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The Portland Observer

EDITORIAL

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Charles Washington
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Gary Ann Taylor
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Mark Washington
Distribution Manager
Larry J. Jackson, Sr.
Director of Operation
Mike Leighton
Copy Editor

Contributing Writers:
Professor McKinley Burt,
Lee Perlman,
Neil Heilpern

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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Every once in a while, it is useful to put current events in a global context. Reverend Jackson did so in a recent speech to the Global Labor Summit in Denmark, to an audience of 600 progressive trade union leaders from more than 100 nations.

Elaborating on an analysis by American political theorist Kevin Phillips, Jesse reminded the international union leaders of how much we have won by working together, and then declared that "the right wing tide has ebbed, and our issues are about to take center stage across the world."

Rev. Jackson noted that the conservatives are on a downward slope now, while progressive forces are on the rise. Recent elections in the G-7 industrialized nations have made it clear that the right wing era is on the wane. And while it's true that our side is not yet in charge, you can feel the winds of change beginning to blow across the world.

Consider the U.S., where Phillips

RAINBOW PUSH COALITION Winds of Change

has pointed out that the Republican Party won less than 38% of the vote in 1992, and less than 42% in 1996, their worst back-to-back showing since FDR's time. Progressives may not yet be in charge of American politics—but the Reagan Era is definitely over.

Or take England, where the Tories have just suffered a smashing defeat, winning a mere 31% of the vote—the lowest in over 150 years! The Tories retained only 165 seats, their smallest number in almost a century. Thatcherism has finally been consigned to history's dustbin.

Look at Canada, where in 1993 the Conservative Party carried only 2 seats total! And just last month,

Canadian voters retained the Liberals in power, increased the New Democratic Party's share of the vote to 11%, and left the Conservatives with just 20 seats out of 301, making them only the 5th-largest party.

The recent elections in France dealt a body blow to the international right.

French voters rejected the right wing's attack on the social safety net. Don't pay any attention to the mainstream media commentators who keep prattling on about the French mistake; these voters knew exactly what they were doing. They were protecting a social safety net that it took centuries of struggle to

create.

Next year, Germany... The point Rev. Jackson keeps making is that the right wing across the industrialized world took on the social safety net, but for the most part we held them off. The right tried to decrease taxes on the rich and powerful—just as the GOP in the U.S. Congress is even now attempting to lower the capital gains and estate taxes for the wealthy—but the voters have had enough of special interest favors.

The conservative, greed-dominated era of the 1980s is over. Our issues are coming back onto the public policy agenda: the huge and growing gap between rich and poor; trade and investment policy; the globalization of corporate capital, and the need for a coordinated trade union response; the corporate attack on workers, pensions, and living standards everywhere in the world.

The voters are on our side on these issues. The wheel is turning. The first ones now, shall later be last.

periodicals

More science - the right kind IV

This is the concluding article of a four-part series designed to provide a relevant and effective supporting structure for the learning experience in technology. Already, the response indicates that, indeed, motivated parents (and community) can make good use of such material.

At the end of this article I have appended an expanded citation of last week's "relevant periodicals." (Some readers expressed a difficulty in securing the addresses for subscriptions). Others said, "thanks for that information about kid's 'neighborhood' science clubs. OMSI is so much at 'pop science' (and awfully expensive), whereas an ongoing neighborhood relationship among peers and schoolmates such as you had would be just the thing."

Please note that the Educational Testing Service recently tracked the scores of more than 15 million stu-

dents on a broad range of exams over four years; The 'gender gap in the sciences is narrowing. The greatest difference noted is low English scores for boys - not low math for girls.

In clarification of just what it was "Forbes Magazine was saying about the resentment of some educators at what they regarded as a misguided "dumping" of computers and software on overburdened teachers still trying to instill the basics - A July 2 article on the Ed-Op page of the Oregonian does very well; "Clinton's Shaky Bridge: Putting computers in every classroom won't guarantee better educated children, but it will cost a lot of money."

School districts wanting to be seen as "on the cutting edge of the new technologies" (and gearing up for bigger budgets). Are dropping music and art programs, discontinuing

needed vocational classes (the latter were recommended by the Clinton's own Advisory Council). Several local teachers of my acquaintance have reflected much of the national sentiment. Education administrators don't realize what people in industry know; right along with hardware and software there necessarily must come the expensive professional expertise and training time, and the related curriculum development - that is, if the system is to work.

Because of the constraints of space, I will have assign the reader some tasks; for the full address, 800 number, etc. of the "Edmund Scientific Co." call downtown library information service, 248-5234. This firm has the widest selection in the nation when it comes to scientific apparatus for youth: electronics, optics, astronomy, communications, biology, etc.

And by all means be sure to shop around Powells Bookstore at Tenth and West Burnside. The best selections in the country and importantly, copies of those "by-subscription-only" magazines you may wish to sample. While there look for a used copy of "Biology: The Network of Life", Mix, Farber & King, Harper Collins, 1992. This is the most comprehensive and best-structured biology book I've seen.

• *Natural History Magazine: American Museum of Natural History, Membership Services, P.O. Box 3030, Harlan LA 51593-2091, \$22 a year.*

• *Popular Science Magazine: Popular Science, PO Box 51282, Boulder, Co 80323-1282 \$17.94 a year*

• *Smithsonian Magazine: Membership Data Center, Smithsonian Institution, PO Box 42039, Palm Coast, FL 32142-9143 \$24.00 a year.*

All will begin subscriptions immediately and bill later.

Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
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Skip the apology!

BY HARRY C. ALFORD, PRESIDENT/CEO, NATIONAL BLACK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

In the rhetoric! How sweet the sound of empathy and compassion which can act as an opiate to disarm those that have been maimed by a society which regarded them as less than human.

Our president has formed another (of the endless) commission to discuss race issues and to suggest what path we should go down next. There is talk form some of our legislators to give a formal apology for the slavery of the past. Let's look a this issue for a short moment.

How is an apology gong to heal the damages done and the suffering currently experienced by us as a people via economic deprivation. We are the poorest, unhealthiest and least achieving group of people in this country. It just didn't happen, it is the result of the cruelest form of slavery ever practiced, and nearly a century of apartheid and economic oppression. We are hurriedly trying to play "catch up" but still a system of discrimination plays a role in suppressing what progress we may achieve. For what I know and the rage within me (that I suppress), I don't want "Mr Charlie" to apologize for his great grandfather. I want the damages done to my great grandfather paid for via reparations to me, they did it for the Japanese interred during World War II, they have formal treaties with Indian tribes throughout the nation and aggressively assisted American Jews who were do reparations for the atrocities of Nazi Germany.

Each and every one of you should figure out the names of your ancestors between the period of 1800 - 1920, then start tracking them through the National Archives and applicable court houses. I have been doing this for over a year and the further I investigate the more enraged I become. I have identified the master of one of my great grandfathers and have started tracking him also. Along this journey I have discovered "lost cousins" whose ancestors were siblings to my great grandfather. I've found them in Florida, Georgia, California and Louisiana. Collectively, we have

resolved to do one thing: Document the horrors our ancestors have experienced and prove the impact it currently has on us and our children.

Finally, attach a "bill" to this and file suite against the United States for reparations. We hope to make a "model" for other Black clans to follow and be made whole.

This apology verbiage is laughable. We want to be made whole! They won't ever voluntarily so this so we must prove the damage with irrefutable facts and make demands through federal courts.

The plantation master, James W. Alford, sexually abused our great great grandmother, Nancy, and impregnated her with 7 sons. When he died in 1860 and his estate was divided up amongst his children, our great grandfathers were not included. A system that discriminates amongst off spring based on race is immoral and should pay for damages caused by such. We can prove this lineage from our newly found white great great grandfather through DNA and we aim to do it! You should see the court records when they divided up his estate and no mention of "us" was made.

What makes me even more enraged is to see conveyance documents in the Bossier Parish (Louisiana) Courthouse concerning my two paternal great grandfathers and paternal grandfather. Between 1872 and 1922 (50 years) these men had possession to nearly 2,000 acres. Bit by bit and piece by piece they lost it. Today, my family has no more than 70 acres left of this massive amount of good Louisiana farm land. My brother and I have read "trumped up" bill of sales, suspect auction documents, etc. that gave this land, for very little money, to developers and opportunists. We have seen through public records exploitation of our ancestors which currently affects our net worth and inheritance to be passed on to our children.

Grandfather Thomas Alford received a 162 acre land grant from President Wilson in 1916. By 1920, he was down to 42 acres, it appears that the application for the grant was prepared by the white guys who eventually ended up with most of it. You see, "fronting" with minority programs was going on back then also.

BY LAYNE BARLOW
Monday June 23, 1997
the Oregonian's front page carried an article about House Bill 2324, recently heard by Senator Miller's Rules & Elections Committee.

The article was also in error on several key points, including the ever popular fiction of "noncustodial parents owe more than \$34 billion nationwide in back child support." Nancy, you know better, because you asked us for the facts and figures to refute that and we provided it.

Oregon Men's Association opposes HB 2324. It is very long, very wrong, and makes Orwell's Big Brother seem like a friendly uncle in comparison. We will get into the many, many problems with this proposed law in the future.

For now we will orient you to the problem, courtesy of Stuart Miller and the March 2, 1995, Wall Street Journal entitled "The Myth of Deadbeat Dads"...

Child-support collection has recently become a big issue in Washington. President Clinton issued an executive order this week requiring all federal agencies to facilitate the payment of father's debts. And Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala testified that if we collect all of the child support owed by Americans, we would reduce the \$200 billion welfare cost by 25%.

In fact, Republicans and Democrats alike count on increased child support collections as a cornerstone of their welfare reform plans. You don't have to be a member of the world champion U.S. Math Olympiad team to see that there is something wrong with those calculations. Even under the rosiest projections of the government's Annual Child Support Report, in 1992 (the last year for which data is available), there was about \$20.9 billion in court-ordered child support owed by all Americans and, of that, a little more than \$6 billion was paid. This leaves \$4.9 billion in unpaid child support in 1992—far short of the \$50 billion Ms. Shalala hopes to raise.

But it's virtually impossible even to collect the smaller amount of child support obligations. We've tried many times over the past 10 years, yet no effort has increased the percentage of collections for welfare mother (the biggest target group) by more than 1%.

This is due to a number of factors. First, of the 30% of child support payments not collected, a significant number are owed by fathers who are imprisoned. A high percentage of prisoners have child support obligations, and as many as one-third of the inmates in many county jails are there in the first place because of child support noncompliance.

Many of the other delinquent fathers are addicts, alcoholics, dis-

abled, mentally incapacitated, unemployed, or otherwise unable to pay pre-set child support amounts. But the largest number of all delinquents are those who simply don't exist.

Recently, the Florida Department of Revenue, the agency responsible for child support enforcement in that state, sent out 700,000 notices of allegedly delinquent fathers. The summonses demanded immediate payment or the recipient would be incarcerated.

Subsequently, officials acknowledged that probably 600,000 of those notices were sent to individuals who actually did not owe child support. One of those recipients, Daniel Wells, died eight years ago in a traffic accident, but the state still wanted him to cough up \$160,000 in past due support!

Nor is this an isolated case. The General Accounting Office found in 1992 that as many as 15% of fathers who owe child support are dead. The report further stated that 66% of fathers who owe support "cannot afford to pay the amount ordered."

The easiest way, then, to increase the figures on child-support collections is simply for the government to make an accurate tally. Until this happens, it's impossible to discuss remedies for the child-support problem.

Once a serious discussion gets under way, one of the first items on the agenda should be the inherent unfairness in taking something away from people and then making them pay for it. Most fathers are deeply committed to their children, yet a 1991 Census Bureau study found that about half of fathers receive no court-ordered visitation. When fathers do receive visitation, almost 80% pay all of their child support on time and in full. When fathers receive joint custody, the child support compliance rate jumps to more

than 90%.

Joint Custody is the cure to the child support problem and is the closest thing to a two-parent family that we can give a child. Unfortunately, more than 90% of litigated divorces result in an award of sole custody to the mother.

Even when fathers do receive court-ordered access to their children, their visitation attempts are often met with interference by the mothers.

Joan Berlin Kelley and Judith Wallerstein, in "Surviving the Break-Up" (Basic Books, 1990), found that almost half of all mothers see no value in the father's continued contact with his children following separation or divorce.

Sanford Braver, a University of Arizona psychologist, confirmed these figures and found that up to 40% of mothers interfere with the dad's relationship with his kids.

Given this documented connection between a father's access to his children and the payment of child support,

• Why does Washington [and Salem/] seem intent on punishing the father?

• What about the mother who creates a climate encouraging non-compliance?

One way around this problem may be to make child support obligations more equitable. At the moment, child support is almost exclusively the burden of fathers. The federal Office of Income Security Policy found in 1991 that less than 30% of custodial fathers receive a child support award, whereas almost 80% of custodial mothers do.

Yet, about 47% of those mothers who are ordered to pay support totally default on their obligation. In the interest of fairness, if nothing else, policy makers should make an effort to collect child support from both delinquent fathers and mothers.

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