

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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Charles Washington  
Publisher & Editor

Mark Washington  
Distribution Manager

Gary Ann Taylor  
Business Manager

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.  
Director of Operation

Gregory Benton  
Graphic Design

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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## RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

### Talking The Talk

It was a great week for speeches, and Reverend Jackson rose to the occasion 3 times in only 6 days, at major conventions. On Saturday, 9/20, Jesse had the Teamsters fired up and on their feet.

"When we stood together on those picket lines, we were not merely Black/White/Brown/Yellow/Red, male or female, gay or straight, disabled. We were working people, standing strong against corporate greed... This land is our land.

"Teamsters, when you won, we all won. Teamsters, when you won, the Reagan Era really ended. Teamsters, when you won, the new activist labor movement won.

"The great gap in America today is not so much a horizontal gap between men and women, nor between the races, though those gaps are wide. The great gap--indeed, the grand Canyon of American life at the end of the 20th century--is the vertical gap between wealth and workers, between rich and poor, the canyon between haves and have-nots.

"For the wealthy, the roof has been removed... For the poor, the floor has collapsed... For the working family and the middle class, there is an anxious, sinking feeling, with stagnant wages, stuck in a house with no floor and no roof."

On Thursday, 9/25, Rev. Jackson closed out the annual AFL-CIO gathering in Pittsburgh:

"American workers find themselves in a box today, a box with four solid sides carefully constructed by the apologists for unrestrained capitalism.

"One side of the box is corporate strategies to oppress workers--to roll back safety standards, hold down wages, weaken labor law, downsize, outsource, and in many cases, simply to win organizing battles by breaking the law.

Another side of the box is the Fed--the Federal Reserve Board, which makes it very clear that if wages begin to rise, it will restrain growth by raising interest rates. Our current national prosperity is being subsidized by working families...

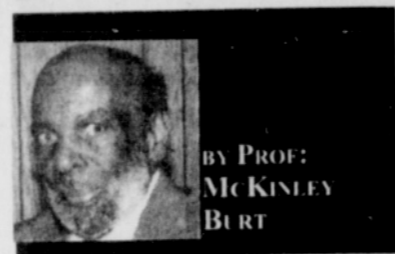
"The third side of the box is public disinvestment, the systematic looting of our children's futures...

"The final side of the box is international trade policy, on which we are about to engage in a major public policy battle, to slow down the fast track... We fight for trade agreements that protect environmental standards. We fight to lift workers up in other countries, not bring our workers down.

"The only way to break out of their box is to fight back to knock down the walls. That's what the Teamsters fight was all about--knocking down their restraining walls."

# perspectives

## To Be Or Not To Be: A Black Dichotomy



BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

It would seem from reader response that the last two articles have reflected a basic dichotomy or split in the mind-set of many African Americans in a vigorous effort to reassert a threatened identity or spirituality.

And that being the case, the apparent delinkage between the approaches or attitudes of two major groups has been described in no uncertain terms. There was the commentary of the black teenager who echoed the opinion of a parent regarding the Million Man March, "...a million black men could have assessed themselves \$100 each and started some great economic projects."

And at the other end of the spectrum we had those who planned a spiritual excursion; "...it was more like my identity was threatened...for a moment I had to get away from this

white, leftist multiculturalism crusade. Others have said, "we blacks were becoming irrelevant and insignificant ciphers in a fuzzy, murky pool of America's societally disabled--needing Affirmative Action."

Claude Anderson, author of "Black Labor, White Wealth" put it very well; "It's not diversity, black people need, its inclusion. However, inclusion in a gung ho capitalist society must necessarily be based on an economic development process where the excluded group practices its won inclusion of 'all' members, all skills.

An "Internal Affirmative Action", if you will.

A process that would include those with real-time, experienced-based talents in industry and the marketplace - not just the philosopher kings, planners, novelists and politicians at the top of the pyramid.

Many of the marchers attributed much of the loss of identity and their spiritual angst to lack of cooperation at the community, or even the neighborhood level.

Last week I put it that "blacks have become as celebrity-obsessed as whites", an ill omen for a people whose cultural and economic integrity is so threatened. There was some very interesting and valuable commentary in the book, "Million Man March/Day of Absence: A Commemorative Anthology," Third World Press, 1996, edited by Haki R. Madhubuti; and Maulana Karenga (Jesse Jackson, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, Conrad West and others).

Addressing that economic scene which the black teenager described and putting it in relationship to the other side of the dichotomy just discussed; I think our case is best illustrated by a failed Washington, D.C.

African American real estate venture that was described here at least a decade ago.

This model is too important and too relevant to the contemporary scene for a hasty compression at the end of this article. Next week I will shed this very revealing light on the incapacitating dichotomy that besieges us; opportunity's bruised knuckles.

Interestingly, while writing this piece, a caller wanted to know if I was "aware that the white folks are having their own 'Million Man March' on the Capital Mall? And their women are also fussing at being left out." The man went on to cite that basic African American belief, "that since the Pyramids, the University of Timbuctu, whatever--first the black pioneers, then here comes the European right behind" (remember the "Chrisy Minstrels").

(Cont'd next week.)

## Civil Rights Journal

### Remembering The Little Rock Nine

By Bernice Powell Jackson

For young people 40 years ago may be history, but for some of us it seems like yesterday, or at least yesteryear. In the news these days is the reminder that it was only 40 years ago that a governor defied the federal government in a much-publicized event in the civil rights movement. It was all about the right of black children to attend public school--the same public schools that whites attended, instead of the inferior, segregated ones they had attended for generations.

The place was Little Rock, Arkansas, the home state of President Clinton and newspapers and television carried pictures of the Governor standing in the doorway of Central High and defying the court-ordered desegregation of Central High. It was only when President Eisenhower ordered in federal troops that the nine black students, dubbed the Little Rock Nine, were able to enter the building.

Escorted by members of the 101 Airborne, the nine teenagers braved mobs spitting on them, shouting epithets and threatening them and their families. Most of us can hardly imagine how frightening, how disgusting, how exhausting it must have been for those nine children. One recalled never once having

gone to the bathroom at school since the soldiers couldn't go in with her for protection. One remembers her dress so wet with spit that she could wring it out. Another recalls the FBI asking her parents for permission to fingerprint her so that they could identify her body when it was found. Several still are uncomfortable in crowds and at least one admits to spending thousands of dollars in therapy.

Miraculously, the Little Rock Nine members survived and even flourished after their frightening experience. They include an accountant, a social worker, a real estate salesperson, a clinical psychologist, a teacher, a journalist and an investment banker. But only one remains in Little Rock; two no longer even live in the U.S.

The lessons of the case of the Little Rock Nine could be many, if the city of Little Rock and if our nation chooses to learn them. Clearly, the case proved that the federal government did have the authority and the right to make sure that constitutional rights overrode so-called "states rights." Indeed, the term "states' rights" is a code word even today for African Americans, who remember the use of it during the Little Rock Nine case and therefore many of us are distrustful of recent moves by states to take control of welfare.

But what have we learned about

schools and integration? In most large cities students of color attend schools which have few white students. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has been overturning desegregation orders and has ruled that suburban school districts cannot be forced to accept urban students as a means of redressing segregation.

Terrie Roberts, one of the Little Rock Nine comments, "it's not about separating or integrating; it's about trying to find a formula that's going to supply black children with what they need to succeed in society." He also recalls that their hope was that when whites saw that not all blacks carried weapons and that they were real human beings that they would accept the black students. "But after they knew us, they still didn't like us," he said.

And what have we learned about how we must all actively participate in ending racism? In a recent CBS Sunday Morning interview, a white citizen of Little Rock, who was a student during the time of the Little Rock Nine, commented, that most people believe that the near-riots which accompanied the desegregation were the actions of a small minority of the people. He was then asked by the reporter, "Well, why didn't the majority speak out and say this was wrong?" He had no answer to

that question. Indeed, what might have happened if white children walked next to the black children? What would have happened if white clergy had walked next to the black children? What would have happened if white mothers and fathers had been at their sides?

Finally, what have we learned about the toll taken on those who dare to challenge racism, to be on the front lines? Young people were often in the forefront of the civil rights movement - at the lunch counters, on the Freedom Ride buses, in desegregated schools. Many of them, like that member of the Little Rock Nine, have needed extensive psychological treatment; many others have needed long-term medical care for damaged kidneys, crushed skulls and other injuries.

The Little Rock Nine believe their parents' bravery and determination have never been recognized either. At least one family had their house bombed and one father lost his job. Have we ever really acknowledged the sacrifices these heroes and heroines made for all of us? As we carry on this national conversation on race, the Little Rock Nine case has lots of lessons for us. We just have to ask the right question to learn them.

## To Be Equal: Report on Texaco

By Hugh B. Price  
PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

Last November Texaco, Inc., the nation's fourteenth-largest company, drew a sharp blast from African Americans and others, damaging coverage from the media-- and a significantly negative reaction from investors--when it became apparent that, despite its public statements, equal opportunity was not a reality there.

The now-infamous Texaco Tapes broke open the racial discrimination lawsuit that several of its African-American employees had been pursuing against the company, prompting the company to quickly settle the case before it went to trial.

In its wake, Peter I. Bijur, Texaco's chairman and chief executive officer, who had vigorously condemned the blighted attitudes that led to the suit, pledged to change Texaco's corporate culture for the better.

I wrote back then that "the evidence indicates that he has a great deal of work to do there."

I can now write that early evidence indicates Texaco is en route to becoming a better, stronger company.

Notice what I have said here: a better, stronger company. For the evidence, now being marshalled at Texaco, and already proven elsewhere, shows that the allegiance to equal opportunity is good for business.

It's good for business because it opens up the avenues of advancement within a company to new talent, which enhances its internal strength. And it's good for business because it enables the company to more skillfully pursue customers across the breadth of the consumer marketplace.

That is illustrated by the document Texaco produced this summer: Equal Opportunity and Diversity at Texaco: 1997 Report.

This 29-page document is loaded with charts and graphs about the Texaco workforce, details on what current programs have accomplished, and specific pledges that the company intends to honor within five years.

For example, Texaco states that in

"striving to achieve business goals, not meet inflexible quotas," it expects its workforce to increase from nearly 20,000 to more than 22,000 in three years. Of that number, it forecasts that women employees will increase to 35 percent of the workforce, up from the current 32 percent, and that African-American and Hispanic-American employees will increase from 9 to 13 percent and from 8 to 10 percent, respectively. Overall, Texaco said that women and people of color would comprise 29 percent of the company, up from 22 percent now.

The report also names more than a score of internal and external programs the company now sponsors or supports and ones it will establish to open up the corporate ladder within the company and open wider the pathways into the company from the outside. They range from internal mentoring programs to improve employees' opportunities for advancement to scholarship and internship programs to encourage African-American, Hispanic-American and Native-American high school seniors entering college to major

in such fields as the physical sciences and engineering.

In addition, Texaco promises that within five years it will be doing more than \$1 billion worth of business with women- and minority-owned companies and professionals in engineering and construction firms, and law, advertising, accounting, and government and public relations firms.

It said it has already increased the number of women- and minority-owned banks with which it does business from 21 to 50 and that it will expand its use of other banking services and money-management activities with women- and minority owned financial firms. And it intends to double the number of minority- and women-owned wholesaler marketers from 43 to 85, 11 percent of its network, by 2002.

Of course, Texaco still has a long way to go to reach its goals. To its credit, the company, has embarked upon the journey, one that other corporations should follow-- for its report on diversity at Texaco demonstrates that equal opportunity is sound business.