

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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Mark Washington  
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Phil Carpenter  
Production & Graphic Design

### Contributing Writers:

Professor McKinley Burt, Lee Perlman,  
Neal Heilpern, Eugene Rashad

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,  
Portland, Oregon 97211  
503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015  
Email: Pdxobserv@aol.com

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## Article retraction

To The Editor:

Mr. Washington, We appreciate very much the article written by Lee Perlman on the April 16, 1997 issue of the Portland Observer, regarding the efforts made by the Mallory Avenue Blockwatch and the Portland Police Bureau in resolving the Drug House on Northeast Mallory Avenue. We know that the Observer makes tremendous effort in reporting the facts accurately and we wish to note the following corrections to that article:

Mrs. Young's son's names are Bruce and Nathaniel (not Edwin as reported).

We have seen and have been told that Cocaine was sold from the premises (Not Heroin as reported.)

The Kent's friend' Kenneth Edwards from the G-Street Old Timers raised the funds for new locks for Mrs. Young. (Although we know of and respect Ray Leary we did not say he was a personal friend (as reported)-(he may be a part of the G-Street group we are not certain.)

Finally, it is very important to note that we are only the organizers of a wonderful group of diverse neighbors who care enough about our community and their neighborhood to be involved in an active Blockwatch. Kenneth Edwards taught us how to form an effective Blockwatch and the Portland Police Bureau, in particular, Officer Marcia Barbour enabled us to be an effective part of law enforcement's on-going efforts to eradicate Drug Houses from our precious communities. This definitely was a cooperative effort! Although we appreciate very much the Observer's reporting of this crucial community issue- we insist that your readers understand that it is the cooperative effort of neighbors, law enforcement, neighborhood associations, the mayor's office, the city attorney and the judges that enables our continued success in making our communities safe and livable. Thank you for your courageous effort on reporting about issues that really matter to the average citizen and reader.

God's Blessings,

James and Elizabeth Kent and Family

**H**eter Edelman resigned last fall from his position as Asst. Secretary for Planning & Evaluation at the Dept. of Health & Human Services, due to his opposition to the welfare bill.

Last month, he wrote an in-depth article for the Atlantic Monthly, entitled "The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done," in which he explained what was so wrong with this welfare repeal.

We think excerpts from it are worth sharing:

"...The bill that President Clinton signed is not welfare reform. It does not promote work effectively, and it will hurt millions of poor children by the time it is fully implemented.

"What's more, it bars hundreds of thousands of legal immigrants-including many who have worked in the U.S. for decades and paid a considerable amount of Social Security and income taxes-from receiving disability and old-age assistance and food stamps, and reduces food stamp assistance for millions of children in working families."

This [the Republican proposal] was a truly radical proposal. For 60

## RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

### The Worst

years Aid to Families with Dependent Children had been premised on the idea of entitlement. 'Entitlement' has become a dirty word, but it is actually a term of art. It meant two things in the AFDC program:

- a federally defined guarantee of assistance to families with children who met the statutory definition of need...

- a federal guarantee to the states of a matching share of the money needed to help everyone in the state who qualified for help...

"The block grants will end the entitlement in both respects, and in addition the time limits say that federally supported help will end even if a family has done everything that was asked of it and even if it still needs."

"This time the Hill Republicans

wanted the President to sign it. The game was over. Now no one could ever say again with any credibility that this President is an old liberal."

"How bad, then, is it? Very bad. The story has never been fully told, because so many of those who would have shouted their opposition from the rooftops if a GOP President had done this were boxed in by their desire to see the President re-elected." [note: To some extent, this would include us, though we did picket the White House the very next day...]

"The same de facto conspiracy of silence has enveloped the issue of whether the bill can be easily fixed. The President got a free ride through the elections on that point because no one on his side...wanted to call

him on it."

"Why is the new law so bad? To begin with, it turned out that after all the noise and heat over the past two years about balancing the budget, the only deep multi-year budget cuts actually enacted were those in this bill, affecting low-income people."

"The magnitude of the impact is stunning. Its dimensions were estimated by the Urban Institute...To ensure credibility for the study, its authors made optimistic assumptions; two thirds of long-term recipients would find jobs, and all states would maintain their current levels of financial support for the benefit structure. Nonetheless, the study showed, the bill would move 2.6 million people, including 1.1 million children, into poverty."

"The new study showed that a total of 11 million families-10% of all American families-would lose income under this bill. This included more than 8 million families with children, many of them working families affected by the food-stamp cuts, which would lose an average of about \$1,300 per family."

## p e r s p e c t i v e s

### Business Information You Can Trust, Part II

**T**hey tell you to, "Please stay on the line... Your call is important to us."

You certainly hope that is the case, for someone is sorely testing your patience; but when you receive the requested information, will it be reliable, experience-based?

As promised, this week I will describe the second of those "excellent business guides based upon the 'real world', and available at your downtown public library." Today's revelation is, "Thomas' Register of Manufacturers." What we have here in this most comprehensive listing of American manufacturers available is the purchasing manager's dream publication; who makes what and where -- what it does, how does it do it, and how well.

But it also is an indispensable guide to any entrepreneur who is making, servicing, repairing, delivering, mining or growing any type of product, device or material imaginable; whether a one-person shop, a limited partnership, an IPO Operation or Intel or General Motors. The need and the utility is there in all cases, though not always recog-

nized. Your product may be dolls, bunk beds, pickles or Web Sites.

I introduced this classic source of commercial data to my urban economics class at Portland State University. An assignment for the semester was for self-selected groups of students to examine 'Thomas' Register', then develop a business plan for a commercial venture that would use a mix of tools, equipment and materials offered by the vendors advertising in the register.

As I had learned through years of experience, this operation proved to constitute a business course in itself and rather than a mere academic exercise, it opened the minds of the students to new parameters for the projected enterprise. True to form, several other University departments adopted an innovation of mine (I was siphoning off an awful lot of their students for my classes, even though their faculties included professors with degrees from the business schools of Harvard, Wharton, UCLA and Stanford).

A study of the wares offered in 'Thomas Register' soon reveals that contrary to the belief of most lay persons, few if any manufactures make or fabricate 'all' of the components of their products. Whereas it is commonly understood that automakers do not make the windshields, tires, ash trays, sparkplugs or clocks for their vehicles, few realize that it is much the same for most companies, large or small. This not

only applies to the nuts, bolts, screws and fasteners, but to the 'wheels' for any vehicle. Production space, capital and craft expertise is not tied up in these type of operations.

Startled students find that there are a thousand specialty "wheel" manufacturers supplying the makers of baby carriages, tractors, lawnmowers, scooters, pulleys, shopping carts, dune buggies, you-name-it! The same structure holds true with the makers of handles and knobs serving practically all of industry with their specialties for furniture, cabinets and devices of all

kinds -- wherever something must be opened, closed or turned. And of course the same relationship technology exists for the electrical industry where each day more machines are electronically controlled or monitored -- from household appliances to construction machinery and from medical devices to agricultural (You don't make the bulbs for your brand of flash lights).

Very soon the students realize that it is possible to greatly expand their ambitions and the scope of their business projection. They will not need nearly so much money and space as first thought because so many components and materials may be bought "off the shelf." Initially that "large" facility may be downscaled to a couple of store fronts, or a storefront to your garage, or your garage down to your basement. I've seen all this happen in my years of accounting practice.

This technique will work equally well today with so many laid-off workers becoming entrepreneurs. But note, industry has always been good at this 'outsourcing -- that's how it expanded so rapidly. "Information You Can Trust!"



BY  
PROFESSOR  
MCKINLEY  
BURT

## The Black Male Vote

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE

**I**n the aftermath of the 1995 "Million Man March," many African-Americans felt a renewed commitment to become active in civic and political affairs.

There is striking evidence from last November's presidential election that this new attitude has directly contributed to much higher voting rates.

In November, 1996, the number of black men who voted was about 4.8 million. This was a 1.7 million increase over the number who had voted in 1992, an increase of 55 percent in four years.

This massive increase in black male voting power was even more remarkable when considered against the voting patterns of everyone else. In 1996, less than one-half of all registered Americans actually voted, the lowest percentage of the electorate since 1924. The percentage of both African-American women and white males who went to the polls respectively declined by 8 percent. For white women, the drop in voter participation was 14 percent from 1992 figures, or about seven million fewer voters.

President Clinton won 84 percent of the African-American vote, a substantial part of his margin of victory over Republican challenger Robert

Dole. Even more influential was the impact of the black male vote in key Congressional races. In New Jersey, for example, Democrat Robert Torricelli was locked in a bitter contest with Republican Dick Zimmer for a U.S. Senate seat. In the election, Zimmer won 54 percent of New Jersey's white voters. But Torricelli won 85 percent of the African-American vote, and won the election by an overall margin of 53

percent to 47 percent. Observers noted with amazement that New Jersey's black turnout of registered voters had almost doubled compared to 1993 election figures. Most of this growth in the black electorate came from black men.

The greatest factor undermining the full power of the black male vote is the criminal justice system. According to a study released by the Sentencing Project, a nonprofit organization, of a total voting age population of 10.4 million African-American men in this country, nearly 1.5 million have had the right to vote taken away from them due to a

felony conviction. In short, about 14 percent of all black men are unable to vote, either because they are in prison or because they have been convicted of a felony.

According to the study, felons are barred from voting while in prison in 46 states. Thirty-one states also disenfranchise convicted felons while they are on parole or probation. And there are thirteen states, mostly in the South and the West,

**"The greatest factor undermining the full power of the black male vote is the criminal justice system."**

that permanently prohibit former felons from voting.

African-Americans currently comprise 51 percent of the 1.1 million Americans incarcerated in Federal and state prisons.

About one-third of all young black males in their twenties are, at any given time, either in prison or jail, on probation, parole, or awaiting trial.

The criminal justice system is the chief means of warehousing unemployed, undereducated and poor black men.

Denied economic opportunity, African-American men are disproport-

tionately locked up by a penal system which is designed to ensure that their full voting power is reduced and, for many, completely eliminated.

As David Bositis, a researcher at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, explained to the New York Times: "You have a prison system where black men are back in servitude, along with an economy where blacks are in the low-paying jobs." So, to many black Americans, "the system is basically rigged to diminish their political power and recreate the plantation system with prisons."

Civil rights organizations like the NAACP need to consider initiating campaigns to change election laws, permitting people who have served time in prison for felonies to be restored their full voting rights.

To be denied the right to vote is to become a non-citizen in one's native land. And for African-American men who still enjoy the freedom to vote, we must continue to do so in ever-increasing numbers. Voting by itself won't solve all our problems, but it is an indispensable tool in the struggle for black freedom.

(Dr. Manning Marable is Professor of History and the Director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, Columbia University, New York City.)



## Letter To The Editor

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