

EDITORIAL

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

This Way for Black Empowerment

Bill Clinton Can't Heal The Racial Divide

BY DR. LENORA FULANI
 Several weeks ago President Clinton kicked off his campaign to heal the racial divide in America. Bill Clinton is one of those politicians who has built his career off of reinforcing that racial divide.

But like any politician who bases his principles on the polls, the focus groups and the political winds, what he did yesterday has no bearing on what he does today. Everything is for political gain. Little is for the good of the country. And nothing is for the good of African Americans.

In his speech at the University of California in San Diego he told the country that we have the opportunity to overcome the racial polarization that still plagues America and create a "truly multi-racial democracy." President Clinton says we need to have a constructive national conversation on race.

I agree that we need to work to create a "truly multi-racial democracy." But in order to have the meaningful conversation that President Clinton is calling for, then some true things about the situation that we, as Black people, find ourselves in, are going to have to get said.

Some of those things are going to have to be about the issue of political power. Because the long-standing inequities between Black and white America -- in education opportunity and the quality of education -- in job opportunity and the quality of jobs -- persist because the current political arrangement has kept us marginalized as a political force. This problem must be addressed, if we as a country and Black people as a community, are going to overcome. And no amount of commissions, or conversations, or apologies for slavery are going to make a difference unless we do that.

How do we do that? Slavery may have been abolished and "apologies" may be forthcoming, but most of America's key political institutions were created during slavery -- notably the Democrats and the Republicans and still bear the slavery mentality. Until we create a new political party that includes African Americans as full partners in its inception, conception and design, we will remain without the political power we need. Moreover, it's building this new party -- together with other Americans -- that will heal the racial divide.

China represses religious freedom, dominates Tibet, threatens Taiwan, restricts democracy in Hong Kong, oppresses independent unions, and undercuts wages with prison labor--so now they've been rewarded with Most Favored nation (MFN) status.

Cuba gets a trade embargo, even on food and medicine. Could it be because Cuba is small, while China has a billion potential consumers? The MFN vote for China this week was a setback for human rights.

SHAFTA-Rep. Bob Wise (D-WV) calls it SHAFTA--the Southern Hemisphere Area Free Trade Association--the Clinton Administration's attempt to win "fast track" negotiating authority for NAFTA expansion into South America, starting with Chile.

However, by 2-1, a majority of Americans believe that trade agreements are more likely to create jobs than to create them. 73% believe labor and environmental issues should be negotiated as part of trade agreements, rather than separately. And the AFL-CIO will oppose any fast-track legislation that does not require enforceable labor and environmental standards.

RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

The week in review

The upshot is that NAFTA expansion cannot succeed this year unless Clinton and big business can persuade 40-50 "Free trade" Democrats to vote for a GOP fast track bill with no environmental & labor standards. But most House Democrats--and a block of Republicans--oppose this, so the final vote is in serious doubt.

Oppose fast track--please contact your Congressperson!

Don't Forget--the Rainbow/Push Coalition first annual conference will be held at the Chicago Hilton & Towers, from July 30th through August 2nd. We will be discussing our Wall Street Project, schools & jails, and Vision 2000 (including an open conversation about our political plans on Saturday, 8/2-to run or not to run?).

We need you there for your input. Please call Ms. Velma Wilson at 773-373-3366 for details.

Huelga-Rev. Jackson gave a keynote address at LULAC's national convention in Anaheim, CA. He called for Latino/Hispanics and African Americans to continue to work together to insure that existing civil rights laws are enforced; stood with LULAC President Belen Robles to demand that the President fight back against Gov. Pete Wilson's Prop. 209 states' rights challenge to affirmative action; and demanded that the President appoint more minority judges to the Federal bench--including filling the next Supreme Court vacancy with our first Hispanic Justice.

Tear Down the Walls-Rev. Jackson also spoke at Trinity Church in New York this week, calling on Wall Street to be part of the solution to racism. Using information provided by historian John Hope Franklin, currently chairing President Clinton's Commission on Race, Jesse

pointed out that Wall Street historically played an integral part in the slave trade:

- about 60 NY clothing firms were doing business in the South on the eve of the Civil War;

- several NY firms were branches of Southern firms, and many NY businessmen and firms owned slaves & plantations in the South;
- the NY Journal of Commerce commented on Feb. 19, 1860, that New York was "almost as dependent upon southern slavery as Charleston itself," and on May 5, 1860, that "downtown merchants of wealth and responsibility are extensively engaged in buying and selling African Negroes."

- many NY merchants were very interested in the slave trade between Cuba and the Coast of Africa, with business firms of the "highest repute" supplying the capital for these ventures.

By opening up to African Americans and Hispanics, Wall Street can help tear down the walls of racism, eliminating the internal trade barriers which artificially restrict growth and prosperity. Our Wall Street Project will continue to focus on this goal.

More science - the right kind III

Here is that promised support and motivation material for directing our children and youth into the fields of science and technology. For the many, their socio-economic future will depend on an early introduction and education in these areas - and 'you' have got to be there for them!

In preparing this package, I was sharply reminded that there are several basic technology learning aids that have stood the test of time - a long time! A recent discussion with a group of parents and grandparents revealed that two of these - learning tools that we ourselves used to initially grasp the nature of science - are readily available at "Toys R Us", Lloyd Center or Jantzen Beach.

For many decades the "Gilbert Erector Set" has been the point of entry for many an inquisitive child who was to become a mechanical engineer, architect, bridge builder or space craft designer. And of course the newer "Leggo" sets lend them selves to later and expanded applications.

Equally important, there are the famous "Gilbert Chemistry Sets" that sparked the development of many a child into a gifted benefactor of

mankind--medicines, foods and much else.

Let me say again in respect to chemistry in particular and about science in general (last week) - being about discipline, order and logical, steps or building blocks - our parents used the very accessible models of the labels/formulas on the packages of food in our kitchen and on the prescription drugs in our bathrooms; The precise, 'repeatable' formulation of the product from package to package (Safety through 'Quality Control'). And they would make the same pint with the recipes for meals.

These attitudes were inculcated early on in our basement and garage science clubs, not only by parents or youth counselors, but by the next older generation of youth who always handed down their skills and motivation; just as with the bicycle clubs, river steamer excursions and the supporting fund-raising activities. Fifty years ago (and even before senior high school) black kids in our neighborhood were buying their own test tubes, retorts and reagents -

crystals to make our little radios - model airplane kits (from scratch). We made soaps, lubricants glues, paints - and alot of messes. But that's learning.

Of course these were the days when the great black inventors I wrote about were delivering the genius of their innovations to a waiting world. And we kids would hear about them through the black press, then quickly head for the library to search the 'how-to-do it books'. There were national magazines like "Boy's Life" that each month featured new projects in chemistry, radio, biology or mechanics. We have lost so much today with 'ready-made products that require no ingenuity.

Across the country, today, we are seeing a number of parent groups progressive public schools and alternative schools who have recognized the significant negative aspects of "out of the box, ready-to-go" toys for the direction and guidance of American children into the 21st century world of technology. Stamped-in-a-mold Asian imports will not be useful in developing the

kind of minds this country will need to compete on the world stage. We had it right before.

And the new issue of "Forbes Magazines" expresses the resentment of many educators that major computer companies are "dumping" millions of dollars of P.C.'s and software on our schools and beleaguered, over worked teachers. "Excitement is not learning" we are told. "We've yet to effectively teach the counting, reading and writing, before big super-marketing techniques smother us." I say, "homework before NET."

Talk to your children's science teacher. Direct that television time to the "Learning" and "Discovery" channels. Get those relevant monthly magazines coming to the house. Check your library for ordering, "Scientific American, Popular Science

Smithsonian, National Geographic, Natural History" - and/or the 'junior versions'. Also at the library, get addresses for "Edmund Scientific Co." and other suppliers of science toys and equipment. Remember we quoted polls saying 68% of black kids expected to become wealthy professional athletes. On what planet?

Civil Rights Journal: Chief Wahoo must go

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON
 Live in Cleveland, where the city is preparing to host the 1997 All Star Game.

It is a time when the nation's sports attention will be turned to our city and to baseball. But what probably will receive little attention is the movement to change the name and the logo of the Cleveland baseball team. It's not a popular story because it is a story of institutional and public racism, but as President Clinton encourages us to talk about racism, we need to include Chief Wahoo in the dialogue.

Maybe you've seen the logo of the Cleveland baseball team -- a grinning, big-nosed, bug-eyed, deep-red colored caricature of a native American. But, maybe you never looked at the image closely or thought about what it was saying underneath the stereotype. Or, maybe you unthinkingly believed the explanation that the name, the Cleveland Indians, and the logo, Chief Wahoo, were honoring native Americans.

But Chief Wahoo is no more an honoring than Aunt Jemima or Uncle Ben or Step n Fetchit or Little Black

Sambo were to African Americans. They were all racist caricatures which showed black women as vestiges of our slavemothers and black men as subservient, lazy and slow-witted. Chief Wahoo is no more an honor than Charlie Chan was to Asian Americans or the Frito Bandito to Mexican Americans.

All of these are stereotypes which de-humanize and take away the dignity of a group of people. All of these take the worst characteristics, often imagined, and make them foremost in the public mind. All of them have been used to sell products or to demean people rather than to honor them.

Now, unfortunately, stereotyping is not a new concept. Germany stereotyped Jewish people as money-grabbing and power-hungry before World War II and a demeaning caricature similar to Chief Wahoo was used in anti-Jewish German propaganda, for instance.

And, stereotyping is not just an European or American concept either. Idi Amin, former Ugandan president and one of Africa's most infamous despots, stereotyped Indians who lived in that nation, for

instance.

But stereotyping is a dangerous and dehumanizing phenomenon. Black men in the U.S. are constantly shown in television news and programming as criminals and the result is that many Americans fear black men. Women were once stereotyped as less intelligent, more moody and only concerned about getting married and the result was that women were barred from jobs in the corporate and government worlds. Chief Wahoo is such a stereotype -- dangerous to native Americans and dehumanizing to a whole group of people.

Chief Wahoo is no honor to those people who discovered Columbus and then shared their wealth, their knowledge and their resources with those who followed Columbus to the new world. That grinning, bug-eyed Chief Wahoo is no honor to a people whose land was taken away from them, whose language was taken away from them, whose religion was taken away from them and now whose dignity is being taken away from them through this stereotype.

If native Americans are offended by the image of Chief Wahoo, then

the rest of us must be offended also. Outside this All Star Game the descendant of Louis Sockalexis, the native American baseball player for whom the Cleveland team is reportedly named, will announce his family's and the Penobscot Indian nation's rejection of the myth that the name and the logo honor Louis Sockalexis.

In the words of the first stanza of a poem written by a native American poet, Juanita Helphrey:

Why is it that when we say, "It hurts, take it away," You say, "No it doesn't. You shouldn't feel that way?"

So as you watch the All Star Game, remember the story which probably won't be told. Remember the struggle of native American people to get rid of Chief Wahoo and to change the name of the Cleveland baseball team. And then write to Dick Jacobs, the owner of the team, and, while you're at it, write to the owners of the Washington Redskins, the Atlanta Braves and the Kansas City Chiefs.

- Dick Jacobs, Cleveland Indians, 2401 Ontario Street, Cleveland, OH 44115
- Ted Turner, Atlanta Braves, 521 Capitol Avenue, SW, Atlanta, GA 64129
- Lemar Hunt, Kansas City Chiefs, 1 Arrowhead Dr., Kansas City, KS 64129
- Washington Redskins, RFK Stadium, Washington, DC 20003



Letter To The Editor

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