

EDITORIAL

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This Way for Black Empowerment

By Dr. Lenora Fulani

Malcolm X: People's Philosopher

There is much talk in liberal circles nowadays about the need for a new public philosophy, the need to reshape how we, as Americans, talk about, think about and enact social policy. I agree with the concern expressed by many of these liberal intellectuals. The problem is that they have nothing to recommend.

Often these conversations -- on talk shows or in magazine "think" pieces -- focus on how liberalism abandoned its vision of humanism, stopped addressing moral issues and left a vacuum into which the right wing has moved. This is, of course, true. But the liberals have been making this pint for close to 20 years. They want to lament the lack of a progressive vision. But they don't seem to want to do anything about it. They view a new public philosophy as something waiting to be discovered, rather than something that must be created.

I reflect on this state of affairs as we get ready to mark what would have been Malcolm X's 72nd birthday on May 19. Some of Malcolm's most brilliant and cutting remarks come to my mind. "You put the Democrats first, but the Democrats put you last." True enough in 1964, when he said it. But shockingly accurate as a predication of where we, as Black people, have come to more than 30 years later. This appears nowhere in the liberals' con-

temporary analysis of the decline of progressivism and humanism.

That remark about the Democratic Party's disregard for Black interests was part of his brilliant and famous speech "the Ballot or the Bullet," in which he described how the choices for Black America had come down to effective electoral political power or violence. Today, we have virtually no political power. And we have uncondoned violence. The "bullet" did not turn out to be part of an armed political revolution, but rather the violent destruction that Black people -- in desperation and deprivation -- often inflict upon one another. The powerlessness of Black America is also unmentioned in the liberals' call for a new public philosophy.

I believe that America needs a public philosophy that not only takes into account the state of Black America, but which is co-created by Black America, together with the millions of white Americans who have come to believe that they have been putting the two parties and the government first, but the two parties and the government now put them last.

If there is to be a new public philosophy, Black and white America will build it in the context of building a new political party and new political culture that promotes democracy and development for all.

RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

Deja Vu All Over Again

Paratrooper Bush must have been laughing to himself, as 1,000 media "points of light" lit up the City of Brotherly love. As current and former presidents painted over graffiti - what are these guys running for, mayor? - it was, in Yogi Berra's immortal words, deja vu all over again.

There is nothing wrong with volunteerism - it is essential to a healthy, democratic society. But it is as clear as day to us that it is a supplement - not a substitute - for public programs, for government assistance and funding, for the enforcement of civil rights laws, for the reconstruction of urban America.

George Bush proposed 1,000 points of light because he didn't want to pay for concentrated government action against poverty, racism, and urban decline. Powell and Clinton should have know better.

After all, did General Powell win the Gulf War with unpaid, untrained, part-time volunteers? And didn't president Clinton just dedicate FDR's memorial, the man who invented WPA, CCC, SSI, and the New Deal? (Isn't politics great? Clinton gets to praise FDR, after dynamiting the social safety net Roosevelt created...)

It's time for the 2nd Clinton Administration to turn the lights back on in the White House. Let's consider one example, civil rights:

*there is more focus on balancing the budget than on balancing opportunity;

*for the first time since Eisenhower, no civil rights liaison sits in the White House inner circle;

*there is currently no Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights;

*the EEOC is looking at a backlog of 100,000 cases;

*the Office of Contract Compliance is frozen in place;

*and with Prop. 209, Pete Wilson has launched what is essentially a states' rights challenge to the Federal government, with no serious response from the Clinton/Gore Administration. Wilson's challenge has gone largely unanswered by the Feds.

Dr. King did not give his life marching for unstaffed, unenforced, unfunded mandates. He did not win the Nobel Peace Prize fighting on behalf of volunteerism, critical as it was to the success of his own movement. He kept his eyes on the prize.

He fought for civil rights. He demanded new public laws, with tough enforcement. He demanded real funding, to equalize centuries of segregation and slavery. He demanded new Federal programs and agencies, with staff and support adequate to the task of promoting equal opportunity.

He demanded a one big tent America, with equal opportunity and equal access for all. With all the sleepwalking at the White House these days, they've forgotten his dream.

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

Wrapping it up, if that's possible

BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

I don't know why I should find it difficult to wind up our recent excursion into 'new' entrepreneurial territory (Business Information You Can Trust," four parts). But, then, I've always had that 'could-have-done-more' feeling about all my projects, no matter how successful.

In the case at hand, I've been dealing with a tried and true Commercial data base, and the mode of interpretation for either the new or veteran business person has equally well proven to be effective in either my university teaching experience or in on-the-job corporate mentoring. What is new, of course, is my structuring of these stand-alone federal and state data bases into an integrated format that enables the entrepreneur to gain fresh insights.

The commentary of Portland Observer readers indicates that this approach does indeed work very well; this placing of possibly unconnected business, occupations, machines, materials, services and commercial organizations, machines, materials, services and commercial organizations into new and revealing relationships.

And as a reader remarks, "I see 'for-profit' possibilities of all kinds in other than those 'commercial organizations'. They all have certain standard and basic needs." (Gale's Encyclopedia of Associations).

And, by the same token, another reader says he used the Gale's manual in the same manner that I did in setting up Union Avenue Finance Company for the used car dealers. "I hear what you're saying. If it worked back then, it will work now, because nothing has changed about how people come together to advance a common interest. I contacted a commercial organization formed by firms engaged in my area of interest—but where there were not how-to books' or college courses."

The reader went on to detail that just as I had done a number of years ago, he obtained all the tools-of-the-trade, as if it were; accounting, office and tax forms specific to the particular enterprise.

And then description of support materials and functions relating to

marketing, advertising, personnel, training, continuing education, equipment, materials shipping, etc.—even invitations to visit, to get hands-on orientation. Nothing changes but the name of the game.

I think it obvious here that good communication skills are an invaluable help once you've learned 'where-its-at'.

I always impressed this in my students as a key skill, without which all else may fall apart—no matter how gifted and capable one might be in other areas. Work at it!

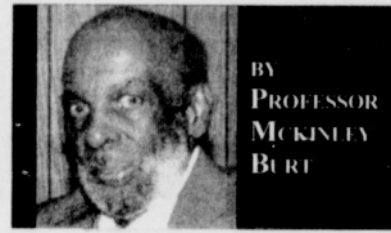
Another reader says "I like your approach—where you craft a real-time curriculum out of the realities of the world around us; somehow it's academic and experience-based at the same time, and it works." Well, thank you dear, kind reader, I try.

And another thing, your public library is a gold mine. I've gotten so much there and have worked for major corporate owners who got all academics there.

I would not close this business series without emphasizing that even when I recite my experiences in large corporate enterprises, part of me is remembering earlier experiences at much smaller enterprise—and the many times of doing my own thing in the world of commerce, car wash, laundromats, short-haul, real estate, public accountant, advertising specialties, you name it.

My point being, there is a lot to be found out about small business while working for big business, they contract and otherwise interface with the smaller enterprises—right down to the one-person shop. Obviously, by the same token, that individual (or small partnership) entrepreneur enjoys a similar learning experience suitable for growth and expansion if so desired. School is going on all around you everyday and in every way. Don't drop out.

Well, that wraps it up, for this time only.



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

Justice Denied: Police Brutality And Us

Civil Rights Journal
By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

In New York City two Hispanic men are killed when they are shot from behind 28 times and another Hispanic man is choked to death after his football hits a police car. In Pittsburgh an African American businessman is choked to death after being stopped for a traffic violation. A St. Petersburg FL African American motorist is shot to death also after a traffic stop. A New Haven CT African American man suffers the same fate. In each case the killing occurred while the men were in police custody or in the course of a police actions.

These are just a few of the stories which were heard at the National Emergency Conference on Police Brutality held in New York City recently. Sponsored by the Center for Constitutional Rights, this conference brought together people who had experienced police brutality from across the nation, including Kentucky, Georgia, Ohio, Florida, New York, and New Jersey.

Indeed, criminal justice is the issue which seems to show the greatest racial divide in this nation. Most people of color would characterize the system as the criminal injustice system and most European Americans would not. A New York Times columnist recently wrote how, in the course of writing a book, he has asked African American men across the nation whether they have ever been hassled by police. Most of them can tell a story of being stopped in a store or in their car while driving in a white neighborhood. Some may have been questioned simply because they were at a phone booth or in a mall. It doesn't matter whether they are well-dressed or what their occupation. Even off-duty or plain clothes police officers have been stopped, or occasionally even shot while on duty. Few European American men have had this

experience.

Not only are hundreds, perhaps thousands of people of color victims of police brutality every year, but they seldom find justice in the courts. Take the case of Johnny Gammage, an African American businessman and the cousin of Pittsburgh Steelers player Ray Seals. Mr. Gammage was choked to death after a routine traffic stop outside Pittsburgh in 1995. Last month the judge in the case dismissed charges against the police officers accused in his killing, saying that prosecutors unfairly singled them out.

Or take the case of Anthony Baez, the young New Yorker who was choked by police after his football hit a patrol car. The officer accused in his murder was acquitted of all charges in a non-jury trial.

It is important to note that while police brutality disproportionately impacts communities of color that the number of European American victims is growing. A recent Montel Williams show focused on white victims, for instance. And it is also important to note that while most of the police officers are European American, there are officers of color who occasionally have been found to be violent.

Finally it should be noted that brutality is not just found in police officers. It is also present in corrections officers, immigration officers and others in the criminal justice system. And its victims are also women, often those who are incarcerated.

What are the reasons for the increase in police brutality cases and what can we do about it?

Next week I will turn to those issues.