

# EDITORIAL

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

Last week in South Carolina's state capital, the Republican presidential candidates held one of their 1996 debates. In that debate, the candidates were asked about flying the Confederate flag over the Georgia Capital. Pat Buchanan responded by saying that the flag did not fly over slavery, but was a symbol of honor and courage in battle—equating the Confederate flag with the American flag. He then said that if the civil rights community can sing "We Shall Overcome" then there is nothing wrong with white Southerners singing "Dixie."

That position may be expected from Pat Buchanan, in South Carolina, as he is making crude racial and religious appeals a centerpiece of his presidential campaign. That is why he has the support of Lester Maddox and David Duke. However, all of the other candidates on the stage with him remained silent or gave tacit approval. When others said this was a matter for individual states to decide, they are giving tacit approval to Mr. Buchanan's racist statements.

Let us be clear, "Dixie" is not the moral equivalent of "We Shall Overcome." One symbolizes legal apartheid, the other symbolizes overcoming legal apartheid. The Confederate flag and "Dixie" divided us along racial lines.

"We Shall Overcome" united a majority of Americans across racial, religious and economic lines. The Confederate flag and "Dixie" are seen around the world as symbols of a

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

### Cat Got Your Tongue?

Republicans Catch Lockjaw Over Dixie & Flag

shameful past "We Shall Overcome" is sung everywhere around the world in freedom, equal rights and democracy struggles about a hopeful future.

"Dixie" and the Confederate flag are symbolic of a racist and anti-semitic "Old South." The Confederate flag is loaded with official racism, anti-semitism, sexism, anti-worker and anti-voting rights symbolism. The decision by the other presidential candidates to remain silent is to allow false southern pride to continue to exist because of false southern political fears. If there is a "New South"—as all the presidential candidates contend and, as JaxFax believes, there is—then it must be appealed to politically by candidates of conviction and courage. Representatives of the New South cannot remain silent in the face of a brazen attempt to resurrect the Old South.

For the other candidates to respond to Pat Buchanan's overt racial political appeals by saying that these are matters of "states' rights" is to pull the cover off of the real Repub-

lican agenda with regard to returning block grants to the states, and with regard to the weakening or the elimination of federal standards. States' rights is a throwback to states' wrongs! After all, the Old South had much to do with making such federal standards necessary in the first place.

There is a New South. The New South allowed Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton to rise and lead all of the American people—something the Old South could never have done. The New South allowed economic investment and growth. The New South brought with it the 1996 Olympic Games; the Atlanta Braves, Hawks and Falcons; the New Orleans Saints; and the Charlotte Hornets and Carolina Panthers. They would never have come to the "Old Buchanan South."

The New South has helped the South, the nation and the nation's image in the world. Buchanan's Confederate flag and Dixie would help to unravel those gains.

Pat Buchanan likes to talk about his boyhood. That is fine, but Jesse

Jackson had a boyhood too. That boyhood was in Greenville, SC, where his father went off to fight the Germans and Nazism in the name of democracy. But when he returned home he did not have the right to vote. One Christmas, when Jesse came home from college, he wanted to use the Greenville public library, but was denied because of his race. His daddy was called "boy" and his mother was called "girl." He had to drink out of a "colored" water fountain, be served out of the back of the cafe by the road, and sit in the back of the bus while paying the same fare to ride. In whose name was this done to all African Americans? The symbol of all this? The Confederate flag and Dixie.

We need conviction and leadership from those in the Republican Party who would be president of all Americans to match the conviction and leadership Pat Buchanan is giving through his racist appeal to the Old Confederacy. Neither Pat Buchanan, nor his racist appeal, should be taken lightly.

We do not need the election of 1996 to be a repeat of a Supreme Court decision in 1896, where a conservative and racist Court turned back the clock on racial progress. Such a repetition is not inevitable, but the challenge must be met head on with strong moral leadership.

This JaxFax is a moral appeal to all the Republican presidential candidates to step up to the plate of racial, gender and worker grievances, and hit a home run for racial, gender and worker justice everywhere.

## Along The Color Line

### Black Liberation: Where Do We Go From Here?

A lack leaders have advocated various programs and strategies to advance the interests of African-American people. One such strategy can be called "reform-from-above."

The social foundation of "reform-from-above" politics came largely from the black middle class and professionals, black elected officials connected with the Democratic Party, and moderates within the Civil Rights Movement. In a nutshell, their strategy favors: the complete integration of blacks into US society, the passage of civil rights/equal opportunity legislation, and increasing the number of blacks in influential positions in government and the private sector. The federal government is viewed as principle for addressing the black community's social problems and human needs, such as health care, housing and education. Implicitly, reform-from-above is based on a pragmatic partnership between black middle class and political elites, with white liberal groups in the foundations, education, organized labor, and the Democratic Party.

The limitations of reform-from-above as a strategy for black liberation have been obvious to many black working class and poor people for decades.

### Civil Rights Journal: In Memory Of Cynthia Wiggins

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON  
I never met Cynthia Wiggins. She was single, teenaged mother who lived in inner-city Buffalo. But unlike the stereotypes, she was not an irresponsible, welfare mother. She wanted to work to support her son, who was born last fall. So she went to work at a suburban shopping mall, the Walden Galleria Mall.

Just before Christmas Cynthia Wiggins was crushed to death by a dump truck as she tried to cross the seven lane highway separating her bus stop from the mall. It seems the Walden Galleria Mall had refused permission for the No. 6 bus from inner-city Buffalo to stop on the mall property, forcing inner-city residents to cross the dangerous highway with no walkway or stop light and then walk across the large parking lot reach the stores.

In the aftermath of Cynthia Wiggins' untimely and unnecessary death, a public outcry forced the mall owners to grant permission for the No. 6 bus to stop on the mall property. After all, they had always allowed

the chief beneficiaries of reform-from-above politics have been, and continue to be, the black middle class. The basic thesis of this class can be described by the concept of "symbolic representation": increasing the actual number of blacks in positions of authority within every institution of society will directly empower African-Americans as a group. Fundamental social progress would occur only in cooperation with white liberal institutions and organizations. Loyalty to the national Democratic Party is central to this approach for gradual change. Thus the insurgent presidential candidacy of Jess Jackson in both 1984 and 1988 did not challenge the two-party system, but operated solely within the confines of the Democratic Party primaries. Although Jackson frequently criticizes the Clinton administrations' policies, he is not prepared or willing to launch a truly independent political movement for blacks and other oppressed groups.

However, an alternative third political vision has also been represented within African-American leadership: the radical politics of "reform-from-below." With their massive migration from the rural South to the northern ghettos, African-Americans soon became the most urbanized population in the US. With the

expansion of the black industrial working class and the subsequent growth of urban poverty and unemployment, political protest began to assume a more militant character. As early as the Great Depression, black street radicals in Harlem initiated rent strikes, boycotts and "don't buy where you can't work" campaigns. Thousands of African-Americans joined the Communist Party and other radical organizations; thousands more participated in trade union struggles. In the Cold War, the more radical wing of black freedom movement, led by Du Bois and Paul Robeson, challenged McCarthyism and domestic political repression. In the 1960s, a similar spirit of radical internationalism, Third World solidarity and peace was advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr., in the months before his assassination. And as the movement for desegregation was supplanted by the demand for Black Power, new models of black militancy and radicalism emerged, such as the Black Panthers and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.

What each of these African-American leaders and protest groups had in common was a radical rejection of the existing power structure of the larger society. They were convinced that the traditional methods of political engagement, working solely

through the system, would not produce meaningful changes. African-Americans had to pressure the political and corporate establishment from below, by active participation in protests of all kinds: mass demonstrations, renters' strikes, labor unrest, economic boycotts, sit-ins, civil disobedience, and even armed struggle. This perspective fostered a type of activist-oriented leadership which saw itself as part of a broad social movement for black empowerment, and the radical redefinition of American democracy. In an international context, reformers-from-below embraced the parallel struggles of African, Asian and Latin American people against colonialism and economic domination by the West. Black American "problems were an integral part of a much larger human dilemma, the inequality and oppression of non-European people along a global boundary of race, nationality and class.

"Accommodation," "reform-from-above," and "reform-from-below" represent distinct strategies and approaches to the problematic of black empowerment. If we're really serious about fundamental change for African-

Americans, we must recognize that the transformation of this system will occur, not from the top down, but from the bottom up.

racism provides the definitions of their lives.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins and the No. 6 bus raises several issues. It belies the mistaken notion that racism is no longer alive and well in America. For it not only shows how poor blacks are not wanted in many stores, but how they are prevented from even going into them.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins and the No. 6 bus shows that racism does impact business decisions in this nation. The mall owners allowed their racism to keep black and poor shoppers from coming to their mall, even at the expense of losing the business of these shoppers. Even wealthy and middle class African Americans have experienced the racism of store owners who have followed them around the store, assuming they will steal something. But this mall, and others, like the Georgia mall that prohibited young African American men from

shopping there, took it one step further. They didn't want the people from the inner city even to enter their mall.

Their racism had another impact as well. It also made it difficult, if not impossible, for black and poor workers to get and keep jobs at the mall. Cynthia Wiggins had wanted to work in a neighborhood McDonald's according to her friends. When they weren't hiring, she was forced to leave her neighborhood to look for work. Upon obtaining a job, she was then forced to cross that highway to get to work.

The story of Cynthia Wiggins reminds us that racism not only discriminates against people, but that racism kills. What about your suburban malls? So they allow inner-city buses to stop on their premises? Are they making decisions about poor people of color that are racist? Why don't you ask them and find out?

## perspectives

### What To Do For An Encore: Reinvent McKinley? Change Routines?

In the heyday of vaudeville when travelling performers with varying degree of talent were making the theatre circuit around America (and Europe), one of the most famous and colorful sites was the Apollo Theatre in Harlem.

Singers, dancers, comedians, mimes, stars and hams dared the stage and that inevitable hook

which would pull you back into the wings if the "toughest-audience-in-show-business" went thumbs down. Red Fox, an old schoolmate of mine from St. Louis used to tell me some harrowing tales about the circuit. Had I know them, so could have George Burns, Jack Benny, Butter Beans & Susie, Moms Mabley, Sammy Davis Junior, et al.

Lately, I've been thinking in terms of "where do I go from here? Should I trot out some old routines and polish them up? Go for new stages—new audiences—rewrite the script for the 21st century—get new agents—what? More math, science, inventors, education—or go for new librettos, playbooks and scores. I'm also remembering that long ago the street performers of North Africa crossed the Mediterranean, these Moors becoming the "Jongleurs" of Italy—Predecessors to the "opera."

All of this extra-heavy mental effort was prompted by an over-long introduction to a recent luncheon speech I gave before a west side business group. I thought the guy never would shut up as he continued the litany -- "been there! done that! I began to sense the audience eyeing me warily -- "really? but what has he done lately? the Tualatin River is pretty high out there, perhaps he could just stroll across to put things in perspective."

Now, this kind of back lighting for one's stage usually results from an ignorance (real or pretended) of the fantastic accomplishments of black men and women in the arts and sciences, whether chained or unchained (partially). As a matter of course, I always begin my presentations with a distribution of patent office photostats of the key patents granted to African Ameri-

cans -- particularly the ones that have created trillions of dollars in wealth for 'others'. And, of course, add a little luster -- so many of these inventions have been important to our health and safety."

But, back to the substance of this article, what to do for an encore?

Reprise some good performances for a 21st century stage? Some plays/productions are desperately needed so many of our youth are dying in mean

streets because they don't know who they are; that they are our engineers, scientists, scholars and physicians -- and there are mean people who don't want them to know, and are determined that they shall not regain their identity.

I have contemplated a number of possible vehicles, keeping in mind that one must be motivated and inspired to learn -- to read, to count, to identify with success and the successful. Every nook and cranny of my office and den is a tangle of files and papers as I narrow the search and selection for experience-proven models. A choice of the right plays for the fright stage and for the right theatre -- where that minority youth can comfortably project himself as a protagonist, a competitor if you will.

I have a good feeling about several more is which could be launched this spring or fall. The current disasters besieging the Portland Education District would rather seem to dissuade one from a cooperative enterprise with those folks. And then, too, in the case of my "Mathematics/Communications/Computer" model which the district turned down 25 years ago after its national award success in The Dalles, Oregon -- why would one suppose that their vision has improved that much after reading some of their commentary on how the internet and World-Wide Web would be used.

I had moved beyond that level 30 years ago, using AT&T, Western Electric and IBM equipment but as in the case of the black inventors, "they" pretend not to know. However, this time, the Japanese and the Australians want to know and we may be able to provide a very successful play for acquainting our youth with their true identity.

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