

EDITORIAL

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

Double Standard In Sentencing On the day of the Million Man March President Clinton gave a persuasive speech on ending racism.

Yet when he had the opportunity to undo the most grievous racial injustice written into our legal system—the 100-to-1 disparity between crack and powder cocaine sentences—he caved in (again) to political pressures. Rather than vetoing S.1254 and eliminating this inequity, Clinton signed the bill and overruled the U.S. Sentencing Commission's call to equalize the penalties.

JaxFac is disappointed that President Clinton signed this racially disparate bill. In the absence of a real war on drugs and an urban policy, we have a war on the young and vulnerable, Black and Brown. A comprehensive war on drugs would include jobs, education and treatment as weapons in that war, not more jails and mandatory sentences. A real war on drugs would stop the flow of drugs into the country, and stem the levels of drug abuse. The president's apparent campaign strategy is to prove he can stand up to the civil rights community, the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses, to

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Crack VS. Powder

placate White fears.

Just this week, the Supreme Court agreed to hear a Los Angeles case which proves that LA has only prosecuted African Americans under the law which yields the 5-year mandatory minimum sentence. We now see evidence of a racial disparity in targeted prosecutions across the country. In 17 states, no Whites have been prosecuted under the federal statute. This explains how more than 90% of those in jail on mandatory sentences are young Black and Brown youth despite the fact that 80% of wholesale suppliers are White, and 55% of crack users are White.

Big White suppliers and cartels have gone unchallenged. Only 5% of those in federal prison are high-level

crack offenders, and only 1% of crack defendants operate internationally. Meanwhile the crack possessor, the lowest rung on the totem pole, bears the burden of the appearance of a war on drugs.

Crack is becoming a code word for Black. Powder is the source—wholesale. Crack is the derivative—retail. Yet, those caught with the derivative serve more time than those convicted of the source or even of violent crimes. Crack offenders are, on the average, serving more time than a state inmate imprisoned for kidnapping, robbery and assault. This jail population is now feeding the jail industrial complex—the number one growth industry in urban America. This is a very expensive political

gimmick.

Oddly, the rationale for disparity is to protect Blacks from Crack. That is racial paternalism. We want to be protected with jobs, education and treatment programs, not fast-tracking jobs out of the country and more jails. A 5-year \$40,000-a-year penitentiary scholarship, in a cell—public housing—worth \$100, plus maintenance, costs. Add 5 years of full security, full medical benefits—but not drug treatment, three square meals a day, public utilities and what you have is a very expensive non-remedy for the urban crisis.

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson and other human rights leaders sought a meeting with the president to discuss this disparity and its effect, but to no avail. A logical solution would be to contact the Justice Department to file suit, but the Justice Department has declared itself to be against equal protection under the law.

What is at stake here is the essence of the 1954 Supreme Court decision—"equal protection under the law." JaxFac urges supporters to call the White House at 202-456-1414 to register your dissent, and join us as we mount our legal and legislative challenges to demand justice in sentencing, and a positive urban policy.

perspectives

More Threats To "Business As Usual" Are Mounting

Those belated and overdue stirrings of conscience in the Northeast community that were prompted by the March, seem to have affected some members of the black clergy; church people I have not heard from in years want my 'spin' on the matter, or its, "did you see that article on page 2 of last Wednesday's Observer Newspaper (11/8)?"

"The African American Leader And The Million Man March" was the title of a strong commentary written by a pastor member of the nation's largest African American Christian organization: The National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc. Among other things he said, "whatever your position on the Honorable Minister Farrakhan maybe, the fact of the matter is that his success is directly attributable to our failure" (...of the Christian Church).

The pastor further says that "...others are taking the leadership in the struggle because the African American Christian establishment has failed to select leadership able to respond appropriately to the challenges of our times." I pointed out here several years ago that the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated just as we were to launch a vast "economic" crusade on a national scale. A decade before that (and since then), I was holding up the Rev. Leon Sullivan, founder of the O.I.C. movement, as an ideal role model for members of the clergy.

Here in the Northeast community the local branch of the international organization founded by Rev. Sullivan is known as "POIC" (Portland Opportunity Industrialization Corporation). Beginning 30 years ago as a project to create employment for members of his Philadelphia church, Reverend Sullivan took this legacy of the "Master" (feed the multitude) to new and successful heights around the world. Sweden, Germany, Russia, Poland, India, South Africa, Mexico, wherever.

I can well understand the fears of that pastor we discussed earlier. I, like others here, have been re-

buffed or ignored by black church 'leaders' when we have made offers to contribute to or participate in the interface between the church and the people. Well remembered is a particular trip of mine to the Yakima, Washington area and the islands of the Klingit Indian people off Alaska—all for the U.S. Forest Service. In both instances, I discovered a vast infrastructure of economic enterprise which in several cases had been imitated and nurtured shortly

after World War II by the "missionary outreach" to native Americans established by several denominations of the Christian Church. Returning to Portland and my classroom at the university where I was teaching a class in Urban Economics I enthusiastically described my experience to the class.

We developed a project and an agenda that could very well address the socio-economic problems of Portland's Northeast community. We promptly called, wrote or otherwise attempted to gain an audience with Portland black ministers. I thought that I was on kind of a roll having just successfully structured the real estate concept and grant project that gained those three buildings at N.E. 17th and Alberta for the Black Education Center.

Not to be! That was twenty one years ago this month and I haven't heard from a black minister yet. However, a white student in the class belonged to a large downtown church on S. W. 12th and said his minister was very progressive and would be more than interested. They were, and a successful program in the Rev. Leon Sullivan style was developed. Incidentally, the church organist turned out to be one of the kids at The Dalles Junior High School math and science presentation where I won the National Science Foundation Award for the district.

For those of you who have an older edition of my book "Black Inventors of America", he is the little fat-faced kid watching the camera in the picture of the event found on the inside back cover.

More next week



By Professor Mckinley Burt

Civil Rights Journal

Washington's Quiet War On Our Children

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

What is going on in Washington these days will have a chilling effect on the most vulnerable of our nation -- our children.

What is going on is called welfare "reform" or ending the war on poverty; but it really is a war on the poor and it signals an end of a fundamental ethical principle of this nation -- that every child should be protected by our federal government as a last resort, when all else fails.

Numbed by the steamroller of the Contract with America and the rhetoric of a Congress which has chosen to deionize poor mothers and their children, many Americans just don't understand what the welfare reform bill will mean for children in this rich nation. Seven million children will no longer have health care coverage and childhood immunization will no longer be guaranteed. Three million children will no longer receive income from Aid to Families

with Dependent Children. Fourteen million children will lose food and nutrition programs, including school lunches and infant formula under the WIC program. In other words, millions of children will be sicker and hungrier and colder this winter.

The irony of all of these cuts is that they come at the same time that Congress is giving the richest 1 percent of Americans a tax break of at least \$12,000 per year and a \$92 billion capital gains tax to the wealthiest 3 percent of Americans. The irony is that these cuts come at the same time when congress is giving the Defense Department \$243.3 billion -- almost \$7 billion more than the Pentagon asked for. The irony is that these cuts come at the same time when Congress is giving the largest 1 percent of corporations a \$121 billion depreciation tax break over 10 years and has refused to cut corporate welfare or farm subsidies.

It is estimated that in 1994 the federal government spent \$104 bil-

lion in corporate welfare -- in bailouts of failed companies, in export promotions, loans, debt forgiveness, interest-free financing and below cost sales to corporations. It was corporate welfare which paid the Walt Disney Company \$300,000 to put on a fireworks display while paying McDonald's \$466,000 to subsidize the advertising of chicken mc nuggets in Turkey. It was corporate welfare which paid Lockheed Martin Corp. \$850 million when it merged Lockheed and Martin Marietta aircraft companies and then paid the top executives of those companies an additional \$100 million as a reward for a successful merger. It was farm subsidies which paid Sam Donaldson, the millionaire television correspondent, \$97,000 in agriculture subsidies for his New Mexico ranch.

In her open letter to President Clinton, Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund, wrote, "it is moral hypocrisy for our nation to slash income, health

and nutrition assistance for poor children while leaving untouched hundreds of billions in corporate welfare, giving new tax breaks of over \$200 billion for non-needy citizens and giving the Pentagon almost \$7 billion it did not request."

Our nation now is in the unenviable position of having the richest children in the industrialized world - and the poorest children is poor. Right now, before these cuts one in every four American children is poor. Right now, before these cuts one in every 12 children is hungry. These proposed cuts will mean that our country has chosen to protect the future of the richest children at the expense of the poorest children.

I don't believe that is what our nation is all about -- making expendable the most vulnerable of our society. For what will it profit us to gain the whole world and lose our souls?

(Call President Clinton today - (202) 456-1111 or E Mail: president@whitehouse.gov)



Letter To The Editor

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

The Powell Obsession

BY JACQUELINE SALIT

America's media is politically obsessed with Black men. First was O.J. Simpson. Next was Minister Louis Farrakhan. Now it's General Colin Powell.

Why? Because beyond the sensationalism that the media has generated, each of these figures has revealed profound an intensifying national antagonisms. Mr. Simpson's trial uncovered that the chasm between Black and white America is more cavernous than most anyone (white) was willing to admit. Minister Farrakhan's electrifying Million Man March revealed that Black America is standing at the edge of that precipice, unsure about whether and how to try to cross over it. The prospective presidential run by Mr. Powell has the political professionals in an uproar over the impact his candidacy might have on an unstable political structure which is already deeply unpopular with the voters. And they have yet to really consider the potential political clout that his entry into the race could confer on Black voters.

Does this mean that Powell, should he become the Republican nominee, would re-align the Black voter to the G.O.P.? Not necessarily. The Republican Party has nothing to offer African Americans, even with Powell on the ticket. The impact of a Powell candidacy will be for more complicated than a mere intra-two party switch. How so?

First, the rumored prospects for an independent bid for the presidency by Powell now seem dim. If he had gone the independent road, he certainly would have pulled millions of African American voters out of a 60-year "bad marriage" to the Democratic Party and into a new partnership with the white center. (If you don't think it was a bad marriage, take another look at the Million Man March. It was the failure of the liberal Democrats to deliver on their promise to end poverty and racism that brought Minister Farrakhan and a million Black men to the edge of that precipice. That's why the Minister called on Black America to politically reshape itself as an independent "third force.")

But even the Republican route

promises to reshape politics-as-we-know-it. If Powell runs and wins as a Republican he will in the long run, if not the short run, split the party. No less an expert on intra-Republican warfare than Pat Buchanan has forecast it. And some scenarios suggest that his description may be a prescription as well. Consider this.

Colin Powell enters the Republican Party primary and by March 7, the date of the New York contest, it is crystal clear that he will be the nominee. Pat Buchanan, with the political and financial support of the Christian Coalition abandons his Republican run and hurriedly assembles an independent bid. With a lot of money and a riled-up Republican right wing, he can access all 50 ballots, switch his primary matching funds eligibility over to his third party run, and stay in the game big time.

Meanwhile, the New Independent Party (known as Reform in some states) catalyzed and funded by Ross Perot, has been creating a new party infrastructure which will be prepared to choose an independent presidential candidate at a mega-Town Hall meeting-style national convention in

August. Faced with the prospect of a liberal-moderate Republican deserted by 45% of the party, a respectable right-wing populist independent, and Bill Clinton, the Perot Party chooses a ticket aimed at grabbing white populist pro-independent Republicans, white independents who want to build a broad-based third party that is non-ideological, and African Americans and other voters from the Democratic Party's liberal wing who feel betrayed by liberalism and who think Bill Clinton is a loser. Maybe that ticket is Lowell Weicker and Ross Perot. Maybe it's Weicker and Jesse Jackson. Or maybe it's Jackson/Perot.

In any event, this four-way race has the political professionals reeling. The two-party system as we know it is way off the map. Everybody wants the Black vote, because with white America split four ways, black America becomes the deciding factor. No wonder the national obsession is with racial issues. They are on the cutting edge of the country's political future.

Jacqueline Salit is a political consultant for independent candidates and parties.

Prime Minister Was Inspiration For Us All

The Urban League of Portland would like to express our sincere sadness over the recent and most tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Mr. Rabin's life as a soldier and peacemaker is an inspiration to us all and will not soon be forgotten.

"We must learn to resolve conflicts without violence, because we human beings will share space on this planet for many years to come. We hope that Mr. Rabin's untimely death will motivate us all to work even harder for peace and unity in the world and turn back the hatred and extremism which is responsible for his death.

"We would like to express our support for and solidarity with all people working for peace in the face of such violent opposition," stated Lawrence J. Dark, Urban League of Portland president and chief executive officer.

The Urban League of Portland for 50 years has been a bridge builder for race relations.

The League is a non-profit, community-based human service, economic and social justice agency serving at-risk youth and families, students, job seekers and seniors in the metro area. In 1995, the League celebrates its 50th year of serving the community. The League is one of 113 local affiliates of the National Urban League.

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