

# EDITORIAL

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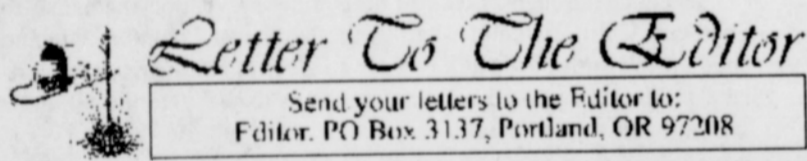
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## Multiracial children & society

A Georgia 12-year-old who doesn't want to choose between his parents when telling people what race he is, appealed to Congress last week for a new "multiracial" category on government forms.

"My mom is white and my dad is black, and most forms ask me to choose between those races. I feel very sad, because I can't choose - I am both," Ryan Graham told the House Government Oversight management subcommittee.

"The reality is that not all Americans fit neatly into one little box," Susan Graham, Ryan's mother, told the subcommittee. "The reality is that multiracial children who wish to embrace all of their heritage should be allowed to do so."

But his request drew opposition from organizations representing blacks and Hispanics, both concerned that creating such a category will hinder efforts to combat discrimination.

The Office of Management and Budget is expected to rule sometime this summer on whether to add a multiracial category to federal forms, including Census 2000. Currently Americans can choose one of four classifications: American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian and Pacific Islander, black or white.

The number of children in mixed-race families jumped from fewer than 500,000 to 2 million between 1970 and 1990, prompting the proposal for the new listing.

Seven states now recognize a multiracial designation: Ohio, Illinois, Georgia, Michigan, Indiana, Florida and North Carolina.

But while Harold McDougall of the NAACP said he supports people's rights to determine their own racial

identification, Census and other federal forms may not be the place for that.

He noted that Census statistics are used to help enforce laws against discrimination in employment, lending, housing and schools and that effort may be affected by people switching from one racial category to multiracial.

"It's what you look like, now what you say you are, that determines whether you meet racial discrimination in this county," McDougall observed.

Eric Rodriguez of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic group, also opposed adding the new category.

The multiracial category "is neither a racial nor a protected class under the law: therefore the collection of such data may not serve any statutory purpose," he told the subcommittee.

And, he added, the category is likely to attract many confused people who are not sure of the meanings of race and ethnicity.

Ramona E. Douglass of the Association of Multiethnic Americans told the panel: "We are no longer willing to remain proverbial square pegs shoved into the consistently round holes of America's racial classification system."

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, D-NY, voiced the concerns of the committee in hearing from the two sides: "The pain caused by forcing the children of an interracial couple to choose between the mother's race and the father's race is very real. So is the pain caused by discrimination. A solution that eases one pain, while making the other worse in no solution at all."

"The evil cruel times will go, never to come again.

A free gallant Congo will arise from the black soil.

A free and gallant Congo..."

These lines are from a poem written by Patrice Lumumba, the passionate nationalist and Congolese patriot who was elected to serve as the Congo's first prime minister after that country's independence from Belgium in 1960.

The poem was written in September 1959, when the Belgian Congo, as the colony was called, was seized by a wave of political organizing that mobilized an entire people to demand "immediate independence." Independence came, on June 30, 1960. But the bankers and mining companies dependent on the Congo's mineral wealth were not willing to take their chances with the nationalist Lumumba: political and military machinations overwhelmed the new nation and on January 17, 1961, he was brutally assassinated, with the connivance of the CIA.

There followed 36 years of "evil cruel times" for the Congolese people, 32 of them under the dictatorship of America's Cold War ally, Mobutu Sese Seko.

Lumumba's friend, Pierre Mulele, launched a guerrilla war for the "second independence" (in which he was joined by a young fighter named Laurent Kabila), but this and subsequent rebellions were always crushed by the dictatorship, with help from its western allies.

I thought of this history - and Lumumba's prophetic poem - on May

16, 1997, the day Mobutu fled Kinshasa and the capital welcomed the arrival of Laurent Kabila's young, ragged, but certainly gallant army of liberation, and the political movement, the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo/Zaire (ADFL), that let it.

Deogratius Bugera, a senior aide to Kabila, announced to a population long humiliated by one of the most obscene dictatorships on the continent that the new government's top priority would be "to restore human dignity by creating a new political system and holding elections that will be open to all people."

The official announcement of the rebels seizure of state power included the promise to quickly form a transitional "government of public safety" and to convene, within two months, a constituent assembly that would draw up a constitution to guide the transition to the new Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The rebels invited civil servants to remain at their posts and contact the new authorities for instructions. Meanwhile, all acts of revenge and "settling of scores" were strictly outlawed.

As revolutions go, the one led by Kabila has been relatively bloodless. This was possible because of several factors: the utter rottenness of the Mobutist system, which did not pay, feed or clothe its soldiers; the discipline and high morale of the ADFL troops; the apparent conviction of Congolese people that an ADFL victory would finally free them to start rebuilding democracy and rule of

law in their country.

The difficult, dangerous times are still ahead. Much depends on whether or not President Kabila can forge a transitional government that includes the broad array of political forces that make up the Congolese democracy movement.

A crucial relationship will be that between the ADFL (itself a very diverse coalition) and the non-armed opposition movement led by Etienne Tshisekedi.

One thing is certain; the Congolese people have been thoroughly politicized by their long struggle for democracy, and will be the final arbiter of any new government's legitimacy.

The international community will also weigh very heavily in the prospects for democracy in the Congo. Several of the Congo's African neighbors, led by South Africa, have already recognized Kabila's government. The United States has merely recognized him as the 'de facto' leader of the Congo.

The same administration that tolerated Mobutu's murderous sabotage of the democracy movement and endless postponement of reforms, now presses the ADFL for quick elections.

If the past history of US policy is any guide, the administration will likely attempt to deploy its political and economic assistance in ways that will narrow, not broaden, the democratic process in the Congo.

It will focus on leveraging power struggles within the leadership to achieve the outcome it wants, and

pay neither attention nor respect to the political activity of the broad masses of people who alone can put the democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

But perhaps now, with the geopolitical situation so radically altered by Mobutu's fall, the Congo's democracy movement will be in a better position to counter international interference.

I believe that, despite the dire predictions of chaos emanating from Washington, the Congolese people are poised to give the world a lesson in democracy.

Patrice Lumumba, in addition to being a poet and a patriot, was a beer salesman. In the "evil cruel times" of colonialism, a brilliant and talented African could scarcely aspire any higher.

Making a virtue of necessity, Lumumba made good use of his time on the road as a salesman; he traveled throughout the Congo, organizing the National Congolese Movement, the party which won a landslide in pre-independence elections.

The Belgian colonialists had a limited comprehension of where the "independence movement" came from. Like the US government today, they could not understand that among ordinary people, democracy might be in even more demand than beer.

In the difficult but exciting days to come, my love and solidarity are with the Congolese people.

Thanks to their long struggle, we can say, with the poet Lumumba:

"A new morning breaks out in old Africa."

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

### Is Science Scientific, Are Scientists Ethical? II

"That is a good question," would seem to be the general feeling among Portland Observer readers who responded to last week's article with its reference to the citation of the cruel and inhuman "Tuskegee Syphilis experiments." Today, we will expand the question and attempt some answers.

For instance, a reader refers to an April media item that I have in my files as well. "New Study Reveals the percentage of Scientists Who Believe in God is the same as 1916 Count." God is defined as "One who communicates with mankind... can pray to and expect an answer." 15 percent said they were "agnostic... have no definite belief" - about 45 percent said they did not believe in God. (Most Americans - 93 percent - believe in God, according to Gallup polls).

Evidently, there is a deep and abiding belief in a just God among the few surviving African Americans who accepted President Clinton's apology at a moving White House ceremony. Herman Shaw, an articulate 95 year-old survivor of the Nazi-type medical experiment spoke to the solemn assemblage. "the wounds that were inflicted upon us cannot be undone... families will forever live with the knowledge that death and suffering was preventable. It is never to late to strive to restore trust and to prevent such a tragedy from happening again."

But is that quite true, the message of this moving polemic from this gentle, forgiving blackman, counseled by his minister and strengthened by almost a century of faith? Just two weeks ago (May 16) the Newhouse News service published a full-page spread in the Oregonian, "After Tuskegee: New Experiments." The investigators follow on: "Decades after the Tuskegee Syphilis study and radiation studies on civilians during the Cold War, the U.S. pharmaceutical industry and the federal government still are in the business of conducting and paying for medical tests on unsuspecting Americans." And, of course, the tobacco industry.

Horror stories abound as the sup-

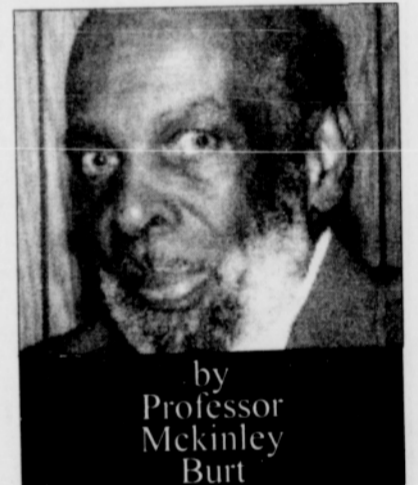
posed ethics and morality of the scientific community are closely scrutinized. Safeguards like the "informed consent" procedure approved by congress are routinely disregarded; a woman is fed solvents to "dissolve her gallstones"... hundreds of Sioux children received an experimental hepatitis vaccine tested for a 'British' company. In Los Angeles, the Center for Disease Control approved the infamous "E-Z vaccine for measles -- to be mostly used on black and Hispanic babies." The experiment was halted only after reports cited high infant mortality in Africa and Haiti.

And of course, the nation was shocked by last year's headline, "O'Leary Reveals More Radiation Tests on Humans." There was not that much new in these revelations except to the extent that the universities were involved and where Hazel O'Leary, head of the Energy

Department said, "almost any of us would find something to be disturbed with... in particular the tests on fetuses."

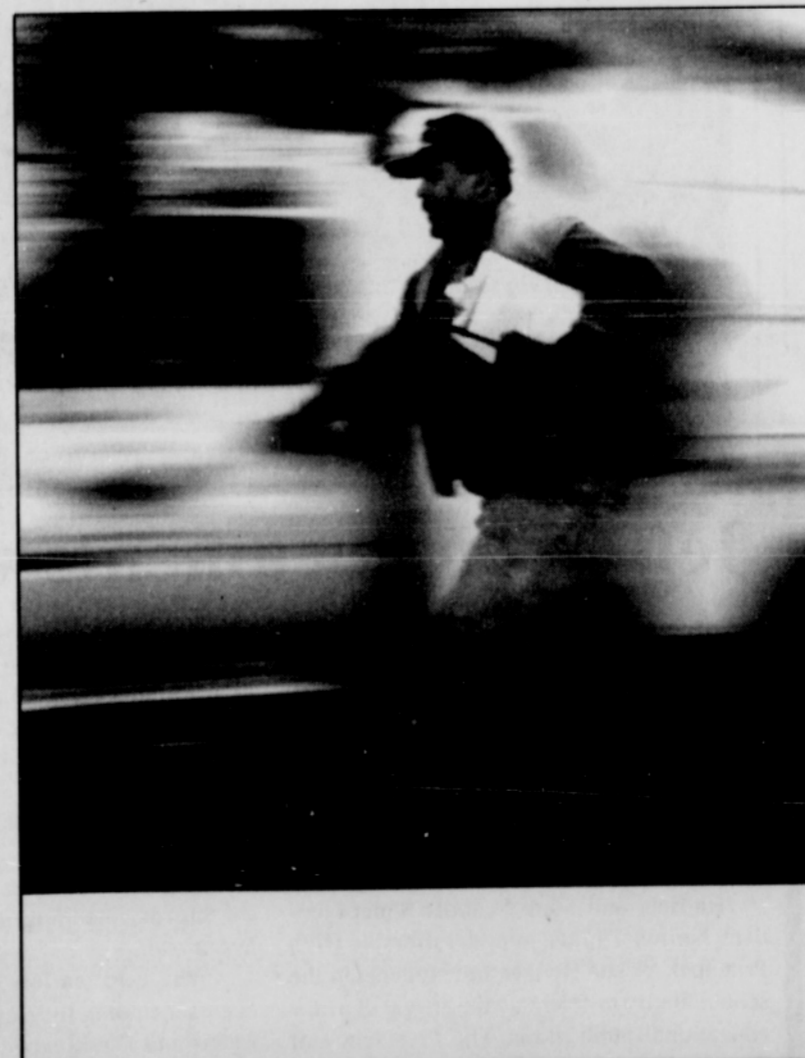
While some have disturbing questions about the development of chemical and biological weapons (that are most assuredly tested in some manner upon humans), others advance the query, "How during the years of the experiment could there have been so large a number of African American doctors and medical support people at Tuskegee without a whisper about the evil operations?" A woman called me to say, "Even during slavery, what ever went on up at the 'big house' was known down in the slave cabins before sundown."

At first it may seem a bitter irony that some sort of Center for Study of Medical Ethics is to be set up at Tuskegee University - but we re-



by  
Professor  
McKinley  
Burt

member the great Dr. George Washington Carver who was "told by God" where to look in his garden for the cures to mankind's diseases and ailments - this place is Dr. Carver's shrine. Fortunately, there have been so many great ethical physicians: Dr. Charles Drew (Blood), Dr. Jonas Salk (Polio vaccine). The scales are more than balanced, but be vigilant!



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