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Reflect Or Represent The Views Of  
The Portland Observer

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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## Letter To The Editor

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

### Letter to the Editor:

**Peter Bhatia**  
Executive Editor  
The Oregonian  
1320 SW Broadway  
Portland, Oregon 97201

Dear Mr. Bhatia:

This letter is written in response to an article which appeared on Wednesday, September 23, 1998, on the front page of the Metro section. The article "Hundreds Will Witness Community Policing" written by Maxine Bernstein, depicted me, George A. Smith, as a drug dealer, using my business for a dope dealing operation.

I am distraught over the accusations this article brings forth. Ms. Bernstein indicates I was evicted and my business shut down after Portland Police built a case implicating my business as a front for a "dope dealing" operation, and that I misled clients to believe "they would 'come full circle' with a makeover if they came in for a buzz." For over 28 years, I have been a hair stylist, providing professional services to clients including, Chief of Police, Charles Moose, politicians, athletes, business folks, public servants (police officers, parole and probation officers, etc.) as well as the overall community. Never has my intent been to do anything illegal or unlawful. Further, I have on numerous occasions, called the police in

an effort to make the community a safer environment, free of drugs and violence. My only detriment is believing everyone deserves a second chance. I hire Aaron Peterson, a convicted felon, sex offender and drug dealer, after he reassured me he had been rehabilitated and needed someone to believe in him and give him a second chance. Mr. Peterson was arrested in connection to "distributing drugs" from my salon, however, I had no knowledge of his selling dope. The "set-up" referred to by Ms. Bernstein, in her article, I believe is directly linked to Mr. Peterson. To date, I have been unable to obtain reports regarding or related to this case. have I been implicated by Mr. Peterson? I believe so. Is there any truth to me knowingly having drugs sold from my business? Absolutely, NOT!

I totally support Community Policing, however, I do not support being used as a scapegoat for the Portland Police to shine and make themselves appear to be doing so much to abort crime in our neighborhoods. I am requesting an article be written and carried with equal importance, detailing what actually took place.

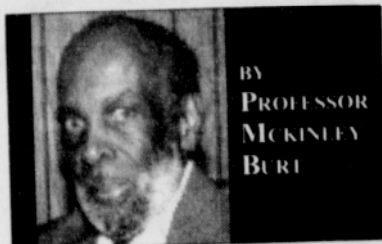
Your immediate response is requested. Thank you in advance for your assistance and cooperation.

Sincerely,

George A. Smith

# p e r s p e c t i v e s

## Columbus Sailed The Ocean Blue, Was In 1492, II



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

By Prof. McKinley Burt

We proceed now with a further inquiry into perhaps the most enduring example of Murphy's Third Law, that of "unintended consequences." Certainly, the four voyages of Christopher Columbus to the "New World" will more than suffice for our purpose.

Last week I placed in stark contrast, the savage behavior of the Spanish explorers and their continuous call to Heaven to "ordain them as an instrument by means of which the high purposes of Heaven might be accomplished." I remember very well a Native American Student of mine saying, "These people always seem to page God, before they rip off somebody."

The "Garden of Eden" concept carried right through from Columbus and his contemporaries to the American essays and landscape paintings of the 19th Century. Nature is to be the scene of conquest and transformation. A new paradise on earth was to be created; The American landscape was to be understood according to the first Genesis account and the consequent moral mandate for work developed into the idea of progress. Not very many seem bothered that much of this "work" was to be accomplished by chattel slavery.

Representative paintings in this genre include, "Home in the Woods", Thomas Cole, 1847; "Twilight in the Wilderness", Frederick Edwin Church, 1860; "The Oregon Trail", Albert Bierstadt, 1869; "Coming of the White Man", Joshua Shaw, 1850.

And in that same article last week, I introduced the name of a patron Saint of the environmentalists, Frederick Law Olmstead. This intensely religious landscape architect (Central Park, Berkeley Campus, National Parks, led a 19th century

transition movement whose esthetics and philosophy was a far cry from the simplistic "Garden of Eden" visualized by Columbus, and earlier Americans. "Scientific Environmentalism" was introduced.

Readers who are in need of more enlightenment in respect to the contradictions within both the environmental and urban planning movements should read, "Interpreting Environments", Robert Mugerauer, University of Texas Press, 1995.

Of course, one might reflect that the forever-threatened inner city residents, having marginally survived the Urban Renewal/Removal cataclysm, must now face massive new assaults upon their remaining "Edens" by the advocates of subsidized Light Rail. They may find the title of that book, "The Geography of Nowhere" to be a painfully accurate description of their 'garden'.

"Aided by his wildly erroneous conception of the earth's circumference, Columbus redrew the globe, perhaps encouraging others to realign the heavens". Scientific Ameri-

can, Nov. 1992 "Astronomy In the Age of Columbus". (Should have let the Moorish navigators prevail).

However, it seems quite obvious that African voyagers had well-mastered the knack of seafaring to the "New World" - and beyond. And this was authenticated long before the late Thor Heyerdahl and his reed-craft voyages from the west coast of Africa to the New World and beyond (Kon Tiki, etc.).

"...and he (Columbus) wanted to find out what the Indians of Hispaniola had told him, that there had come from the south and south-east Negro people, who brought those spear points made of a metal which they call guanin, of which he had sent to the king and queen for assaying, and which was found to have in thirty-two parts, eighteen of gold, six of silver and eight of copper".

This was the exact same formula used by the people of Ghana Africa. Quote is from "Africa and the discovery of America", Leo Weiner, Harvard University (circa 1920)

## Progressive Policies Do Matter

By Hugh B. Price, President, National Urban League

The U.S. Census Bureau's annual report on income and poverty released last week indicates the American economy's prolonged period of economic good times is beginning to significantly raise incomes and reduce poverty among African Americans and Hispanic Americans.

Indeed, last year, the poverty rate among blacks fell from 28.4% to 26.5%, a record low, as the number of poor blacks dropped by 600,000, to 9.1 million.

For Hispanics, the census tally of 8.3 million poor represented a drop in the poverty rate of more than 2%, to 27.1%.

These groups' declines in poverty were primarily responsible for household income rising and poverty rates falling for all Americans for a third consecutive year.

In 1997 13.3% of Americans, nearly 36 million people, lived in poverty, down from 13.7% in 1996, according to the federal agency. A family of four was considered poor if its annual income was \$16,400 or less; for a family of three, the poverty threshold was \$12,802.

Conversely, household income—again, driven by improvements in economic status among blacks and Hispanics—rose slightly.

The median household income for all Americans—the number of households above the median is the same as the number below it—rose 1.9% to \$37,005. That increase was nearly twice the rate of inflation and equaled the historical high-water mark it had reached in 1989 before the economy endured a recession.

The median of black households grew 4.3% last year to \$25,050. Since 1993 it's increased by 15%, or \$3,354, after adjusting for inflation. For Hispanic-American households the median income rose 4.5% last year to \$26,628; since 1993 it's increased by 4.8%.

President Clinton said the good news proved that his economic-policy approach has been the right one.

"Our growing economy is giving more and more families a chance to work their way out of poverty. After six years, it can't be an accident anymore."

The President's entitled to a little boasting. He did lobby hard and successfully for increases in the minimum wage, which took effect in 1996 and 1997. Those increases have made a difference: they protected the earnings of wage earners at the bottom of the wage ladder by keeping pace with inflation.

So, too, has the Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income workers,

which he also vigorously championed.

Those three measures likely had a great deal to do with the median income for single-women-headed households increasing by 4.4% even as many single mothers left the welfare rolls. The gains were largest for Hispanic and black women.

These statistics mean that there were a lot more dollars circulating in the communities where these women live—enough money for individuals and families to now buy a used car to get to that job on the other side of town or in the suburbs, or to give the daycare lady of the block some money, which, in turn, she could use to hire an assistant.

It's those kind of "little" consequences going on in these neighborhoods which can make a significant difference in the status of those at the bottom of the wage ladder.

Yes, this proves that a strong economy with low unemployment (now at 4.5%) and inflation is the best anti-poverty program one can devise.

And it undermines that persistent racism myth that poor black and Hispanic workers either can't compete or aren't interested in competing.

But it also underscores that because a rising tide alone doesn't necessarily lift all boats—progressive

policies do matter. Progressive economic and social policies can make a rising tide lift all the boats; they can expand social and economic opportunity to all of America's citizens.

We need to keep that in mind as

we go forward from here for two reasons.

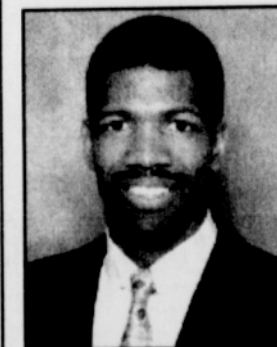
Now, more than ever, we must not relax our efforts to use progressive policies to produce more economic good news. Progressive policies do matter.



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