that we care about life so we kill you too."

Would that we here in the United States would become a civilized society. The lives of innocent people depend upon it.

(Note: For information on the Chain of Rocks bridge case, contact the Justice Watch Committee for Reginald Clemons (314) 381-1912.)

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

If Powell Goes Independent, The Black Community Goes With Him

BY DR. LENORA FULANI

Public and private speculation over a possible presidential candidacy by Colin Powell has hit a fever pitch.

This has prompted a new round of questions about how relevant a Powell candidacy would be for the Black community. For example, I got a call from CNN asking my opinion on the results of a new poll which showed Powell with a higher favorable rating among whites (73%) than among Blacks (57%).

My response was this: I believe that if Colin Powell were to run for President as an independent he would be an eminently popular figure among African American voters. If he were to address the failure of the two-party arrangement and the increased alienation among Black Americans this failure has produced, he'd become an overnight hero with the majority of Black people. As Mr. Powell said on "Larry King Live," this may be a

two-party system, but "we are not a two-party nation." With the proper leadership, I believe that the Black community will play a vital role in helping the country move beyond that stagnant two-party system, and thereby help to empower itself.

Mr. Powell has insisted in statements to the press that he is not the "Black" candidate. I do not think the media has fully appreciated the depth of this remark. Black voters don't vote "Black." Like all Americans, we vote in what we believe to be our own interests.

Until recently, those interests have been intertwined with the Democratic Party, though I believe that the Democratic Party did far better in that deal than we did.

Now that the Democratic Party has all but abandoned our agenda, that political partnership has been undercut.

There has, of course, been much public and private speculation about whether Rev. Jackson would play the

role, either as a candidate or an endorser of an independent campaign, of leading the Black community out of the Democratic party. I've been urging Rev. Jackson's break with the Democratic Party since 1983.

But so far, his independent posturing notwithstanding, he has allowed the independent movement to gain considerable ground without supporting it or positioning himself in it. The Black community is not unaware of this.

Moreover, Rev. Jackson has staked his career on being the loyal opposition inside the Democratic Party. His son has just announced his Democratic primary candidacy for Mel Reynolds' seat in Chicago.

It seems that Jesse is no longer in a position to go up against the army of Black elected officials one would have to confront in order to bring the Black community out of the Democratic Party and into independent politics, particularly at a moment when the Clinton re-election cam-

Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

I want to suggest to readers an alternative to the approach to writing offered in the last issue's Perspectives column:

If you tie dozens of ornaments to a spear, it may look more intimidating, but will rarely find its mark.

Drop your thesaurus on the ground, stop it, and watch to see if it moves. If it does, make it stop. Use a pitchfork, a bazooka--whatever is necessary.

Pick the dead thing up (with two fingers only) and drop it in a refuse container. Close the lid. Wash the fingers. Listen to me.

There are exactly two great forces in your universe: one is love, the other truth. Both exist only inside human skin.

Before writing, your task is to look into your self--maybe "soul" is a better word--to find the love and the truth. (I can't do that for you, and neither can your writing teacher.) Listen to your truth.

Next write down in black ink what your truth has told you. Don't be all day at it. Real truth is brief.

Walk away. Listen to music, think of other matters.

After a time, return calmly to what you've written. Using red ink,

let your love read what your truth has said. (Remember, love sometimes has a right to delete truth, and to add a comment of its own.) There may be on your paper about as much red ink as black.

Again, walk away. Don't return to your writing until you have slept.

Look once more into your self and find the part that is called "sense" or "reason." Read your writing, this time letting reason take complete control. Reason, although fragile and forceless, will decide which parts of your writing are lies pretending to be truth. It will decide which parts are hatred masquerading as love.

If your love or your truth want to appeal a decision made by reason, both forces must agree before reason considers the appeal. All judgements of reason are final.

You will notice in this process that you have set one part of your soul against another. I never said this would be easy. And I am saying it won't be painless.

But that is how I suggest you approach writing. I think you'll find truth flies like a spear when love is the muscle that launches it and reason the hand that guides. Don't give up.

Yours, D. Ben Saxe

perspectives

Anatomy Of A Language III: Conclusion

In part I of this series, I had the following to say about a book that has proven to be an unmatched aid to a clear and articulate expression of ideas.

"Many thousands have used 'Roget's International Thesaurus: Fourth or Fifth Ed.' as



By
Professor
Mckinley
Burt

a browsing book, a book that stimulates thought and exploration because it uniquely collects great semantic domains under large conceptual headings...and shows by the manner of organization the tracks the mind may take as it ranges about in a given territory."

In the same "Perspectives" article (9/27/95), we saw how a word is found in the index (dictionary section) and how it is accompanied there by a number of subentries which may or may not be closer to the meaning you want.

For instance, if the word for which you seek broader or more expressive meaning is "Shapeless", then you will find numbered subentries like "abnormal, 85.9; formless, 247.4; unordered, 02.12; vague, 514.18.

From here, one would turn to the main body of the Thesaurus where these numbers would direct you to the proper word or phrase in a 250,000 word text, arranged in categories by their meaning. A "Synopsis of Categories" at the front of the book indicates that most of the

meaning and experience of human existence may be expressed in eight great classes. And accordingly, you may be guided to new levels of effective communications and discourse. Try it, child, youth or adult (lawyer's, please pay attention).

Class One: Abstract Relations. 1. Existence 2. Relation 3. Quantity 4. Order 5. Number 6. Time 7. Change 8. Event 9. Causation 10. Power.

Class Two: Space. 1. Space In General 2. Dimensions 3. Structure; Form 4. Motion.

Class Three: Physics. 1. Physics 2. Heat 3. Light 4. Electricity And Electronics 5. Mechanics 6. Physical Properties 7. Color.

Class Four: Matter. 1. Matter In General 2. Inorganic Matter 3. Organic Matter.

Class Five: Sensation. 1. Sensation In General 2. Touch 3. Taste 4. Smell 5. Sight 6. Hearing.

Class Six: Intellect. 1. Intellectual Faculties And Processes 2. States of Mind 3. Communication of Ideas.

Class Seven: Volition In General. 2. Conditions 3. Voluntary Action 4. Authority/Control 5. Support And Opposition 6. Possessive Relations.

Class Eight: Affections. 1. Personal Affections 2. Sympathetic Affections 3. Morality 4. Religion.

Well, there you are. Go ahead and see if I care if you sound better than I ever dreamed.

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION

Established in 1970

Joyce Washington--Publisher

The PORTLAND OBSERVER is located at
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033 * Fax 503-288-0015

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday Noon

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes to: Portland Observer,
P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

Second Class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

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Subscriptions: \$30.00 per year.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest African-American Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver

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