

# EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily Reflect Or Represent The Views Of The Portland Observer

## p e r s p e c t i v e s The Medium Is The Message: Especially In Education

### Attention Readers!

Please take a minute to send us your comments. We're always trying to give you a better paper and we can't do it without your help. Tell us what you like and what needs improvement... any suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. We take criticism well! Get your powerful pens out NOW and address your letters to: Editor, Reader Response, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

### The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680) Established in 1970

Charles Washington  
Publisher & Editor  
Gary Ann Taylor  
Business Manager  
Laphael Wright  
Graphic Design

Mark Washington  
Distribution Manager  
Larry J. Jackson, Sr.  
Director of Operation  
Iesha Williams  
Graphic Design

Contributing Writers:  
Professor McKinley Burt,  
Lee Perlman,  
Joy Ramos

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,  
Portland, Oregon 97211  
503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015  
Email: pdxobserv@aol.com

Deadline for all submitted materials:  
Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday, 12:00pm

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes To: Portland Observer,  
P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

Periodicals postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

Subscriptions: \$60.00 per year

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

### SUBSCRIBE TO The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer can be sent directly to your home for only \$30.00 per year. Please fill out, enclose check or money order, and mail to:

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER; PO BOX 3137  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip-Code: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## Trillion Dollar Roundtable

On Wednesday, July 15th, the Rainbow/Push Coalition Wall Street Project convened a "Trillion Dollar Roundtable" in New York—a meeting of corporate, labor, and governmental leaders who collectively advise \$2 trillion in pension funds and private equity capital. Rev. Jackson and Sandy Weill, Chairman and CEO of Travelers, co-chaired the event. discussion focused on vehicles to transport capital to underserved urban and rural American communities to expand the marketplace and create economic growth.

### We Invest Overseas, But Not at Home

We have a number of vehicles to transport capital to markets overseas (OPIC, IMF, Export/Import Bank, etc.), but inadequate vehicles to transport capital to underserved America. Where there are vehicles for investment, American corporations are eager to build trade relationships wherever they might be.

\*Polish American Development Bank-The U.S. established a formula for long-term, concessionary rate loans to help build Poland and increase American business opportunities there. It has worked.

\*Coca-Cola and Pepsi each announced major investments in Uganda during the President's trip there.

\*On the President's recent trip to China, GM, GE, and Motorola traveled with the President looking for new opportunities in an opening market.

It is good that we invest in markets overseas to create high volume consumers for American products, but as Jesus asked, "How can you see a splinter in your neighbor's eye, but not see a log in your own?"

### United Bank of Philadelphia and Dr. Emma Chappell

Prior to 1992 when United Bank opened, six banks served Philadelphia. they collectively issued \$80

million in loans per year, but less than \$3 million of that money went to minorities—in a city where African Americans and Latinos represent half of the population. There was a desperate need for a bank to serve the underserved in Philadelphia.

After overcoming tremendous obstacle, Dr. Chappell opened United Bank with \$6 million in 1992. Today, United Bank of Philadelphia is worth \$120 million—2000% growth in just seven years! There is growth potential in the inner city.

### Tough Questions Answered

Skeptics might ask, "It is all well and good that we invest in underserved America during strong economic times, but what happens when the economy slows down and pressures to meet fiduciary responsibilities increase?"

Sandy Weill and Jim Hill, Oregon State Treasurer and President of the National Association of State Treasurers offered direct, clear answers.

\*Treasurer Hill said that, regard-

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

The "Medium is (still) the Message," and no number of assaults upon the messenger can change a fundamental truth. Of course, the status of the messenger always is to be considered, and there are those who would shape their opinions accordingly.

And in the particular case we have the following comments of Dr. John Silber, the chancellor of Boston University and chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education: These opinions are no less relevant (or critical) than those of the readers—or my own.

"The controversy surrounding the (teacher) test has obscured the real story, which is that so many prospective public school teachers failed a test that a bright 10th grader could pass without difficulty. This is a telling indictment of higher education in America."

Dr. Silber also made the following observations after citing some unbelievable garbage. "No

responsible person would subject anyone's children, much less his own, to such teachers...This examination was not exceedingly demanding."

Many readers of The Portland Observer, would nod in assent with this disgusted chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education. just two weeks ago a very upset retired, African American public school teacher unleashed a scathing indictment of destructive and racist practices in Northeast elementary schools.

Her angry and factual response appeared in the "Letters From Readers" section and cited, among other 'crimes,' the dumping into black schools of the type of incompetence described by Dr. Silber. Obviously the mix with the decently prepared instructors would make it almost impossible to assess

the problems in an effective manner; "blow the school up?"

I made the rounds of a couple of coffee shops and attended a school meeting of irate parents. The community is trying to get on top of this thing; paying close attention to those scary headlines regarding teacher tester and standards. A parent observed, "Can you believe that the teacher's union is finally making noises about 'professional standards' and what 'they' can do to improve things?"

It was very rewarding to hear a number of quotes from two of my recent series in the Portland Observer: "Webster's First Dictionary Featured Eurobonics: Ebonics for White Folks" & "Family Matters: The Way It Was." The series "Supper Table Input" also was mentioned.

It seems that hundreds of copies of my "best" articles were mailed locally and nationally

and some quotes are appearing on the NET. This a cause that I (and others) took up years ago but evidently we were the wrong messengers and, indeed, some were assaulted. But it just may be that we now have added weight from the top. Are the top people getting worried or 'embarrassed'?

It is very reassuring to find that parents are getting sharper all the time. WE hope it is not too late. For instance, in that 'Dr. Silber' Oregonian article of July 12, 'Dismal Results On Teacher Test Underscore Reform Need,' he is quoted, "...This is a telling indictment of 'higher education' in America."

Across the board, his statement was described as a typical blatant evasion of the issue. All audiences cited the standards for language skills I described for elementary schools before World War II. This is where our problem begins, not in the university. We are not fooled. - Continued next week.

## To Be Equal A Clear, Consistent Message

BY HUGH B. PRICE  
PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

How long does it take for an ethnic group in America to climb out of poverty? And how can we know when significant progress is being made? What will the rate of progress be for African Americans?

The answer to that old American question is being fashioned right before our eyes these days through the stories of striving and success African Americans have posted in the three decades since the civil rights triumphs of the 1960s.

The answer is also being crafted by the nation's—and Black America's—response to the problems which continue to beset poor black neighborhoods, families, and individuals.

I was drawn to consider this very broad question when the federal National Center for Health Statistics released its annual study of births in America earlier this month. Its most surprising finding: The birth rate for unmarried black women, one of the flashpoints in the debate over race in America, has reached its lowest point in 40 years.

According to the federal survey, encompassing 3.9 million births in 1996, the last year for which figures are available, the birth rate for unmarried black women was 74.4 births per 1,000 women. That is a remarkable drop from the peak birth rate reached just nine years ago of 90.7 per 1,000 unmarried black women.

The out-of-wedlock birth rate has declined for all age groups of black women, federal researchers found; and it comes amid a significant overall downward trend in birth. Fewer babies were born in 1996 than in any year since 1987. But black teen girls, until recently, the group with the highest level of births, showed the most dramatic birth-rate decline.

Ten births among African Americans fell by 21 percent between 1991 and 1996, to just over 9 percent of all black teenage girls. Hispanic-American teens are now most likely to give birth, although their rates also fell, from nearly 11 percent in 1995 to just over 10 percent in 1996, their first significant drop since 1991.

(For all teens, the overall 1996 birth rate was 54.7 for every 1,000 young women ages 15 to 19, down from the 1991 rate of 62.1)

"There's been no letup, and it's not been slowing down," Stephanie J. Ventura, the federal demographer who wrote the report, told the New York Times. "And it's not just for teenagers. For all black women under 30, the declines have been really big."

The figures took much of the health community by surprise.

But demographers and health experts said that the good news probably results from a combination of several different things: the precaution, including both increased use of contraceptives and abstinence from sex, the AIDS epidemic is causing some men and women to take; the impact of sex education, either within or outside of schools; and efforts by some organization to encourage abstinence or the use of contraceptives.

Dr. Donna E. Shalala, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, said referring to the decline in the black teen birth rate, "What is significant is that these declines are in every state. I give a lot of credit to the African-American community, which has put out a clear, consistent message from the churches, from the schools, and all sorts of civic organizations, a drumbeat to young women and young men that they should not become parents until they are truly ready to support a child; that having children too early will limit their options."

That's one of the significant points to consider about this positive surprise: the importance of sending out a clear, consistent message.

The message that has been "beamed"

to young people in more intense fashion over the past decade has been to alert them to a vitally important fact of life: Nearly 80 percent of children born to unwed teen-agemothers grow up in poverty.

Put positively, the message has urged them to follow three simple steps to give themselves—and their future children—a chance to avoid a life of poverty:

First, finish high school.

Second, get married before having their first child.

And third, hold off having that child until they're over 20 years old themselves, and equipped to provide for their family.

The federal statistics indicate that our children are getting the message.

It's not being Pollyannish to celebrate that—even as we recognize the need to continue to work to reduce the still unacceptably high out-of-wedlock birth rate. (69.8 percent of black children were born out-of-wedlock in 1996, compared to nearly 22 percent for non-Hispanic whites, and nearly 41 percent for Hispanics.)

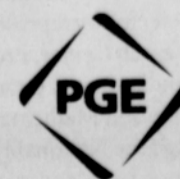
We can take heart from Donna Shalala's point that teen-age pregnancy is most often a consequence of a girl's feeling of hopelessness about the future. If adolescents—girls and boys—think they have a future, she pointed out, they put off having babies.

We must reach more of our teens with that message—that is, convince them they have a future—for it will mean that our young people and the children they eventually bring into the world will have a much easier shot at the American Dream.

### National Night Out: A bright idea in creating safer neighborhoods.



PGE shares your concern for safe, livable neighborhoods. That's why we sponsor National Night Out, America's night out against crime. On August 4, PGE invites you to show your support by turning on your porch light—a proven crime fighter. Join or organize a National Night Out block party or flashlight walk in your neighborhood. You'll help make your community a safer place. For information, call 823-4519 in Portland, 588-6499 in Salem, or your local police department or sheriff's office.



Portland General Electric

CONNECTING PEOPLE, POWER AND POSSIBILITIES