

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

### perspectives

#### Children Language And Norma Loquendi

I'm so glad that so many readers were pleased with the honor accorded Alma Reeves Woods when the new city library in Watts, California was named for her. A number were quite surprised: "A librarian? Imagine that! They're about the most important but unappreciated people we come in contact with throughout our lives."

Other readers were amiss over the pronunciation of "Loquendi". You had it right. When you put the two together it just rolls off the tongue.

"Norma Lo-kwen-dee" (the 'common speech' of the people). Of course, we were advised not to get too "common". I referred to those who would "abandon phonetics" or formulate a "Black English" as "barbarians" and in no uncertain terms. I could have added the "see-Bob-run" school of illiteracy.

Today I meet young adults who 20 or 25 years ago were being educated as small children at the Black Education Center on NE 17th. I was occasionally availed as a resource person and can emphatically attest that there was no such nonsense taught at this very exceptional community school for the early grades. And today, the cultural and economic benefits of the phonetic, language-is-a-code curriculum are readily apparent even in a brief encounter after all these years.

Facility with language has not only enhanced their learning skills and acquisition of knowledge for the balance of their educational track—but, that same correct early childhood encounter with sister "Norma Loquendi" proves to have improved their economic situation beyond the average. We're talking acceptance and upward mobility here.

A few people (two) bristled at my use of the term "barbarians". There are times when I have said worse after seeing or reading of teenage victims of violence—kids who were never empowered with those linguistic and other cultural skills that would have "improved their economic situation" or facilitated entrance into better peer groups and job situations.

To those few such people I say, yes, I've read "Growth And Form" by the noted D'Arcy Thompson (who says that actually the old English forms "I be going" or "I be listening" are grammatically correct. In Scotland?). And that in another place (p.24) he quotes the colloquialisms of English country folk, "A good big 'un is better than a good little 'un". Whatever ratio and proportion is assessed (smiles). The fact is, we live here.

I believe, however that I have

made my point, and for the one African American teacher who though 'Black English' might be "a necessary way to go in some cases", I cite the following black organization whose membership is adamantly opposed; "The National Black Association for Speech, Language and Hearing". These speech specialists have performed yeoman efforts in developing language enhancing curriculum for minorities.

Contact Prof. Gloria Weddington, San Jose State Univ., CA.

Next week I will describe some important and experience-based structures for early-childhood (and later) enhancement of language skills.

In the interim I cite the following uncontroverted documentation of the African Origins of language structures and writing. As usual, there is some outcries of rage at the African attribution. Pierre Montet is the Dean of Modern Egyptologists, Univ. of Pennsylvania.

"Shashank I, Osorkon I, and Osorkon II also sent the kinds of Byblos of their day statues of themselves (a present which cost them comparatively little), and, in each case, the king had an alphabetical inscription in Phoenician engraved round the cartouches. The relations between the two countries were not of a purely economic nature, but extended also to political and military matters. The Pharaohs of the New Kingdom who sent their armies and messengers into Syria counted on the support of the kings of Byblos. Shashank I, for instance, was helped by the king of Byblos in his Palestinian campaign. Regular contact with the Egyptians brought more than one advantage to the people of Byblos. They learned the language and script of the Egyptians and were inspired by their example to create a form of writing of their own, which was still rather complicated in its initial stage but eventually emerged as the alphabet, the simple and perfect system of writing of their own, which was still rather complicated in its initial stage but eventually emerged as the alphabet, the simple and perfect system of writing which spread from the shores of Phoenicia to all other nations. Their art and all their products showed the effects of the Egyptian influence. Having accepted the association between Hathor and the Lady of Byblos, they felt obliged to portray the latter, on their own monuments, with the form and the attributes of the Egyptian goddess."

—p.110, 111 "Eternal Egypt", Pierre Montet.

And we keep it in mind that "Homer was the last of Greek tribal/auditory authors", e.g. Oral Tradition, "illiterate). Marshall McLuhan, author of "The Gutenberg Galaxy" and "The Medium Is the Message"

# EDITORIAL

As Reverend Jackson leaves today for his 10-day trip to Japan and Indonesia, it seems an appropriate time to discuss money, wages, and greed.

This coming week, Jackson will be meeting with high-level Mitsubishi officials in Japan, to continue discussions about sexual harassment and auto dealership inclusion. He will also meet with officials of Bridgestone/Firestone and the New Otani Hotel in Tokyo, in an attempt to resolve ongoing labor disputes.

Jackson will then journey to Indonesia, where he will try to visit a couple of offshore "sweatshops" sites—low-wage garment and sneaker

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

### Money Can't Buy You Love

er factories, producing for export to the American market.

JaxFax thought a few facts about worldwide wage rates might be of interest this week:\*The Senate, following months of delay instigated by the Republican leadership, finally

voted this week to raise the minimum wage in the U.S. by 90 cents an hour, up to \$5.15 per hour. Jax Fax would like to stress that this minimum wage increase, which we also wrote about on 5/23/96, is progressive, populist, and popular! By siding with the mass

of working people against the interests of a narrow economic elite, the Democrats were able to put Gingrich, Dole, Lott, and Arney completely on the defensive, seize the agenda, and win. Words to the wise... \*Not everyone worries about the minimum wage. According to our friend, Sam Pizzigati, editor of the new "Too Much" newsletter (call Share the Wealth at 617-423-2148 for more details), in 1995 CEO compensation at large corporations leaped 23%—to an average of \$4.37 million. That's \$2,100 an hour, or 183 times the average worker's 1995 hourly earnings of \$11.46—and 408 times the new minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour.

## Civil Right Journal

### Risky Business, An Environmental Justice Story

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

The picture of laughing children sliding down a hill is marred by the knowledge that the hill is composed of dirt contaminated by dioxin, pentachlorophenol and creosote compounds.

The children have climbed through one of the two holes in the fence which was put up to keep people out of this Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) clean-up site. Children being children and, in the process, endangering their health.

That's the story of one African American community in Pensacola, FL where not one, but two contaminated sites are located. Environmental racism, when the two companies which contaminated this community abandoned their plants. Environmental racism, when local government has turned its back on these residents. Environmental racism, when the EPA chose a precipitous course of action in its initial clean-up activities.

For nearly 40 years, the Escambia Treating Company operated its wood treating plant, taking few environ-

mental precautions. Wastes were placed in an unlined landfill, an unlined containment pond and unlabeled drums. By the 1980's, when the extent of the contamination became obvious, the company went bankrupt and abandoned the site. Nearly a thousand people live within one-quarter of a mile of this site, with five day care centers, one hospital and three public schools close-by. For nearly a decade the site went untreated while near-by residents increasingly became sick. Suddenly, in 1991 the EPA designated the site as an Emergency Removal Program and hired a contractor to excavate nearly 260,000 cubic yards of highly contaminated soil to create what residents call Mt. Dioxin, an enormous mountain of highly contaminated soil.

The excavation also created a huge hole with a 40-foot drop from the yards bordering it. Residents then found themselves even more exposed to the toxins.

Nearby is another toxic waste site where the Agrico Chemical Company was once located. This plant manufactured sulfuric acid at the turn of

the century and later produced agricultural chemicals. It closed in 1975, leaving behind many toxic wastes. Although placed on the EPA National Priorities List in 1989, it wasn't even enclosed by a fence until 1993.

Excavation of the surface contaminants began in 1995, despite the opposition of the community, which believed their health was so at risk that they wanted to be relocated rather than have this site cleaned-up.

In 1992, desperate to stop the digging at the Escambia site, the residents of this twice-contaminated community began to meet. The homeowners, tenants, former workers and other concerned people formed Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE).

A retired teacher who grew up in community next to the Excambia plant became the president. "We agreed as a group to stay together to make sure that justice was achieved," said Margaret Williams.

And stay together they have. When EPA issued a preliminary report earlier this year proposing that only 66 of the 358 households be relocated,

CATE declared that no one would move unless everyone could. The EPA has been holding meetings with local residents and plans to issue a final report with recommendations at the end of June.

This Pensacola community has the potential of becoming the largest environmental relocation ever—even larger than the infamous Love Canal in New York. Indeed, it is "probably more contaminated by a broad range of carcinogenic chemicals that threaten people living immediately next door to the site than any other contaminated site in the county," said Joel Hirschhorn, an expert on hazardous waste clean-up.

Many people of color in this nation feel that our lives are worth less to our country than those of European American background. But at the heart of the environmental justice movement is the belief that all people are of value and have a right to healthy, sustainable communities.

That's what the people of the Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE) in Pensacola, FL believe. That's what they are fighting for.

## Vantage Point

### "Beware The Wolf In Sheep's Clothing"

BY RON DANIELS

The Black church burnings issue seems to be evoking sympathy and support from some very strange places.

Even rightwing politicians, and ultra conservative religious organizations, most notable the Christian Coalition, are springing into action to identify with this issue. One is forced to wonder whether the interest of this strange array of would-be allies is sincere or whether there are some ulterior motives involved.

At the House Judiciary Committee hearing on the church burnings held in May, Chairman Henry Hyde, conservative Republican from Chicago, waxed eloquently about the

utter shame of houses of religion being touched. He called on all Americans to denounce these heinous deeds. It is interesting to note that Chairman Hyde invited the Christian Coalition and Southern Baptist convention to testify at the hearing while pointedly excluding representatives from the National Council of Churches, the Center for Democratic Renewal and the Center for Constitutional Rights, the organizations spearheading the effort to bring the church burnings issue to national attention. There was certainly the appearance that Chairman Hyde was using the hearing to provide legitimacy for right wing groups like the Christian Coalition.

Cong. John Conyers, the ranking

Democratic member from Detroit, heralded the unprecedented coming together of conservatives and liberals, Democrats and Republicans around the church burnings issue. Later in the hearing, however, Cong. Conyers pointedly alluded to those forces that now condemn the "dropping of the match" who fed the climate that led to the epidemic of church burnings." Cong. Maxine Waters, Democrat from Los Angeles, in her own inimitable way, came directly to the point. She suggested that "anyone can be against church burnings," but that some who were pledging to help the affected pastors and congregations are responsible for leading the assault against Black progress.

The remarks of Cong. Conyers and Waters were directly aimed at the Christian Coalition which over the last decade has emerged as one of the major pillars of the radical right in the U.S. and a key proponent of the Republican Contract on America.

A few weeks prior to the hearing, the Christian Coalition made a highly publicized announcement that the organization was putting up a \$25,000 reward for information leading to convictions in the burnings of Black churches.

In recent weeks the Christian Coalition has also pledged to raise \$1 million to help rebuild Black Churches. A number of civil rights, religious and political leaders are justifiably suspicious of the motives of the Christian Coalition.

The groups opposed to this measure cover a broad spectrum from the Oregon Farm Bureau to the Association of Oregon Counties.

For your information, enclosed is a packet of information about this ballot measure. If you have any questions about the measure or would like to discuss the measure with someone. Call me at (503) 224-5650. Sincerely, Julia Brim-Edwards

### "Don't Fence Oregon"—No on Measure 3

Last week's deadline for the filing of ballot initiatives resulted in a flurry of last minute filings.

With about two dozen initiatives filed with Secretary of State's office, the ballot is certain to be crowded this Fall. There is one proposed initiative that I would like to bring to your attention because of the extreme consequences it would have for the state of

Oregon.

Ballot Measure would result in the fencing in of almost every body of water in Oregon. Prohibiting livestock near virtually all bodies of water would have disastrous consequences for family farms and the Oregon dairy industry. The measure would result in unlimited lawsuits, more regulation, and an end to the cooperative efforts underway around the state to

improve watersheds.

This measure does not have the support of mainstream groups or the leaders of this state. In fact, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber has already said he does not support it. In an interview with the La Grande Observer, Governor Kitzhaber said, "I support clean streams. I don't support the initiative." He said the ballot initiative creates to solving Oregon's problems.

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## A Thanks From Fransiscan Enterprise

As the new Executive Director at Fransiscan Enterprise, I want to take this opportunity to thank the board, the staff, the volunteers, and all of our hundreds of donors for your incredible support throughout this last year.

Fransiscan has experienced tremendous growth and many changes in 1995 and 1996 as we struggle to continue to provide affordable housing for low income families in our community. Special thanks to Jerry Lindsay and Tom Del Salio for their continued support and assistance throughout the transition.

Fransiscan has several new

projects in progress, including some new construction. The most challenging and exciting project is the renovation of an entire block on NE Alberta Street. This project includes renovating the store fronts of the Texas Lounge, which are occupied by a CD store, and an old restaurant.

This project will add an additional 10-20 affordable housing units and include the renovations of the existing store fronts. We have been meeting with neighborhood residents and businesses, as well as funders and potential tenants to determine the best use and design for these buildings located in the heart of the Alberta Corridor. We will be moving our

offices to this site sometime in the fall this year.

Fransiscan Enterprise has received a \$50,000 challenge grant from the John Heinz Neighborhood Development Fund for the Alberta Street Project.

In order to receive the full \$50,000 we need to raise \$12,000 locally by August of this year. We are about a third of the way to our goal and need your help to get us all the way there! A donation of \$10, \$25, \$100, or

\$500 would be great. We are asking each of our supporters to send what they can afford so that we can receive the entire \$50,000 grant.

I am looking forward to working with you over the next year as we continue to "build community one porch at a time." Thanks again for your hard work and support, we could not do it without you!

Sincerely, Karen A. Voiss, Executive Director, Fransiscan Enterprise.

Letter To The Editor

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

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