

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## Letter To The Editor

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

### To the Editor,

In a recent issue of *The Portland Observer* (June 3rd) announced the formation of a partnership between the Vancouver-Clark County Parks and Recreation Dept. and the U.S. Marine Corps for the completion of a park expansion project. I do not understand why such a partnership makes sense to the parties involved, including the Operating Engineers Union Local 701.

The involvement of the U.S. Armed Forces in public works projects like this one—as well as partnerships with local schools and police departments—is increasingly commonplace in communities throughout the nation as the Pentagon struggles to justify its bloated defense budget. Most often, these partnerships are praised for the money they “save” and the volunteers they make available to schools and community groups.

In reality, there is no savings as project costs are merely shifted from local to federal coffers. The same budgetary slight of hand occurs when military personnel “volunteer” in schools and other community settings as part of their assigned (and paid) duties.

Why should military personnel be assigned to work that is unrelated to the mission of the U.S. Armed Forces, especially when there are trained civilians ready and able to take these jobs? And if training is the problem, why not develop training programs for citizens in need of good jobs rather than stopping the gap with military personnel?

I don't understand why union leadership would support non-union military personnel taking what would otherwise be union jobs. The same issue applies when military personnel teach classes in local schools in place of union teachers. Furthermore, I find it alarming that uniformed military personnel are becoming increasingly visible in the civilian sector—in our schools, community groups and public parks. We do not yet live in a police state, and these are not the role-models that I want for my children.

Sincerely,  
John Grueschow

## President Clinton Announces Market-Based Affirmative Action Policy

The Democratic National Committee today hailed President Clinton's announcement to establish a market based affirmative action policy that will expand opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses.

This new policy will allow affirmative action to be used in industries making up about three-fourths of all government contracts. The President said that the new policy “continues my

promise to mend, not end affirmative action, expand opportunities for small disadvantaged businesses.” [Washington Post, 6/25/98].

Representative Maxine Waters (D-California), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, said the new policy will “provide opportunities for qualified minority businesses to compete openly and fairly for Federal Government contracting oppor-

tunities.” [New York Times, 6/25/98]

“At a time when conservative Republicans have launched an all out effort to dismantle all affirmative action programs, every American who believes in fairness and equal opportunity for all should support President Clinton's efforts to level the playing field for minority-owned businesses,” said Steve Grossman, DNC National Chair.

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

Last week, many readers found it hard to believe that this “spelling nonsense” had been going on for over 170 years. It was equally difficult to comprehend the shocking state of teacher education in a state with the highest number of colleges and universities per capita in the nation.

The New York Times News Service (7/2/98) reported that Massachusetts' teacher education system had carried Noah Webster's “simplification” procedure to new heights - or lows! Apparently, it no longer would be necessary for a teacher to know, define, or presumably, spell the standard parts of speech. And as for their intended pupils (?).

When 60% of prospective teachers failed the state exam for basic competence, they were criticized by a legislator as “idiots” who could not define what a noun or verb was, or the word “imminent”. Others wondered why few graduates of education programs could answer questions such as, “what is a preposition?” Passing grade was “C”.

Local teachers whom I've known for years asked if Boston has a “Eurobonic” equivalent of Oakland's “Ebonics” - for-

mally known as the “Standard English Proficiency Program,” most exam-takers were not black.

Several of these teachers, former students of mine at PSU, recalled a special two-page spread that appeared in the Portland Observer, July 25, 1990. The late Joyce Washington, publisher and dedicated education advocate, had directed me to design a “hard-hitting message” to the community in support of a frustrated “desegregation watchdog group”. Schoolboard response to parental concerns had been desultory.

I included a description of my highly critical testimony in Salem before the legislature's committee on Teacher Standards and Practices, then chaired by Legislator Vera Katz. The key issue was the same as the present controversy over “teacher certification tests” in Massachusetts, the lowering of standards. And my answer was the same as that of those Americans of 170 years ago. “The blind cannot lead the blind.”

I've been reminded that it was only a partial victory. What else is new? One

### “Ebonics For White Folks” II

need not go to the inner city, simply pick up the daily newspaper: “insistence - Sattelite - misspell” and the confusion between “effect and affect” It would not do any good to call for “Mrs. Malaprop.” The School Board?

But back to our good friend and benefactor, Noah Webster “When I had come to the last word, I was seized with a trembling which made it somewhat difficult to hold my pen steady for writing.” He was 67 years old and had just completed 27 years of dedicated research by oil lamp, no less. But before that, he had put in half a lifetime of his “Speller”. This year of 1825 was important in more ways than one.

I was further reminded that earlier this year I had written a piece on a much earlier contribution to education by our woefully permissive New England state, “Massachusetts High School Law, 1827.” Everyone in the educational establishment was not that happy that I had publicized a set of “teacher standards and practices” of 170 years ago (about the time Webster got his magnum opus roll-

ing).  
... In addition to United States history, single entry bookkeeping, geometry, algebra and surveying, shall be competent to instruct in Latin and Greek languages, history, rhetoric and logic.”

But then, too, I have written about my experience at the John Marshall Elementary School from 1927 to 1935. An old ghetto building in Central St. Louis, MO. and in a state of somewhat disrepair. Doomed to inherit five to ten year-old books from the city's white school systems and to beg for needed supplies and equipment (Today, in many cities, one must monitor the “Federal Grant and Title Game.” Rascals still among us).

Despite all odds, there is no way those committed African American teachers (all female) would allow you to leave Marshall headed for high school without thorough mastery of the “parts of speech.” And, of course, subject predicate agreement, an introduction to the meaning of “tense, mood and voice,” verb and object, and punctuation. The “rules of engagement” mandated homework and use of library. No “Ebonics.”

- Continued next week

## Make Our Numbers Count

BY HUGH B. PRICE

PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

The U.S. Census Bureau has nearly completed its month-long trial in three areas across the country for the new way it plans to conduct the population count in the year 2000.

No doubt, some of you may be thinking: Now, if ever there's a subject to make the eyes glaze over, it's the details of conducting the Census.

If that's what you think, think again. Remember that this decennial event provides the demographic data that literally fleshes out that ideal called the American nation. The information in the Census—racial and ethnic, economic and educational, and so on—tells us who we, the American people, are. More practically, remember also that the census count greatly determines how federal and state funds are allocated.

Its findings also play a significant role in the drawing and re-drawing of election districts for state legislatures

and the House of Representatives. And they are even used by many businesses to help determine how-and where-best to market their products, whether it's soap or a supermarket.

There are other compelling reasons to think seriously about the Census. For one thing, America's economic recovery is welcome news. But pockets of high unemployment and poverty that only the census can detect still exist.

For another, President Clinton and the governors keep hailing the supposed success of welfare reform because so many folks have been dropped and pushed off the public assistance rolls.

But the government has never—and

has little incentive now-to track what's become of them: Are more people relying on food pantries? Have more people doubled up in households with relatives?

The census can document what's really happening. African Americans, along with other people of color, must take a special interest in the upcoming Census count. We must see it as a way to make sure that more of us are properly counted-so that our true numbers count.

There's a specific reason for that concern. The 1990 Census missed 10 million people nationwide and counted 6 million people twice. The final count was off by 4 million.

Significantly, most of the missed 10

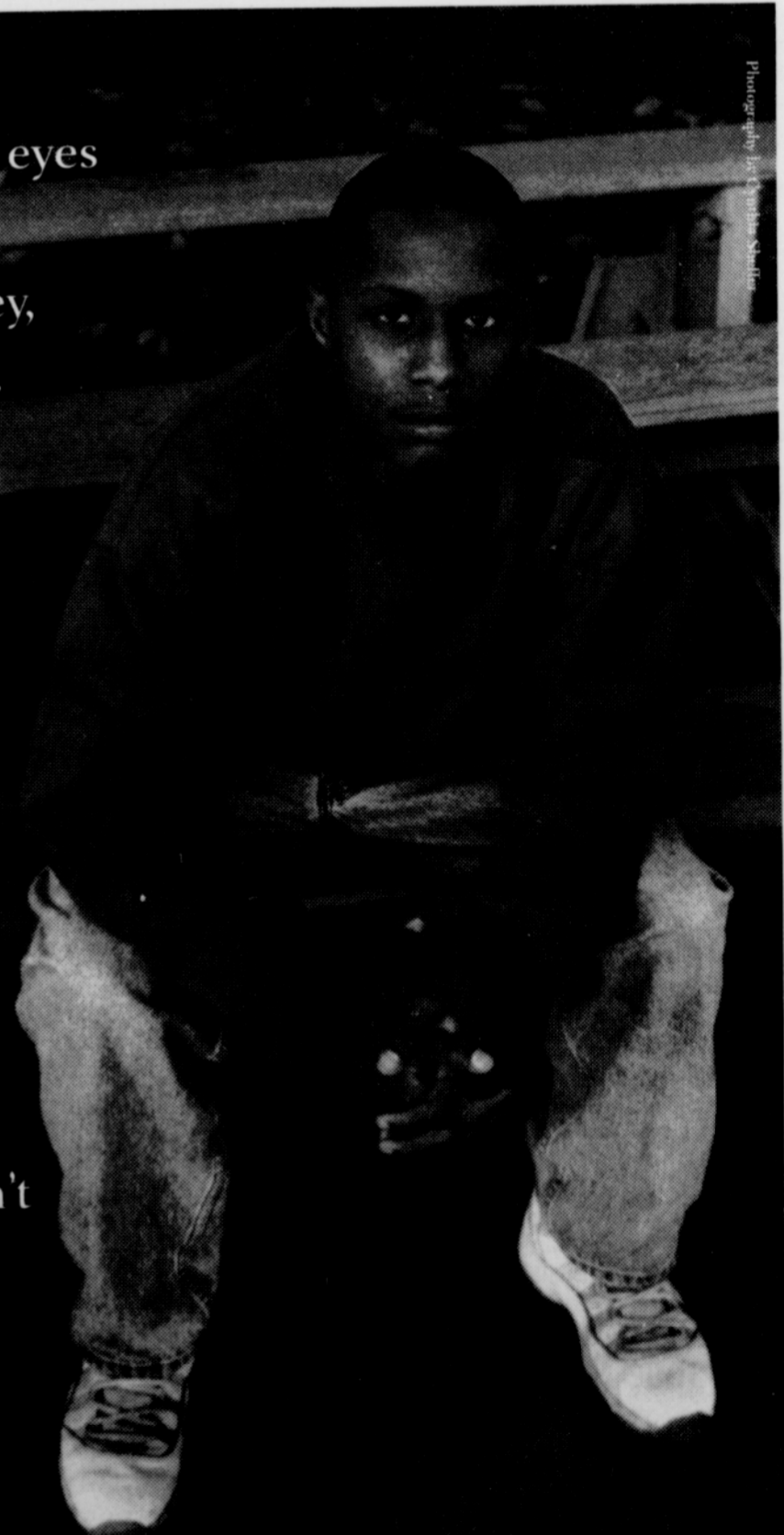
million were African Americans in inner cities and Hispanic Americans in Texas, New Mexico, and California.

Most of the 6 million who were counted twice were college students and affluent whites who own more than one home.

The Census predicts that if it uses the traditional way of counting every head—an estimated 275 million in 2000—it will miss about 5 million people.

That's why it's trying something new. It's called statistical sampling, an approach which mixes the traditional house-to-house attempt to count every person in a neighborhood with a simultaneous sample of 10 percent of households in that neighborhood.

Ten thousand eyes  
are on me,  
shouting Casey,  
go all the way.  
First base,  
second base,  
third base.  
Make your  
move today.  
Do it, Casey,  
do it.  
Score,  
mighty Casey,  
score.  
But I just don't  
get it.  
Is that what  
girls are for?



If you don't talk with your kids about sex, who will? Be sure to start an honest, open dialogue with them at an early age. Call for a free booklet that can help you discuss all kinds of tough issues like sex, AIDS and violence.

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