

# EDITORIAL

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## Letter To The Editor

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## Anti-smoking groups take action for teens

Anti-smoking groups said Tuesday they would inform retailers about new rules against selling cigarettes to minors and then would report violations to health authorities.

From Feb. 28 it will be illegal to sell cigarettes or smokeless tobacco to anyone under 18 and businesses will have to check the photo I.D. of anyone under 27. Other new Food and Drug Administration rules designed to curb teen smoking

will be phased in through August 1998.

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), joined by health and education groups, said it would distribute information on the new rules to businesses and then would report violations to a toll-free FDA telephone line.

FDA officials have said they will not fine merchants based on those reports but complaints may trigger an official check on the

By JOHN L. BURRIS

When I first heard of the passing of famed reporter and syndicated columnist, Dennis Schatzman, I was in a state of shock and disbelief. For me, he had many more articles to write, speeches to give and television appearances to make.

I saw so much more life to be intensively lived by this gifted and brilliant man, who through his writings had deeply affected me.

I had first met Dennis as a television commentator during the O.J. Simpson trial when he and I would be on the same program. Whether it was Rivera Live, AM Philadelphia or CNN, I was always impressed by his

ability to speak the truth no matter how uncomfortable it made the white commentators, and some blacks feel.

To me, Dennis was the proverbial bard who was there to tell it like it was regardless of how it affect others. His commitment to explaining to whites and blacks that race was an all encompassing phenomena in this country and that it does not go away because you try to ignore it. As others tried to suggest that the O.J. Simpson case was not about race, Dennis Schatzman was there to remind us all that we should not ignore the issue of race, and that this case was not only about race, but was bigger than O.J. himself.

And although to some he appeared

to be outrageous in his manner, but beyond surface appearances, there was a method to the madness because he had the ability to focus the issues and make people see the truth whether they liked it or not.

Dennis Schatzman was a modern day Paul Revere who warned us that racism was like an insidious parasite which was sucking the lifeblood from the African American community. He tried to show us that we should beware of the racism that is part of the criminal justice system in this country which is sapping us of our young men and has resulted in a disproportionate black prison population and great disparity

between blacks and whites in sentences and time actually spent in jail.

Likewise, he understood that the disparity in health care, education, housing and employment was also detrimental to the survival of the African American community.

So for me, Dennis Schatzman proved the adage that "the pen is mightier than the sword" and the legacy that he leaves to all of us is best summed up in the words of Frederick Douglas when he said toward the end of his life, as he counseled young men and women as to their future role in society, that they should "agitate, agitate, agitate."

## Observer

## A Week Of Victories

For the 26th year in a row, the Rainbow/Push family held its national convention, and this year, the first held after the Rainbow/Push Coalition merger, was one of the best ever! We're on the move...

From the opening day Board Luncheon to the closing Ministers Luncheon and the next Leadership Generation networking event, this conference was alive. The crowds were large, registrations were at record levels, panelists were outstanding, and the delegates were involved and attentive. (Nancy, Axel, Velma & Company-you can be proud!)

The highlights were many:

\*The opening press conference, in front of a capacity crowd, focused on our 5-point back-to-school pledge for students & parents. Rev. Jackson noted that 50,000 parents were involved in Chicago now, after 3 years of effort by Rainbow/Push, working with Chicago Public Schools CEO Paul Vallas. We set a goal of 40,000 parents & students in each of 50 urban districts, for a total of 2 million pledges.

\*A comprehensive series of more than a dozen panels and workshops put together by Dr. Valerie Johnson, laid out an education agenda for the coming century.

\*The "Race, Reason, Remedy" Town Hall meeting opening night, featured experts and scholars such as Dr. Charles Ogletree, Dr. Cornel West, Dr. Ron Walters, Laura Murphy, and Lerone Bennett. This panel concluded that the president's national Conversation on Race" must

be about structural inequality, power, and privilege-in other words, not just race, but racism.

The panel also decided that we do need an apology, reparations, and remedy; and that we must be active and involved right now in defining what "apology" and "repair" and "remedy" really mean. The Rainbow/Push Coalition must help lead this conversation.

\*Thursday morning, the large crowd at the Labor Breakfast came alive with AFL-CIO President John Sweeney's speech, and erupted when Jesse presented labor awards to United Farm Workers head Arturo Rodriguez and Melody Johnson of the mushroom workers in Florida.

Rev. Jackson also noted that the Rainbow/Push Board approved a "Slow Down the Fast Track" resolution at the board meeting.

\*Rev. Willie Barrow put together an overflow crowd of 1,000 people to hear Alexis Herman, our new Secretary of Labor, at the Women's Luncheon. The award given to Ms. Dorothy Height provided a particularly touching moment.

\*The Clay Evans Gospel Concert brought together a beautiful mass choir of more than 300 singers.

\*Friday morning, Doris Davenport helped bring together Jack Smith, CEO of General Motors, with key executives from Ford, Chrysler, Nissan, and Mitsubishi, for a discussion of minority partnerships.

Later business panels analyzed how to open doors in the food market industry, the survival of African

American funeral homes, and fairness in media and telecommunications.

\*Cong. Jesse Jackson, Jr., led a crowded "How to Fight Back" workshop that afternoon, with his own special, focused, no-notes presentation on organizing.

\*Rev. Jackson's keynote, "A Year of Change; A Century of Victories," preceded the Trailblazer Award given to Don King, at the Business Luncheon.

\*Lou Rawls entertained the gala banquet that night, along with a wonderful video by Chee Chee Williams. The special honorees were Rev. Joseph Lowery, recipient of the Jack O'Dell Peace & Justice Award, and Mr. & Mrs. Evander Holyfield, receiving the Arthur Ashe Award.

\*The last morning of the conference featured talks by NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, LULAC President Belen Robles, and former New York Mayor David Dinkins. Analysts David Bositis and Bob Borosage then painted a precise picture of America's political situation.

Two moments in particular stand out from Saturday morning's session"

-First, the wife and son of labor leader Muktapar Pakpahan, reading a letter of thanks for our award, given to him as he sat locked in an Indonesian jail for his organizing efforts. (Our thanks to Barb Shaffor, International Director of the AFL-CIO, for her help in making this profound moment happen!)

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

## "Love's Labour Lost" (At United Parcel?)



BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT



That is the title of a play by Shakespeare where, early on, it is demonstrated that like their 'labors', "the best laid plans of mice and men often go astray." King Ferdinand of Navarre attempts to

convert his little court into a university.

Last week, we presented here a brief but well-documented recitation of some 130 years of American labor history which clearly indicated that the long-term planning of both labor and management has "gone astray." And this week in Mid-August, 1997, we have on center stage a major national confrontation between the United Parcel Company and the Teamsters Union. So far, no one has been able to bring any level of understanding to this 'court' -- and the foes in this controversy remain implacable even at this writing, Friday evening 8/15/97.

Depending on your choice of media, commentator, political or economic persuasion, you may select issues of concern or you may disregard the entire emotional affair -- on the premise that you are not directly affected in any substantial manner. Is that plausible? The media cites a 5% "downturn in the nation's economy as a result of this strike, to date. Believe me, if you are on the economic "fringe or border line" so often referred to, then, indeed, you are "directly affected."

You don't necessarily have to be a striking employee of United Parcel to feel an excruciating financial pain

-- although the job with this workforce may have taken you off a welfare roll to which you cannot return. Across the nation the very same set of economic facts obtain for the hundreds of thousands of workers for both small and large firms who depend upon a smooth flow of their products to customers - and not just mail order firms. The same circumstances hold true in respect to many of the parts and materials these firms must receive in order to manufacture such products.

Additional emotional pain will be added to the economic hardship for those who thought they saw a little financial breathing room possible with the new Income Tax Credits approved by the 1997 Oregon Legislature and signed into law by Gov. John Kitzhaber. Working mothers for United Parcel or strike-affected firms must quickly rethink the: budget adjustments and number-crunching. If this strike becomes a long-term standoff, will we hear more voices from Washington boasting of "Shrinking Welfare Rolls" and school clothing, for children of the poor?

On the other side of coin we have the working men and women of the nation finally coming into confrontation with management (selected) over

several of the most controversial and divisive issues of modern industry and workforces; namely, "Part-time Work and Pension Plans." Each side claims the 'high ground' and refuses to budge, and each has legal and anecdotal material to support its position -- especially as relates to pensions.

The union claims that the company wishes to seize control of the U.P. Pension fund so that it may manipulate the investment of these moneys for corporate enrichment (see, "Pensions In Crisis: Why System Is Failing...", Ferguson and Blackwell, Arcade Publishing, 1995).

A company spokesperson has pointed to "the Teamster's long history of pension fund mismanagement, including financing of much of the 'Las Vegas Strip' and leveraged-buy outs having nothing to do with benefits for working men and women." The Teamsters refer to a "federal clean up and fair elections" that have taken place since the 'old days'.

In any case, the pundits have it that "the pension issue is simply a bargaining chip. We wonder what is on the mind of Alexis Herman, the comely black Secretary of Labor?"