

EDITORIAL

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Campaign Season Is Here

As we approach the midterm elections, we need to remind ourselves of the importance of voter participation in the democratic process. Low voter participation is a chronic illness in this country. The highest voter turnout in American history was in 1960. And even then, less than two-thirds of eligible voters made it to the polls.

Turnout and income
A voter's likelihood to go to the polls on election Day is directly related to that voter's income.

* Less than 40% of people earning less than \$15,000/year vote.

* About 75% of people earning more than \$50,000/year vote.

This creates a vicious cycle. Politicians are not responsive to working class and poor people's needs because they do not vote. Because the politicians are not responsive, the people feel powerless and stay home on election Day.

The only way to break the cycle is to convince lower income people to vote. If these numbers were reversed and 75% of working class and poor people voted, politicians would be forced to be responsive to them regardless of who contrib-

uted to their campaigns.

The Dangers of Low Turnout
To combat apathy, people need to see how the decisions that elected officials make affect their lives every day. The examples of what can happen when voter turnout is especially low are plentiful and frightening. One recent example springs to mind--the 1994-midterm elections.

The average turnout for all congressional districts in 1994 was 36%. The result was a right-wing Congress led by Newt Gingrich bent on dismantling the social safety net and programs like Medicare while giving huge tax breaks to the wealthiest Americans.

Possibilities of High Turnout

South Africa is a perfect example of what can be accomplished when nearly everybody votes. When they finally won the right to vote, Black South Africans United and finally won the right to vote, Black South Africans United and used their power to elect Nelson Mandela.

The stakes this fall are high.
* 435 Congressional races.
* 37 Gubernatorial races.
* 34 U.S. Senate races.
* Thousands of state and local races.

Black History Month Is Here (Again) III

By Prof. McKinley Burt

The following critical analysis of the teaching of history in our schools may extend the parameters of our own running commentary here, "History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past" Nash, Crubtree and Dunn, Alfred A. Knoff, N.Y. 1997.

Principally, my approach, or perspective, has been to retrieve those experiences/lessons that retain their value over time and circumstance. And there is no question but what black people have many hundreds of such well-documented models available to them, whether the American experience or on a world stage. Builders, artists, poets, inventors, educators, entrepreneurs.

Given these facts about such an extensive and authentic data base of relevance, then the remaining questions or issues must be about ease of access (to the many) and/or their motivation and dedication to the task. Where as I have been addressing the latter parameter (for years), "His-

tory On Trial" represents a very recent generation of educators and historians who have gained or assumed enough power to challenge a firmly entrenched establishment. It is only 'that,' at present, a "challenge", but the energy, commitment (and courage) of the 'Young Turks' may yet allow them to successfully engage those who believe the world's history is "inherently and eternally Western." The latter viewpoint we find enthusiastically adopted by E.D. Hirsch, author of the 1987 best-seller, "Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs To Know", Vintage Books.

Several readers say they remember a quarter-page special I presented in the August 8, 1990 Portland Observer, "Where's The Beef: Is it to be Cultural Literacy or European Literacy?" My impassioned polemic headlined my less-than-enthusiastic review of the english professors' argument for "a common store of basic knowledge that would permit all citizens to 'talk the same

language...society would be more equitable, just and unified," he furnished a list "What Every American Should Know"

I point out, of course, that what Dr. Hirsch is about is not only a further rigid exclusion from our history texts of the major contributions to the world's culture and technology by people of color, but a tactic to implement for all time an education system guaranteed to produce an accepted 'Nordic response' from every student.

Hitler's propagandist, Dr. Herman Goebbels, asked no more. Nor did the famed 'liberal' philosopher Locke who designed the Constitution of the Carolinas to perpetuate slavery forever.

These guaranteed, one-hundred percent, 'anglo' lists are not the exclusive domain of the education establishment. Every, teacher and parent (who cares) should be aware of the avalanche of corporation-designed "Ethnic Support Material" that is reaching the school houses during a

'recently discovered' Black History Month. Major firms seem intent on catching up with the tobacco and liquor companies in dollars directed to "Special Markets", e.g. African Americans.

Several teachers and a principal have sent me copies of materials received. All of course highlight, Reverend King, Jackie Robinson, Dr. Carver, and a few cite Crispus Attucks.

But those I've seen present a black whose existence in the Universe began with slavery--there is no Ethiopia, Egypt, Black Popes or Virgins, no Leo Africanus, no Great Pyramid, no great universities in West Africa like Timbuctu, no speech by Napoleon. Standing on the sands of Africa, before the Great pyramid, "Forty centuries of greatness look down upon you."

No sir, there is nothing that would jeopardize a corporation's bottom line, that could provoke objection by either a racist or a fearful curriculum specialist. 'Blacks are just here that's all and we're stuck with them'.

MCI/WorldCom Merger Creates Cause for Alarm

The proposed \$41.8 billion MCI/WorldCom merger, the largest business transaction in history, is potentially devastating to consumers and minority participation in the telecommunications industry. It is monopolistic and anti-competitive on its face and must be stopped.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 was originally presented to the American people as a means of stimulating competition.

It has failed to do so. Rather, it has increased market concentration in fewer and fewer companies, discouraged entry and participation of small and minority businesses, restricted diversity of opinion and perspective, increased prices for consumers, and reduced consumer choices.

And now in just a few months, millions of Americans could face dramatically increased long distance telephone rates as a result of a proposed merger of telecommunications giants, MCI and WorldCom.

Rev. Jackson has called on the FCC to impose a moratorium on major media and telecommunications

*WorldCom is a nonunion company governed by a board of fifteen White males--they are the only one-

RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

mergers until the FCC can establish standards for evaluating whether a merger benefits consumers and promotes minority entrepreneurship and employment.

If the MCI/WorldCom merger is finalized...

* Two companies will control 75% of the long distance telephone market.

* MCI/WorldCom will control 60% of the Internet backbone over which all Internet traffic flows.

* MCI/WorldCom will almost certainly downsize, sending thousands of people to unemployment lines.

WorldCom's Record of Exclusion

race, one-gender board of a major telecommunications company.

* No minorities or women sit on WorldCom's Executive Committee.

* WorldCom has already announced plans to move its headquarters out of Jackson, Mississippi to the suburbs and to move MCI's computer operations from Fairfax, VA to Leesburg, VA--away from African American workforces.

Call To Action

Here is what the Rainbow/PUSH coalition is doing to stop the MCI/WorldCom merger:

* We have petitioned the FCC to deny the merger on public interest grounds. Other petitions

were filed by the Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO, GTE, Bell Atlantic, Bell South, and many other organizations.

* We have formally asked the FCC to hold public hearings on the merger proposal.

* We have filed papers with the Department of Justice to reject the merger on anti-competitive grounds.

* We will hold our own public hearing on media and telecommunications competition in Chicago on March 16-17.

* As a stockholder of both MCI and WorldCom, we will emphasize the issues of redlining, discrimination, and anti-competitive behavior to the companies' stockholders.

What you can do to stop the MCI/WorldCom merger:

* Call or write to the Federal Communications Commission

* Call or write to the Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, Anti-Trust Division

Make your voice heard! The FCC and the Justice Department need to know we oppose this merger.

To Be Equal Re-Discovering Black History

By M. Gasby Greely
(GUEST COLUMNIST)

NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

M. Gasby Greely is Editor-in-Chief of Opportunity Journal and Senior Vice President for Communications and Development of the National Urban League

"I want to expand the place in which we see black people in history and how they functioned," said Danny Glover, the actor, recently, explaining his involvement both in front of and behind the cameras in the made-for-television film, "Buffalo soldiers."

Apt words indeed. That sentiment guided the literary, journalistic and scholarly endeavors of the National Urban League's magazine, Opportunity Journal, during its first publishing era, from 1923 to 1949, and it guides our efforts now that we have revived it after a hiatus of nearly a half century. We think we've made a good effort with our issue just out for Black History Month.

"We were everywhere doing everything!" a colleague fairly shouted recently when I mentioned to her some of the articles the issue contains. Her enthusiasm was meant to underscore how much there yet is of African-American history to be, as she put it, re-discovered.

By that she meant, how much of the facts and circumstances of our long existence in this land remain to

be brought into the mainstream of knowledge about African-American history--and therefore, American history--and how much there is to be gleaned from the oral and written recollections of individuals, and the genealogies of black (and white, and Native American) families. How much there is to be interpreted and perhaps traced from photographs and daguerreotypes.

The roots of African Americans go very deep here. Although nearly all the Africans who came here during the 17th and 18th centuries were brought as slaves, they--because they were human beings--immediately became full-fledged participants in the great struggle for freedom, for the United States, and for themselves.

W. Jeffrey Bolster's essay, drawn from his fascinating 1997 book, Black Jacks: African-American Seamen in the Age of Sail, examines the role black seamen played in creating, out of the cauldron of slavery and racial oppression--and, it must be said, opportunity--what came to be Black America. His work will lead many readers to consider the pre-Civil War history of Africans and African Americans in an entirely new way, as well the companion piece, written by our colleague, Dachell McSweeney, on the black whaling community that flourished on the island of Nantucket before the Civil War.

Molefi Kete Asante, the renowned Afrocentric scholar, presents a powerful essay asserting that African and African-American history must be made a foundation of our schools' curricula in order to help inspire black schoolchildren to achieve. It is a position that deserves the broadest discussion.

We also include my consideration of President Clinton's awarding last year the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award for bravery in battle, to seven black soldiers and sailors--a half-century after their deeds of heroism, as well as a discussion of Dona Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton's important history of the 20th-century civil rights struggle, from their recent book, Dual Agenda: The African-American Struggle for Civil Rights and Economic Equality.

You'll also be inspired by our remembrance of Mallie McGriff Robinson, the mother of that American icon, Jackie Robinson. Read it and you'll understand why we say he was his mother's son. And you'll see that M. Denise Dennis' poignant tribute to her family is, writ large, a tribute to the heritage of all African Americans.

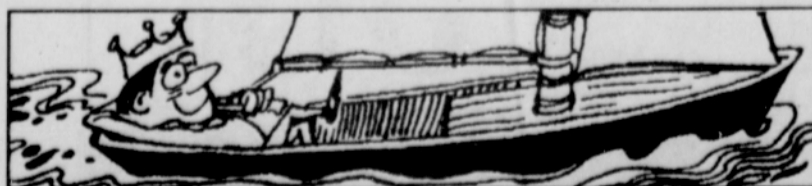
Make no mistake. We're not in favor of a distorted, "feel-good" history that pretends some African Americans, whether male or female, weren't rakes and rascals. No, we want the full version of African-

American history--and thus, American history.

We want it because, as Professor Asante makes clear, it is important for our children to understand their ethnic heritage as well as know the truth about history, and their history: that African Americans have never sat on the sidelines of the great drama of the American experience, watching as others "made history." We've always sought to forge our own path and to take our place as equal members of American society.

That the legacy of the Past still inspires the men and women, boys and girls of today is evident in our other articles--in our tribute to five Movement stalwarts who passed away last year; in our profiles of accomplished entrepreneurs, Ed Lewis, president of Essence Communications, and Charles M. Collins, the Urban League's senior Vice chairman; and in our taking note of the energy and determination of the teens from the youth programs of our Toledo and Pittsburgh affiliates. They marched all the way to our annual conference in Washington, D.C. last summer, and plan to repeat that this summer for our conference in Philadelphia.

Their determination tells me that re-discovering our history gives us our marching orders for the future.



Sailing as a sport dates back to the 17th century. Originating in the Netherlands, it was introduced in England by Charles II.



Letter To The Editor

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