

# EDITORIAL

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

**WDC-Editor's note:** The Human Rights Campaign Fund recently conducted a series of fascinating polls and focus groups concerning American's attitudes about the so-called "religious right". We thought their findings were worth sharing with you, and Celinda Lake of Lake Research, who conducted the poll, graciously agreed. Her findings are summarized below.

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION Religious Political Extremists

(1) The best phrase to use to refer to these groups is religious political extremists. These terms are strongly negative for every group of voters, much more so than "religious right," the term mostly commonly dislike what it implies--a mixing of religion, politics and extremism.

The term "religious right" gives off positive images to voters.

The term "radical right" does carry a strongly negative connotation, but after the Oklahoma City bombing Americans tend to associate this term with violent fringe groups such as militias, New-Nazis and skinheads, and resist associating the "radical right" with religious activity.

(2) The best message is that they are extremists who would go too far, and use politics to impose their view on others. Voters do believe that re-

ligious people should be involved in politics, but they dislike the idea of politics being used to dictate or impose one set of values on everyone. They would have values guide politics, but dislike the idea of religion dictating politics.

The Christian Coalition's usual response that those who oppose them are engaged in anti-Christian bigotry is not persuasive to voters. In fact it seemed an example of the very "my way or no way" attitude of these extremists that voters dislike.

(3) Americans do not want the public schools used as battlegrounds for

religious extremists, nor do they want their communities divided and polarized. Voters resent the Christian Coalition tactic of "stealth candidacies," where religious political extremists run for local office, but refuse to reveal their political affiliation and beliefs.

(4) Several issues convincingly illustrate the problems of using the public schools as battlegrounds, dividing communities, and forcing political views on others--freedom of choice, sex education in the schools, book banning in schools and libraries, and gay and lesbian rights.

(5) The best strategy should include a values-oriented, faithbased response. Progressive have powerful norms and traditions, and strong American values on our side. Americans strongly believe in the separation of church and state, in freedom of choice, in fairness, and in the principle of the Golden Rule--treat others as you would be treated yourself.

Americans believe values should be determined by individuals families and communities, and present any attempt to dictate one set of political views, plus Americans dislike the self righteousness of many religious political extremists.

However, it is critical that progressives confront religious political extremists on a religious and values-based terrain. An our response to religious political extremists must include a faithbased response. Reaffirming values is vital at a time when America worries about declining morals and family values.

Since faith-based and morality-based responses to issues have always been the core of the Rainbow's work, this advice fits in perfectly with our organizing principles.

Or, as Dr. King put it: Vanity asks, is it popular? Politics asks, will it work? But conscience and morality ask, is it right?

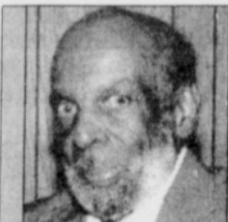
*perspectives*

## There Is An Education Dynamic As Well

I am grateful for the overwhelming response to last week's column which revealed that the principal dynamic that propelled the United States to world supremacy in both the sugar industry and high-rise urban structures was the inventive genius of two African Americans; Norman Rillieux and David Crosthwaite, respectively.

While it was rather cute and somewhat precocious that a little girl wrote, "our teacher says that nobody could go to the bathroom

above the sixth floor if Mr. Crosthwaite hadn't designed modern plumbing systems. You couldn't take a shower in a skyscraper, either. No way Mr Burt! "At the same time I was rudely reminded of several of my "Baseline Essay" models of 'black inventions' that were submitted to the Portland School District -- but never reached the classrooms.



By Professor Mckinley Burt

and anecdotes you will find a few observations that may match your experience with minorities in the real world. Good luck with the Zillion citations.

For those teachers who requested some citations of material they might incorporate in fashioning lesson plans on "Rillieux and the Sugar Industry" try the following.

"Sweetness And Power: The Place of Sugar In Modern History," Sidney W. Mintz, Viking 1985.

See related entries in indexes to such periodicals as National Geographic, Scientific American and the weekly news magazines such as Time, News Week, etc. also your daily newspapers where there has been extensive coverage of Sugar growers and their price-support programs.

Also there has been considerable coverage of the "destruction of the Everglades" by Sugar planters of Florida who have diverted the natural flow of waters.

For general insights how blacks were able to maintain and nurture their technical skills during slavery, see "Eye-witness: The Negro in American History", Katz, Putnam; and "the Negro Artisan" W.E.B. Dubois, 1902.

## Vantage Point Bringing Down The Walls Of Oppression

In the Old Testament of the Bible the prophet Joshua, on God's instructions, assembled a small, well trained, disciplined army to confront a vastly superior force in the ancient walled city of Jericho.

Armed with a righteous cause and following the battle plan conveyed by Jehovah, "Joshua fit the battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down." In the era of the '60's, Martin Luther King, a man inspired by his Christian faith and devoted to the philosophy and tactics of the holy man, Mohandas Mahatma Ghandi of India, assembled a non-violent army composed of the downtrodden sons and daughters of Africa and people of goodwill to bring down the walls of southern apartheid. Against formidable, seemingly unsurmountable odds, the oppressed shattered a vital pillar in the U.S. system of racial oppression.

At the annual Martin Luther King celebration of Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network, the keynote speaker, Rev. Herbert Daughtry of the renowned House of the Lord Church i Brooklyn, reminded the

audience that at the time of his death Martin Luther King, the "radical dreamer," was also preparing to mount an initiative aimed

at bringing down the walls of economic injustice and oppression in America. When King was cut down in Memphis he and the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were planning to launch a Poor People's Campaign to demand an Economic Bill of Rights for Black people and poor and working people in the U.S.

Offering a more in depth analysis and interpretation of dr. King's famous and oft repeated "I have a dream" speech, Rev. Daughtry indicated that Dr. King clearly understood that racial harmony must be based on economic parity and equity. Dr. King also increasingly understood that the battle to end racial apartheid in the south, as dangerous and difficult as it was, paled in comparison to the struggle to end economic apartheid and injustice. That struggle would require an assault on the very nature of a greed oriented, materialistic, profit above people driven economic system that might make concessions on white only signs

at water fountains and lunch counters but would fight to the death to preserve power, privilege and a disproportionate accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few White men who run this country and much of the world.

King died before he could personally lead the most important campaign of his life, the Poor People's Campaign. His lieutenants from SCLC carried on in his name, marching hundreds of miles with scores of people from communities in the South to erect a Resurrection City on the Capital Mall in Washington, D.C. Though the campaign did have an effect on congressional consideration of President Johnson's War on Poverty program, it fell short of the ultimate goal of forcing this nation to face the devastating realities of economic inequality on Black people and poor and working people in this society.

This is the unfinished task on Martin Luther King's agenda of social change and social transformation. As the State of emergency afflicting the masses of Black people, people of color and poor and working people deepens under the right

wing's racist and reactionary Contract on America, it is time, past time to discuss the vision, strategy and tactics required to mount a renewed campaign to bring walls of economic inequality and injustice in America Down.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never has and it never will." The obscene system of gross inequality in the U.S. will not change unless it is challenged and overturned by the oppressed. An Economic Bill of Rights will never be enacted in this nation unless poor and working people, the homeless, the hungry, welfare recipients, the unemployed and underemployed the locked out and left out rise up to demand that social and economic rights become an integral part of the fabric of this society.

Perhaps, it is time to finish King's unfinished agenda by calling for a new Poor People's Campaign and a new Resurrection City to disrupt "business" as usual in this country. Like Joshua at the walls of Jericho, perhaps, it is time that oppressed people, confident that God is on our side, shake this system to its very foundation until the walls of injustice and oppression come tumbling down.

## Civil Rights Journal Caught Between The Elephants

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

*"It's all in the timing" is an old saying which the Pastors for Peace under stand in a new way. Pastors for Peace is the ecumenical group which has sponsored five caravans across the U.S. to the Mexico border to carry medical and humanitarian supplies to the people of Cuba. Their activist, non-violent actions have been in defiance of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, which they believe is immoral.*

As this is written, five of the Pastors for peace group are on their 16th day of a hunger strike at the San Ysidro, CA border into Mexico. Their temporary home is made of plastic and canvas, and, after consecration, was named the Wayside Chapel for Peace and Friendship. The fasters, led by Rev. Lucius Walker, Executive Director of Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization and Pastors for Peace and pastor of Salvation Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY, vow to continue their fast until the U.S. government releases

the 400 medical computers bound for hospitals and family clinics in Cuba which it seized as Pastors for peace tried to cross the border.

"Even in the worst days of apartheid, food and medicines were never stopped from going to South African. Even when tens of thousands of people were disappearing in Guatemala, trade in food and medicine were never restricted. The severity of the U.S. government's economic war on our Cuban neighbors is unprecedented, unnecessary and immoral," said Rev. Walker about the U.S. restrictions on Cuba.

The timing of this sixth caravan is part of the Pastors for peace's current problem. Several days after they reached the border the downing of two Cessna planes by the Cuban government turned the world's attention to Cuba once again and hardened the U.S. government's attitude toward Cuba. In addition, the election year and the Helms-Burton legislation just passed by Congress has escalated the political rhetoric around Cuba.

But Pastors for peace remains committed to its humanitarian assistance

to the people of Cuba. "We regret the loss of life in this incident, as we regret the loss of thousands of Cuban lives caused by the U.S. embargo of Cuba," said Rev. Walker, responding to the downing of the civilian planes. "While the Fast for Life may be more difficult in this climate, it is all the more important to create a space for calm, reasoned and moral reflection on U.S. policies toward our neighbor," he added.

Pastors for Peace says that the U.S. government has spent over a million dollars to prevent U.S. and Canadian volunteers from fulfilling their mission to send donated humanitarian aid to churches and hospitals in Cuba. On January 31, 400 non-violent volunteers were confronted by some 1,000 government officials, who used helicopters, surveillance equipment, police vans, tow trucks and unmarked cars to stop the caravan from crossing the border. They did allow Pastors for Peace volunteers to take some medical supplies across, but when the trucks with medical computers tried to cross, Customs agents broke into the trucks

and began to confiscate the computers. Eighteen of the Pastors for Peace were arrested.

Two weeks later medical computers donated by Canadian citizens and purchased in the U.S. by Pastors for Peace were confiscated at the Canadian border. Pastors for peace say that medical computers are just as necessary for medical care as sutures and aspirin in this computer age and vow to continue their fast until the computers are released. "We cannot match the force or resources of the government and so we have decided to make the only and ultimate sacrifice -- ourselves," said Rev. Walker their decision.

There's another old saying about what happens when two elephants decide to move. Pastors for peace, like the little flea in that saying, is caught between the government elephants of the U.S. and Cuba. Meanwhile the little people of both countries are caught between the two elephants and the people of Cuba are dying from the lack of medical supplies and equipment.



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