

# When Is Enough Not Enough?

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

The readers of this column are quite aware by now how events at home or abroad impact upon the economic and social condition of urban blacks--local, regional, national, and, how, international. If submarine warfare World War I had not cut off European immigration in 1914, Blacks would have soon been displaced to reservations right along with the Indians (has our vast drug-besieged and incarcerated underclass fared any better?).

It has made equally obvious that it is education and workplace that comprise the urban stage for scenarios that can match any Shakespearean tragedy.

But it is all the fault of that middle class which Black essayist Shelby Steele says should get rid of its victim-focused Black identity ... our real problem is lack of ability to take responsibility and seize opportunities? And, is that what Darin Scott meant when he told a standing-room only audience at the University of Southern California.

"We (Blacks) are the first group in modern history to see those who follow behind us have fewer opportunities and rockier road to travel than we did?" I wonder about the validity of these statements when I look back through my files which are 35 years compendium of activism and observation.

Beginning with my ten-year sojourn in Los Angeles (1954-1964), I find that, supported by an equally committed peer group, there was an intensive involvement in every aspect of a history-making upwardly mobile

decade. These were precedent-shattering times and there were breakthroughs on major fronts: Employment opportunity, housing and school desegregation and public access. All of us were heavily involved in the NAACP, Urban League and Black Press, and given our professional careers. It was also about how to utilize a 70 hour week effectively.

If there was any consensus among us at all, it was that the rest of the tribe would move right in behind us, climbing the rounds of the ladders we built; it had always worked that way before, hadn't it? Certainly, in Portland immediately after World War II this was the case.

The marching, picketing, striking, pushing and screaming of the new immigrant Black population carried the city past the period when there were no Black retail clerks, banktellers, busdrivers, long shoremans, supervisors in industry or a public agency, and only a handful of teachers or postal workers.

The opportunities for minorities burgeoned to a point.

But, today, in the last decade of the 20th century, Blacks rail at whites; the establishment, and the world in general.

"We are still far behind in jobs and promotions--and enrollment in higher education has dropped precipitously since 1980. And on top of this we exclaim, we have developed a huge body of individuals euphemistically described as the underclass or disadvantaged.

Now, think about it, aren't these the very same people who would move right in behind us, climbing the rungs of the ladders we built?"

Wha' happen? Is Shelby Steele right about a "lack of ability to take responsibility and seize opportunities?"

I could run through a vast litany of "what happened" type recitations. That Black - upwardly-mobile middle class moved to suburbia taking with it the economic and political skills necessary to maintain an urban infrastructure of viable housing and school systems, or even retail stores and shops. The neighborhoods of the rung climbers rapidly degenerated and the absentee landlords and developers moved in, utilizing every device from Urban Renewal (Removal) and eminent domain to more sophisticated forms of gentrification.

Today, we look at television programs like "Tony Brown's Journal" and we see groups of the black middle class managers and executives lamenting their difficulties and alienation.

We have titles but we are on staff, not in line positions. We have no path to the top, and in these days of reorganizations and frequent buy outs we are more insecure than ever.

We try to spin out and set up businesses but the banks have no money for us (nevermind the loudly heralded franchise purchases in sports --also 80% of those auto franchises failed). These television programs are a sad sight indeed, so many brains, so many degrees, so many silk suits, so many Mercedes in the parking lot and so much estrangement from reality. Did we do this to our children and ourselves?

# Summit For America's Future

Oprah Winfrey, producer, philanthropist, businesswoman and child advocate, has been selected to participate in the Presidents' Summit for America's Future, as announced by General Colin Powell. The Summit will be held April 17-29 Philadelphia.

Ms. Winfrey joins Co-Chairs President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush in issuing the Summit's call to service for children.

General Colin Powell, the former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff serves as the Summit's General Chairman.

Former Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Henry Cisneros, serves as the Summit's Vice Chairman, as does Lynda B. Robb, Daughter of former President Lyndon Johnson and National Chairperson for Reading is Fundamental.

Commenting on Ms. Winfrey's involvement, General Powell said: "I am delighted that Oprah will be joining our Summit team. I, and the other Summit leaders, have the highest regard for her and the efforts she has made on behalf of America's children throughout her career. Having Oprah on board will be invaluable to us in helping to focus the attention of the American people on the Summit, and on "America's Promise--The Alliance for Youth--the national campaign that will follow."

Ms. Winfrey said, "I'm so pleased to have been selected to participate in the Presidents' Summit. It has been my number one goal to make the world a safer place for our children. I believe no idea is too big and no task is too great to save and serve a child."

Ms. Winfrey's commitment to empowering children is reflected

through her charitable and philanthropic contributions.

In 1995, Ms. Winfrey devoted herself and her nationally syndicated talk show to tackling the most critical issues facing children in a year-long series titled, "Oprah's Child Alert."

This special series examined gun violence, poverty, domestic violence and abuse of children. The goal of

the series was to empower viewers with information and solutions to improve the lives of children.

In 1991, Ms. Winfrey initiated "The National Child Protection Act" and testified before the United States Judiciary Committee to establish a national database of all convicted child abusers. On December 20, 1993, President Clinton signed the national "Oprah Bill" into law.

## MEGABUCKS DOUGH WINNERS

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## AT&T wireless services replaces missing mannequins

AT&T has purchased new mannequins to replace those which were swiped from the Southeast Portland location billboard promoting "The AT&T Giants of the Gobi" exhibit at OMSI. Ty and Tera Tops, brother and sister of the missing mannequins, have volunteered to pose on

the billboard after hopes of finding Rex and Cera were extinguished.

AT&T Wireless Services filed a missing mannequin report with local authorities and has had several leads come over AT&T's Missing Mannequin Hotline, but none of them have panned out. AT&T would like

to thank everyone who called in with information. While the case is officially closed, the Hotline will remain open another week. Anyone with information can call the Hotline at (503) 306-6002.

The 3D billboard, located on the east side of the Hawthorne Bridge,

features an advertisement paid for by AT&T that uses mannequins of children to create awareness and emphasize the mammoth proportion of "The AT&T Giants of the Gobi" exhibit was essential in bringing this exhibit, which is one of OMSI's key recovery strategies, to the Northwest.

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