

EDITORIAL

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Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

Dear Editor,

As parents (members of the Jefferson Community) who served on the interview committee for the selection of the principal for Jefferson High School, we are writing to express our extreme disappointment and several concerns. The superintendent and other top level administrators of Portland Public Schools blatantly disregarded the process they set up to select Jefferson's leader. We believe that we, as supporters of a fair and open process, have been disrespected. Further, we believe that the candidates who followed the process outlined by the District were not treated fairly.

Our committee worked from 5:30 until after midnight (with no dinner or snacks other than beverages) to interview the slate of candidates, discuss their strengths and weaknesses and to come to a consensus regarding the three names that should be recommended to the District for consideration. As a committee, we were lead to believe that all of the candidates came from a prescreened list. The fact that the candidates came before us was an indication that they met the District's criteria and were qualified to assume the position. If, in fact, top level District administrators perceived the candidates to be weak or not fully qualified to fill the position, then the candidates failing to meet the District's criteria should not have been scheduled for an interview. Our time is very valuable! It was our understanding that if none of the candidates interviewed were recommended for consideration that the search would be reopened. We, as parent representatives, were fully prepared to participate in interviews of additional candidates.

It is an insult to us as volunteers (who have a vested interest in the selection of a principal who can build a quality academic program and select teachers with excellent skills and high expectations for all students) to have our recommendations totally disregarded and to find that the process has been changed without any explanation of notification to committee members. Our time and energy were wasted! We, the parents, the other members of the interview committee, the candidates and the greater Jefferson community deserve respect. The manner in which this selection process has been handled demeans and devalues our participation.

Let us make it perfectly clear that our concerns should not be interpreted to be a negative vote against Lela Roberts, for we do not have enough information to draw any final conclusions. Any questions that we have center around the fact that the majority of her experience is at the elementary school level and that her selection violates the process that the District established. Lela Roberts was not on that list.

The press conference announcing the District's selection of an "interim" principal raises several questions. Why change the process and have another interim principal? Does anybody care about the students? Our children and all of the students of Jefferson High School deserve to have some stability. The relationships between parents and the District administration, the administration and the teachers, the teachers and the students are all strained by lack of communication and failure to follow the process outlined. The relationship of CMAC to this process remains unclear to us.

Why was CMAC included in the press conference announcing the new principal? Has any member of their organization spoken with the interview committee or other Jefferson parents? We are from the community and we want people to speak with us before they speak for us. Why was the press conference held at a church rather than at Jefferson High School? We respect Bishop Wells but what does he have to do with Jefferson High School? Our community is diverse and we expect that any representation of us will give consideration to that fact. A press conference regarding the leadership of Jefferson should be held at a place where all members of the community would feel free to attend. Notification of our committee would have appropriate. (It was obvious that the District had the time to notify CMAC.)

In closing, we must note that we have contacted Diana Snowden and she has not returned our phone calls. This is unacceptable. How hard is it to respond to individuals whose time you freely use? it is our expectation that the Board of Education and the Superintendent will contact us. Failure to do so will make it clear that the words "we want parent involvement at Jefferson High School" are nothing more than rhetoric. We would like to have the next steps and timelines shared with us by District administrators not the news media. Please communicate with the Jefferson parents and community directly. We have not authorized any one individual or group to share our ideas or present concerns.

John E. Lee, Linda A. Brooks, Judy A. Brown, and Antoinette Edwards

perspectives

When Reality Is Real, Not Virtual, IV Conclusion

BY MCKINLEY BURT

In 1899, Charles H. Duell, director of the U.S. patent office announce, "Everything that can be invented, has been invented!"

As several of the black youths in our neighborhood science clubs pointed out, this gentleman could scarcely be blamed for such a myopic observation, since this was a time when widely publicized technology essential to the industrial revolution had already been patented. These were the highly visible contributions attributed to 'giants' like Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell (a telephone), and Samuel F.B. Morse (a telegraph).

And since I always provide the groups with relevant supplemental reading material, they also were able to point out that unknown to Mr. Duell, the Patent Office Director, Mr. Henry E. Baker, a black Assistant Examiner, was about to publish the next year, "Four Giant Volumes on Black Inventors." By 1913 his list numbered over a thousand.

Mr. Baker had accomplished this crucial task of ethnic documentation by simply polling all the patent attorneys in the country from his master list. "Have you ever prosecuted a patent for a black man and if so, please advise as to particu-

lars?" When I examined the treasures at Howard University's Moorland collection of Black Patents; I assure you that I felt the same surge of pride and identity as Baker from the replies.

And as I emphasized in the recent series "Identity and Motivation," this association with talent, pride and compassion, is just the sensitivity we wish to inoculate in our youth. The 'whole' person is as important a concept as mastery of instruments, tools, and machines from computers, telescopes and electronic circuits, to robots, lasers, satellites, scalpels and x-rays.

And it is not as if the "blackout" on seminal African American inventors stopped there at the turn of the century. One of my white former PSU students, now an associate professor in economics at a prestigious Ivy League University, cites a particular problem that has not gone away in the 25 years since he was in my class. Identity, Identity, Identity!

"Prof. Burt, I am sure you remember telling us that though you had written a book detailing the key inventions of black innovators who were absolutely essential to the development of America's manufacturing, transportation and construction industries over a

hundred year period from 1860 to 1960- nevertheless, the most respected economists who assess America's industrial growth completely omit mention of the men or their inventions."

"Well, nothing has changed. Today, the work of highly regarded Dr. Joseph A. Schumpeter (Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy, 1950) and some of the conclusions you based on your experience in industry are being paraphrased in the legal battle between Microsoft and the Justice Department. Schumpeter insisted that new technology is the competitive difference that creates monopolies and he too amassed his database without considering black inventors. And, unaware, 'Justice' says, "he is certainly right but we want to see opportunity and democracy in the marketplace."

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the Science Club Kids (and supporting parents) are going full blast. Sometimes enthusiasm must be tempered while experience is gained and structure is better understood. "We've got to have some spin-offs into business and investment clubs-maybe an aero club. What about some 'water sports' that are new? We saw those Africans racing down a river in a

style similar to those 'Chinese Dragon Boats.' A guy was beating this 'bad' drum to keep the rowers in time and I've got the tape." You always tell them, "We need counselors, technicians."

Others talk of improving grades and SAT scores, and about "tutoring 'little kids'." Some say they hope to reach the point to where a graduation class can organize and contract a moonlight river cruise on its own-"like mom said your generation had the initiative to do." More and more we begin to see that genes don't change. We simply have been on constant guard against the 'gatekeepers,' the fearful, the weak.

Last week's comment on "model-building" certainly got attention. Many kids (and parents) say that it's much more fun and instructive to build many toys than to buy them ready made and model boats, trains, planes, helicopters, cars, trains or bulldozers. And, then, there are others who want to do arts and crafts. It seems that if allowed, youths would be a lot more about self-discovery and disciplined development. That is, if not compressed into a programmed vise by 'experts.'

Smoking and Teens of Color

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Enough is enough. The data has been coming out slowly over the past year or so, as the tobacco industry investigations and agreements have been release. First, tobacco industry documents released earlier this year showed that they had targeted African Americans in their marketing. Now, data released by the U.S. Surgeon General shows that smoking among African American youth has increase 80% over the past seven years and that it has increased 34% among Hispanic youth.

Communities of color are already in a health crisis. Our rates of cancer, hypertension, heart disease, and asthma are two, three or four times those of white Americans. All of these life threatening diseases can be related to smoking. Indeed, more than 47,000 African American die of smoking related illnesses every year. The death rate among

Native Americans from tobacco abuse is double that of other Americans.

The fact is that tobacco use is the single leading preventable cause of death in the United States. This means that the premature deaths of tens of thousands of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans which were caused by smoking did not have to be. Tens of thousand of mothers and fathers, grandparents, sisters and brothers who might still have been enjoying life with their families if they had not smoked cigarettes.

The Centers for Disease Control,

which released the latest figures on smoking among U.S. teenagers, does not know why the enormous increase occurred in African American and Latino/a youth and will continue to look for the reasons for these frightening numbers. Meanwhile, we must say enough is enough and lead our children away from a shortened life of tobacco addiction.

Everyday more than 3,000 young people across the nation become daily smokers. Most of them start smoking not understanding or believing that tobacco is as addictive as heroin,

cocaine or alcohol. Most of them don't believe the health consequences will ever touch their own lives. We've got to tell them something different.

Almost 80% of Hispanic males who begin smoking as teens smoke their whole lifetime. For African American males that number is 70%. That means that once they start, they are hooked for a lifetime, probably a shortened lifetime at that. When those numbers are combined with others which show 50% higher incidences of lung cancer rate for African American males, then it is time for us to say enough is enough.

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