

EDITORIAL

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perspectives

Blacks Put Their Stamp On Modern Technology And Society, III

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER



By Prof. McKinley Burt

The question has been put to many an African American, "Why in the world do we need 'Black' History - how can history have color?" and we are quite pleased that our readers have overwhelmingly agreed that our many citations of documented black contributions to the world's technology have more than adequately addressed this question.

Our structured approach, designed to demonstrate the economic and societal impact of these key inventions, enabled the reader to easily appreciate the devastating, genocidal effect of an allegedly "color-blind"

history. No matter how devious and dishonest the effort to attribute progress to one race or class alone, these ugly exercises in vanity have proven to be a two-edged sword.

Many savants and academics (historians?) who over the years acquired a sterling and respected reputation for their account of the time-line of development for a particular area of technology or economics, are now finding their prestige and importance under siege from unexpected quarters. And they cannot blame the "grad students" who do most of the 'real' research (under their supervision). Librarians and undergrads find blacks in woodwork.

We have paused here in our own account of seminal African American engineering and science because we are nearing a meaningful working definition of that ubiquitous term, "institutional racism." This is the path that led our readers to, "appreciate the devastating, genocidal effect of an allegedly "color-

blind' history;" generations of increasingly - troubled black youth brought to maturity with their role models "lost, strayed, or stolen."

But during the very same eras of America's expansion in technology, white youth was intellectually and spiritually enriched - and motivated - by the standard icons that reached out from every textbook, encyclopedia, movie and museum: Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Samuel Morse, Eli Whitney (cotton gin), Cyrus McCormick (reaper, wheat). Black youth was given the "kindly old colored man from Tuskegee who 'talked' plants out of their precious secrets and gave them to mankind." I cited much more.

Readers, both black and white, have been on the phone to comment on Scott Learn's article in Wednesday's Oregonian (12/14/98): "Standards Emphasize Perspective On History." In a sense (smiles), he has followed along my recent, four-part series on "columbus who sailed

the ocean blue."

However, the callers had a perspective of their own to bring to the table. They could not forego the pleasure (?) of pointing out that almost two decades ago contracts were let by the Portland School District for production of the "Baseline Essays" history document for curriculum enrichment. Particularly, there was comment on topics which I had submitted on "blacks in technology" but were never adopted. Many photocopies were made and circulated in the community. Excerpts appeared here.

Until we return at the end of the year with more African American inventors and related commentary, you might read "History On Trial" Culture, Wars and the Teaching of the Past." Nash, Crabtree and Dunn, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. This revealing volume explores the "Great National controversy over the setting of voluntary standards for the teaching of history in our elementary and high schools that erupted in 1994."

Dear Editor:

In 1978, Mormon Church President Spencer W. Kimball had a revelation in which he claimed the LORD had told him that blacks could not be ordained to the Priesthood. Since 1978, the Mormon church has been actively rerouting African and African-American members. To date, the church had made about 40,000 black converts in the US, 100,000 in Brazil, and about 200,000 in black Africa. However, due to its past teachings, the Church isn't growing in this area like it is among other ethnic groups. In the last year, Church leaders have decided to tell black inquirers that it "never taught" that blacks were Cainites, or cursed to the Priesthood, but that this was "merely the opinion of some of the (church) members, but never sanctioned or approved by The Brethren (the 15 Mormon Apostles that lead the church)." This is PURE DECEPTION! There are literally dozens of Internet

sites which quote prior Mormon leaders on the Curse of Cain doctrine (type in "Curse of Cain" or "Blacks and Mormons" in any search engine). All Mormons over the age of 30 KNOW that the Church had taught the Curse of Cain up until 1978. The 1978 revelation did NOT refute the doctrine; rather, it declared only that the "time had come" to give the Priesthood to blacks. The Curse of Cain doctrine has NEVER been refuted publicly or privately by the Mormon leaders. The Church is now telling blacks it "was never taught". We humbly request that you and other African-American newspapers call the Mormon Church and DEMAND straight answers. The Church

should not continue to seek black converts until and unless it is willing to do one of the following things: 1. Publicly refute and apologize for teaching the Curse of Cain doctrine for 150 years. 2. Publicly acknowledge that the curse of Cain doctrine is still a doctrine of the Church. 3. Publicly announce that the Curse of Cain was never official Church doctrine. We feel that the Mormon leaders should COME CLEAN and publicly acknowledge or publicly abandon the CURSE OF CAIN DOCTRINE; either in a public apology, or in a public statement. We encourage you to contact the Mormon Church, and ask them for an "on the record" statement concerning the Curse of Cain doctrine.

We suggest calling the Mormon Church at 1-800-453-3860 (ask for statements from Public Affairs and the Office of the First Presidency. Ask them when it changed. We also suggest you contact David Jackson (a black Mormon) for an interview. His number is on the back; as well as some quotes from past Mormon leaders. He has all the background information. The Church shouldn't seek black converts unless and until it PUBLICLY repudiates the doctrine, or at least is willing to inform potential black converts about it. We hope that you do an article on this subject. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Darrick Evenson

This kid's got a record!
his grades.

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Civil Rights Journal My Christmas Wish

By Bernice Powell Jackson

Some years I have written a wish list of what I'd really like for Christmas beyond hitting the lottery or such. This year my list is one item long - one word long - I wish for peace. Even just one day of peace would feel like my wish was granted.

I've been centering my prayer time over the past two months on peace after spending a few days with some brave and powerful young sisters and brothers. Sisters and brothers dedicated to making peace in our cities. It was the fifth anniversary of what they called the gang summit at that first meeting in 1993, when gang leaders from around the nation came together to talk and plan and meet and pray for peace in our communities. This time it was called the National Summit for Peace and Justice because they realize now

that the violence of gangs is but one piece in a larger puzzle and that peace is the only viable way for our communities.

And so they come back together again, some of the old faces and some new ones, all dedicated to the belief that there can be, there must be peace in our communities. They came from the east coast, from the midwest, from the west coast. They came speaking several languages and calling God by several names. They came -- African American, Latino/and native American. They came trusting each other and trusting that the power of good can overcome the power of evil. And if there was any doubt in their minds about whether this summit was needed it evaporated the night before they arrived in Kansas City when a 10 year old child was killed in that city while playing in her front yard. And so they piled in cars and

vans and went to the child's home and surrounded her family with prayers and love and pleas for peace and retaliation.

I'll never forget that child's mother's eyes that night. I'll never forget the pain which seemed to reach down into her heart and her womb. I'll never forget that child's father's tears, running freely down his cheeks, as he recounted his shortcomings and told of the pressure to seek revenge. I'll never forget the poem recited by a brother from California that night and I'll never forget the prayer circle we formed on that front yard. Peace so that no more children might be maimed by land mines. Peace so that no more children might die at the hands of their mothers or their fathers. Peace so that the children of the world might laugh and play and smile and run and skip and giggle and live without fear. What a Christmas gift that would be.

Mothers' Vision

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

For a long, long time, the Mothers have observed the disrespectful and racist surveillance of the neighborhood. The Mothers watch as the homes of the Elders are taken from them. The Mothers know that the Fathers and sons are being harassed, slandered, betrayed, poisoned, entrapped, railroaded, imprisoned and murdered, and yet, the Men remain strong, whether maintaining a profession in the community or in solitary confinement at the penitentiary. The Mothers feel the anxiety imposed upon the Daughters who carry on the Hope and the Faith. The Mothers witness authority figures intimidate, humiliate, discount, exploit, abuse and incarcerate the Children, who when very young must become so wise in order to survive the efforts to harm their Souls. The Mothers see the bombs fall. The

bombs violently invade other Mothers' sanctuaries and kill their Babies, while embargoes bring illness and starvation to more Little Ones whose pure Innocence cannot be denied. The Mothers are aware that the History of rich and dynamic Cultures is deleted from education at the institutions of learning. The Mothers cherish the perpetual wisdom and Compassion of their Kin. Although their Families possess a magnificent strength which allows them to prevail no matter what circumstances may be, the Mothers decry the gestapo-like tactics they must constantly endure. The Nazis manipulated fear just as it is being used today to vilify a People. With a slight change in perspective all of those who have silently condoned current atrocities will be able to open their eyes and acknowledge the covert and systematic

attempts to commit genocide. The task will then be simply to remove the inferiority complex from the hearts of the hateful master minds who perpetrate these crimes against Humanity, so that they may realize the pitiful futility of their actions; recognize the truly Humble position they share in the Glory of Life; and, rather than desiring to divide and conquer, they can allow themselves to partake in Joy along with their Fellow Man. The Spirit will not and cannot be destroyed. The Light of Truth will always glow. The Mothers shall continue to give their Love bestowed to them eternally by the almighty and Benevolent Power of the Universe.

Peaches Haney
Frances O'Halloran
Neighborhood Academy of
Learning and Awareness