

EDITORIAL

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p e r s p e c t i v e s 'Supper Table Input; What Was It? What Now? IV

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Civil Rights Journal The More Things Change...

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Two years ago we marked the 100th anniversary of the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision which established the nation's "separate but equal" doctrine and legalized separate public and educational facilities for African Americans across the South. That case was the first wave of oppression of African Americans which included taking away the right to vote, the dramatic increase of lynchings, and the burning of black churches which were all a reaction to the Reconstruction era of the South.

There are those of us who wonder if we're not living the Second Reconstruction right now. For example, the Supreme Court handed down decisions regarding the redistricting of majority African American voting districts which may well lead to fewer African American congressional representatives. For example, more than 200 African American churches have been burned in the past few years and there are still African American churches burning, albeit the numbers are smaller now than they were two years ago.

And then there is Alabama. In 1986 I was part of a new group of Freedom Riders, young people led by the Commission for Racial Justice who visited the sites of the civil rights movement in Alabama. We went to Montgomery, we went to Selma, we went to Birmingham. And we went to Greene County where a group of African American citizens were being persecuted and prosecuted by the state of Alabama, which was aided by the F.B.I.

Now it seems more than a de-

cade later, things are still the same in Alabama. Indeed, some of the same tactics used by state officials to keep black voters from voting more than a decade ago have been dusted off and are being used again. They are accusing black activists and community leaders of voter fraud, specifically around absentee ballots. In the 1980's eight people were indicted on 212 felony counts and in the end not a single felony conviction was reached.

Now they are accusing some of the same leaders of "conspiracy" to commit voter fraud, a charge which is very difficult to defend oneself against. Six people have already been convicted and their cases are on appeal and six more have been charged. All are active members of the Alabama New South Coalition, one of the most vital grassroots political organizations in the country.

These 1990's indictments grew out of an investigation of the 1994 elections and were spearheaded by Jefferson Sessions, former Alabama Attorney General and now U.S. Senator, who as U.S. District Attorney in Mobile also sparked the 1980's indictments. As in the 1980's Alabama state investigators teamed with F.B.I. agents to conduct the investigations, who clearly intimidate the elderly, often poorly-educated voters who often vote absentee.

Meanwhile, the Alabama legislature has passed a law making it more difficult to vote. It requires a picture I.D. to vote and requires half of the polling officials to be Democrats and half Republican, creating highly-partisan polling sites.

Black elected officials in Alabama are also finding themselves under attack. Baseless charges were filed against State Senator Hank

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

Last week's article should have been labeled number "III" of this series but, actually, the most grievous error I could make would be a failure to fully describe this nurturing process; and that could quite easily take a book or two.

My ending note was, "lots of guns in the house"--and that generally held true for the neighbors, the friends of the family and the parents of his friends--wall mounted or secret cache--because it has been the nature of kids since time began to seek out and mischievously reveal anything of a forbidden or confidential nature. "Be my father's is the biggest."

I was raised in the southern city of St. Louis, Mo., where the possession of firearms was the life-style of the not so rich and the not so famous and those who were much better off. As with most of Oregon, this way of life just 'was' and did not depend upon the loud and strident advocacy of an NRA or Charleton Heston ("Moses").

However, none of these factors provoked or encouraged the frightening carnage being carried out by today's children. That nurturing and internally controlled home environ-

ment with its solidifying dinner hour and similar canons of intimacy and respect produced, for the most part, a coping and disciplined youngster--without 'Prozac!'

But, now, that tightly wrapped social fabric of discipline and civility is being rent a surrender by (among others) greedy electronic invaders of our privacy and our moral standards in general. The full depth of their dangerous and rapacious assault that we can no longer discover any significant correlation with such factors as family, wealth, education, geographic area, social class or parent's education.

In these days of alienated children, some with guns and bombs at the ready, it is difficult for many to realize that in the 'old days' people would carry their rifles on the subway on the way to target practice. And in the viciously racist, segregated social structure that constrained my grandfather's manhood, he and his friends nevertheless maintained their "Rod and Gun Club" at the outskirts of the city. And nothing was thought of it--or of me the little black kid cleaning shotguns, or triggering the clay pigeons (a dollar every Saturday).

And many of my correspondents

say that it is as equally difficult to realize that the NRA (National Rifle Association) has grown, intelligent members who cannot comprehend that the 'social landscape' has changed. That further of the "heroes" from the Springfield High School seemed to function in a world all of his own--where, incredibly he seemed to believe that the circumstances of his family were universal. An intact, caring nuclear family, with committed parents observing the "supper table input" and related canons.

While it is quite difficult to find humor in any related situations, this being life, some does arise. A caller was trying to make a case for a sort of 'morality play' built around "those nice fairy tales we enjoyed as little children." This lady seemed to have forgotten what really went on in those 'murderous' days.

But this makes my point exactly. Our (earlier) generation had been nurtured, socialized and civilized to the extent that we did not confuse fiction with reality. For instance, I seriously doubt if these children can handle the new bloody electronic carnage coming from the 'Ile of Wight': "Apocalypse Now" and "Armageddon."

Where do the readers think we should go from here? Can individuals, organizations provide more "Supper Tables" in the community?

For another look at what most of us seemed to have missed in childhood, see "The hard Facts of the "Grimms' Fairy Tales," Maria Tatar, Princeton University Press, 1987. As I look back I now realized that a child sees what he wants to see, hears what he wants to hear and believes what he wants to believe. A child is a child, is a child, is a child!

"Even those who remember that Snow White's stepmother arranges the murder of her stepdaughter, that doves peck out the eyes of Cinderella's stepsister, that Briar Rose's suitors bleed to death on the hedge surrounding her castle, or that a mad rage drives Rumpelstiltskin to tear himself in two will be surprised by Maria Tatar's revelations about the tales of the brothers Grimm in their unpergated form. Murder, mutilation, cannibalism, infanticide, and incest: the darker side of classic fairy tales figures as the subject matter for this intriguing study of Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's *Nursery and Household Tales*."

The Assault on Educational Opportunity

**By HUGH B. PRICE
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE**

Everybody knows that education is the key to economic self-reliance. The better educated you are, the better off you'll be personally, and the more you can contribute to society.

That's why the assault on expanding opportunity in higher education for students from racial and ethnic minority groups is so dangerous to the economic and social health of the country.

Nowhere is that danger more sharply underscored than in America's two most diverse locales: California and New York City.

In California, Governor Pete Wilson led the drive to pass Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in university admissions.

The predictable result has been a sharp drop in students of color accepted at the state's elite universities.

Last year, 260 black students enrolled as freshmen at the University of

California at Berkeley. This September, the number will plunge by more than 50 percent--to 98. This spring African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans made up 10 percent of those accepted for next fall, compared to 23 percent last year.

It's much the same story at the University of California at Los Angeles.

On the East Coast, Governor George Pataki of New York and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani are trying to narrow access to the 11 four-year and 6 two-year colleges of the City University of New York. They proposed sharply curtailing the network of remedial-education courses that since 1970 have helped tens of thousands of CUNY students achieve two-year and four-year degrees.

The recent decision of the CUNY trustees to do so will especially hurt thousands of highly motivated black, Latino, and Asian-American students, many of whom are struggling to get ahead academically while working and raising families.

No one can disagree that the controversial open-admissions program transformed CUNY in one stunning respect:

In 1969, the year before the open-admissions policy began, 91 percent of students at CUNY's four-year colleges--located in the most racially and ethnically-diverse city in the world--were white; 9 percent were not.

Today, nearly 70 percent of CUNY's students are African-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-American.

In other words, open admissions produced at CUNY an enormous expansion of educational opportunity across New York City's color line. Dismantling it will sharply curtail access of people of color to educational opportunity. Try as they might, the proponents of the move can't obscure that prospect.

What makes these assaults on educational opportunity such a threat to the society is that studies clearly show the concrete benefits of helping people reach their highest potential educationally.

In California, African American and Latino students who could have handled the work at Berkeley and UCLA are now being denied a shot at the best education their state has to offer.

Clinton Picks Up Where Bush Left Off

Portland Senior citizen Shines as a Daily Point of Light

Mildred Bennett, of Portland, Oregon, was named the Daily Point of Light recipient for June 1. The Daily Points of Light awards are given daily by the Points of Light Foundation, the Knights of Columbus and the Corporation for National Service. The award initiative is a national recognition program that calls public attention, on a daily basis, to the contributions that volunteers are making toward solving local and national social problems, especially as they relate to young people.

Bennett, a retired Portland State University mathematics professor, volunteers her time every day tutoring students of all different ages, with her primary emphasis is on children. She enhances students' desire and tools of learning at 14 different sites. In her spare time she tutors anyone else who needs help, including college-aged students and adults lacking math proficiency.

In early 1994, Bennett began working with Safehaven, a church program providing after-school services in a low-income region. Since then, she has expanded her tutoring to include several more sites and initiated a program where her older students volunteer to help tutor the younger children. Bennett custom-tailors the lesson plans and games to stimulate within each participant the joy of learning math.

Students often visit Bennett at her

home on Sundays for extra tutoring. The program is funded by donations from residents and corporations in greater Safehaven. Through her program, teachers continue to find that students have a renewed interest in mathematics and perform better in school.

Both President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush have endorsed the recently revived Daily Points of Light Award and both will send a congratulatory letter to each award recipient.

For those interested in nominating an individual or organization for the award, please mail nominations to The Daily Points of Light Award, 1400 I Street, NW Washington, DC or call (202) 729-8184.

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