

EDITORIAL

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

This week, from Wednesday afternoon (9/18) through Saturday noon (9/21), Operation PUSH will celebrate its 25th anniversary of service to humanity during the PUSH Annual Convention at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago.

If you can come--especially those of you who have long been involved in the struggle for social change--and particularly those of you who have worked side-by-side with Operation PUSH in the past--Rev. Jackson has asked JaxFax to issue a special request for you to come join him at this celebration.

This PUSH's "sterling" anniversary. That is no small accomplishment for a cutting-edge, social change organization. It is a time of pride in our past successes, joy in our present survival & growth (against all the odds), and anticipation of our shared future.

The theme of the convention this year is "Opening New Doors." This has been the focus of our common struggle since the early days of Oper-

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

Operation Push 25 Years Of Service

ation Breadbasket under the leadership of Dr. King, Rev. Jackson, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in the fight to open the doors to political and economic opportunity.

Operation Breadbasket led to the formation of Operation PUSH, on Christmas Day, 1971. PUSH led the way during the 1970s:

- *using economic boycotts to force corporate America to open its doors and franchises to the locked-out.

- *inspiring youth to engage in "family values" in our homes and schools, long before Dan Quayle ever met Murphy Brown--but also fighting (unlike the current "family values" crowd) for equal funding for rich and poor school districts, better salaries for teachers, and building schools instead of jails to educate our young.

- *registering the voters and building the movement infrastructure in Chicago that eventually resulted in Harold Washington's historic May-

oral victory in 1983.

That victory inspired the Southern Voter Crusade in the summer of 1983, when the people at the grassroots endorsed the idea of an African-American candidate for the Presidency, with their cries of "run, Jesse, run!" And in November, 1983, Jackson announced the first of his two history-making campaigns for President.

Jackson's 1983-84 effort led directly to the formation of the National Rainbow Coalition, which became the premier political strike force of the progressive political movement in America (and, in many ways, the world).

From the soup lines to the picket lines, from welfare to warfare, from Hamlet to Harlem to Havana to Johannesburg, from the courthouse to the statehouse to the White House, the National Rainbow Coalition was always there, struggling for the "moral center."

It all started for PUSH on Christmas Day, 1971--25 glorious and hard and beautiful and successful years ago.

perspectives

But who does it take to raise the village?

Good question! That thought immediately came to my mind last Thursday night during an exchange of viewpoints with other participants on the cable TV program, "Straight Talk".

This was an appropriate stage for voicing such a query since the program is a continuing presentation by a very active community youth organization of the same name.

Diverse but quite relevant opinions on the state of health of the education system and the impact on its student/parent clientele rotated around an equally diverse panel. The program host was David Carter, director of community affairs for 'Straight Talk' and he was joined by co-host, Samuel A. Johnson, and able replacement for Carter who is leaving soon for a similar position in Denver, Colorado.

Joining me as panelists were Dr. Jeffrey Niess, School District Psychologist for Camas/Washougal Washington, a nationally-recognized consultant and lecturer on school-child behavior and Ms Sasha Spencer, a black North Salem High School student. This young lady made quite an impression on all of us with her vigorous and intelligent presentation of the student's position in the education process.

Both moderators were quite adept in their roles and were able to advance the dialogue by a technique of occasionally interchanging their roles with those of a panelist. This was very effective in bringing out points that were perceived to need further development--especially in respect to a viewing audience that might benefit from a broader exploration of particular issues.

Now, for that opening question. The title of Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton's new book "It Takes a Village" has provoked considerable comment in black communities across the country--but not necessarily in the manner intended. "Coopted again" went the cries of indignation as millions of blacks (and many whites) immediately recognized the age-old African axiom; "it takes a whole village to raise a child."

I thought the program hosts and

panelists did quite well in structuring questions and comments that uniquely addressed this vital social concept. It is universally understood that the "village" approach is an essential element of the magnificent work of Marion Wright Edelman with inner-city children, "Children's Defense Fund." She calls upon us all and many respond.

Spencer, the young student was quite skilful in the structuring of her responses to far-ranging inquiries and consistently was able to emphasize that holistic "village" concept. I'm quite sure that she pleasantly surprised a number of the viewing audience with her vigorous support of a strong parental involvement with the educational process, and the identification of structure as an essential element of the maturation process (Really says something for her parents, doesn't it?).

Niess, our resident psychologist for the evening was, of course, kept busy fielding quite a number of questions relating to that busy and critical interface manned by his profession--an educational hot seat where students, parents, teacher, behavior, performance, hopes and personalities can converge to form a volatile mix. The exposition of the actual realities of his role were quite clear and we all gained insight here.

I spoke about my involvement with the schools and curriculum--over the years and at various grade levels. I was able to emphasize two points in particular, the necessity of innovating curriculum that is both interesting and that relates to real-time processing going on "out in the village"--that is, "the outside world" (I've brought in engineers, ranchers, bankers and carpenters).

In this first instance I gave account of my award-winning math and communication demonstrations in The Dalles, Oregon--emphasizing that this was 30 years ago and I was still trying to get school people to understand that they are just now "nibbling at the edges" of what I was doing with computers in 1966 in elementary school classrooms. I also got to make my point about more involvement of the "Community College;" everybody's not a four-year person!



By Professor McKinley Burt

Look, Were Doing A Good Job

BY RUTH MCFARLAND, METRO COUNCILOR AND VICE CHAIR OF REGIONAL FACILITIES COMMITTEE

This is a report to the citizens of the greater Portland Metropolitan Area. On August 14, 1996, the Metropolitan Exposition-Recreation Commission received the year-end financial report from all the facilities managed by MERC.

Chairman Gary Conkling said "this is the success story that the whole region should share in". The report was ignored by the media, and I share Chairman Conkling's sentiments. This spectacular success story should be shared with the public.

About 3 years ago, the Portland Center for the Performing Arts was in serious financial trouble. It had lost its funding with the loss of the Coliseum subsidy. The Civic Stadium was threatened with closure, and the Expo Center was showing a prof-

it at the expense of delayed maintenance and upkeep. The Oregon Convention Center was built with a designated subsidy from Hotel/Motel taxes and has been consistent in exceeding expectations at every turn.

The Portland Center for the Performing Arts was operating in the red at about 1.1 million a year. When Harriet Sherburne accepted the position of Manager of the PCPA she implemented the business plan for dealing with the red ink. It called for cutting costs and deleting programs that they could survive without, securing more Broadway business and mega hits, and analyzing the rental rates.

Sherburne reported to the Commission that instead of an operating deficit of \$1.1 million, the PCPA ended up with a net profit of almost \$600,000 1995-96. This success was achieved through the successful management strategies in the business

plan and a \$600,000 contribution from the Hotel/Motel tax and \$250,000 from Metro.

Sherburne introduced several members of the volunteer organization at the PCPA. She praised the volunteers for their help with 1027 events on stages public areas of the three facilities of the PCPA. The monetary value of all the volunteers for 1995-96 is approximately \$550,000.

The Oregon Convention Center showed a bottom line profit of \$1.9 million in the 1995-96 fiscal year. Under the continued superb management of Jeff Blosser, OCC enhanced revenues and cut costs. They received \$4.3 million in Hotel/Motel tax and operated at 74% capacity, considered full because of holidays, load-in and load-out. The Convention Center was managed in conjunction with Expo, giving increased consumer business to Expo and leav-

ing more room for convention space at the Convention Center.

The Convention Center still needs more room for conventions and larger shows. It is a victim of its' own success and a feasibility study has been completed and expansion is under discussion.

The remarkable management of the Regional Facilities by the MERC team under manager Patrick LaCrosse is a success story that residents of the whole region and the whole state can share. The frugal husbanding of public funds and the spectacularly successful management of public facilities is a story too often lost in the bad news.

As former chair of the Metro Council Regional Facilities Committee and present Vice-Chair, I have watched this process from its' inception three years ago, and I thought you would want to know just how successful it has been.

Civil Rights Journal: Welfare, Work And Wages

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

It is ironic that in 1996; the year designated by the United Nations as the International year for the Eradication of Poverty, the United States Congress and the President of the United States chose to end our nation's 60-year commitment to be the last resort provider of food and shelter for the poor.

It is ironic that we Americans have chosen to make more children poorer, sicker and less well fed as the rest of the world re-committed itself to ending poverty.

The welfare "reform" bill passed by Congress and signed by President Clinton is troubling for several reasons. First, welfare will be turned over to the states as block grants, with only a small contingency fund for times when states experience high joblessness. Medical will also be converted to a block grant, ending guaranteed coverage for children and cutting \$72 billion in medical funding over six

years. Secondly, food programs such as food stamps and child nutrition programs have been cut by \$26 billion over six years. States will be able to choose a food stamp block grant in place of the current program.

Thirdly, some 300,000 disabled children will no longer receive Supplemental Social Security and some \$8 billion in children's SSI benefits will be cut over six years. Clearly, there will be more poor children in this nation and they will be hungrier and sicker than before.

But while most Americans agree that there needs to be massive changes in the welfare system and that generations of families should not be on welfare, many have not realized the connection between welfare and the problem of jobs in this nation. The lack of jobs, the location of jobs and the lack of education and training for jobs are the real problems which we must address.

In a recent article in the Sunday New York Times Magazine, econo-

mist William Julius Wilson points out that one of the very real problems about work in our nation's inner cities is that the unskilled or semi-skilled jobs once available in inner city communities have either moved out or have disappeared altogether. Left in their place are abandoned factories and warehouses, which often have become toxic waste dumps or rubble-strewn lots. Many of the unemployed workers left behind have no transportation to the jobs now found in the suburbs and no training for the information age jobs now hiring. For many, fast food jobs offering minimum wage and no benefits including health care, are the only nearby job options. A family cannot live on \$4.75 an hour and no medical insurance or child care.

Yet, the welfare reform bill does not address the need for job training for the vast majority of welfare recipients. It does not address the fact that many of these potential workers need intensive training in the most basic of work skills, which most of us take for grant-

ed -- how to do a resume, how to conduct yourself at an interview, how to dress, how to manage your time and budget. It does not address the fact that many of the unemployed are illiterate or only marginally literate in a world of work which requires not only reading literacy but computer literacy as well.

Moreover, the welfare reform bills and our broader economic policies do not seem to be looking at the larger problems of the decreasing number of jobs in our economy. We have lost 5 million factory jobs in the past 15 years and at least one economist predicts the end of the blue collar job as we know it by the year 2020. Some 750,000 secretarial jobs have been eliminated from the economy, never to return. These jobs losses have enormous impact on the unemployed poor.

Nearly a generation ago Congressman Gus Hawkins and Senator Hubert Humphrey introduced a bill calling for a Full Employment Economy in this nation. If we had passed that bill then, perhaps we would not be in this predicament now.

N/NE neighborhood kids need help

Children in inner N/NE neighborhoods are reaching out to the adults in the community. Many boys ages 7-12 are waiting for an adult to offer some friendship, fun times and guidance to help them grow up today.

I am a Big Sister and I can tell you it has been the most regarding and important thing I ever decided to do. I met my little sister Robin in 1987 when she was about 10 years old. Like many kids waiting for a big brother or sister, Robin lived in a single parent home and was in need of an extra support person from the community. Robin saw an ad for Big Brothers/Big Sisters and begged her mom to "get her one". She waited over a year before she was matched

with me...there simply weren't enough adults volunteering. That first phone call was the only time I ever felt like I was volunteering. We formed a friendship and I sometimes offered my guidance and ear when she wanted to talk things out. But most of the times, we just hung out and did fun things. It is easy to just be there and care...and that is what kids need most. We got together once a week for three or four hours and had picnics, went to movies, carved pumpkins for Halloween, went bike riding and lots of other simple things. Today Robin is 18 and on her own in Florida. We still visit each year and talk on the phone a lot.

I am now the Program Coordinator for the Big Brother/Big Sister Program at the Urban League. I saw

firsthand what good it can do to have a big sister and how much fun it is to be one, so now I want to provide these boys and girls with a way to broaden their life experiences. There are about 50 boys and 10 girls from African American homes in N/NE Portland who have requested an African American big brother/sister and who have been waiting as long as a year.

Please think about volunteering three hours a week to spend with a

young person in our community. (Volunteers need to be at least 18 years old, pass a criminal check and thorough interviewing process including a home visit and attend several trainings). For information, please call (503) 280-2657.

Together we can improve the lives of children, one child at a time.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lisa Wilson, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Urban League of Portland Program.

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