

## Forty Acres And A Mule; U.S. Department Of Agriculture Still Holds The Dream

By Prof. McKinley Burt

The cruelest joke of the nineteenth-century was the promise made to a few black dreamers that immediately upon Emancipation, each former slave family would receive one-sixteenth of a section of good farm land and a healthy mule with good teeth.

Real estate developers, yet to be born, must have trembled as these reckless rumors reached their upper abodes. They need not have been so concerned about the immediate post-Civil War period, for a carefully-crafted process was put in place to restore most lands to white ownership.

The ways and means of implementation by a larcenous South was known by the oxymoron "Reconstruction." Today, the national and foreign media has identified agents of the U.S. Department of Agriculture as principal conspirators, conniving with corporate farms and mall developers.

One need not be a rocket scientist, as they say to conclude that this federal agency was fully involved from the day of its inception - and not only in the South. It is not just the case of being born in that area and having family in-

put, but in the 1970s and 1980s, I had supporting conversations with both my black and white southern students. The crime spree spans more than a century.

Several Observer readers called to say how "disheartened and depressed they were to hear that the number of black farmers had decrease from a high of 17 percent to today's low of less than 1 percent." One woman said, "I doubt if a few NBA millionaires put things anywhere near in balance. I know that's what we're going to hear from whites."

You've got that right lady; no closer to closing the 134 year-old, racial economic gap than all the Affirmative Action or Minority Business programs that could have been instituted. We are talking trillions, of dollars here, for land is more than just crops; it is all the dreams that can be developed upon it - implementation of energies and futures that range across generations! Across 134 years.

It occurs to me that with the history curriculum being what it is in many places, some clarification of terms may be needed here. Let us define "Reconstruction" as a broad catch-

all term used to describe federal interaction with a defeated South following the Civil War. For terms which may be more familiar to some, let us quote that noted African American historian, John Hope Franklin, "Reconstruction After The Civil War", University of Chicago Press.

"Only slightly less military than the army itself was the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly known as the 'Freedmen's Bureau: ... It restored, at the insistence of President Johnson, most of the abandoned land to pardoned rebels. Freedmen received only a small portion of the lands confiscated by the Union during the war."

"After the passage of the Southern Homestead Act in 1866, the Bureau hoped to assist Negroes in obtaining farms under its terms. The lands that were opened up were, for the most part, inferior and unattractive."

And so it goes, yet today. Do you think \$50,000 a piece for a few broke black farmers, mostly over 70, will set things right? Next week, the other big land grab.

## Coalition Of Citizen Groups to Propose Light Rail Revival

The Coalition for a Livable Future (CLF) unveiled a proposed new transportation plan for the region at a news conference at the Multnomah Athletic Club on Tuesday, January 12th.

Former Governor Barbara Roberts was the spokesperson for CLF, which is a coalition of forty eight diverse citizens organizations seeking to preserve and maintain Portland's quality of life. Governor Roberts is a board member of 1000 Friends of Oregon, one of the coalition's founding members.

The proposed plan will include a call for continuing to expand the regions light rail system. In addition, the plan proposes specific improvements for all modes of transportation throughout the region. These include projects to enhance transit, bike and pedestrian facilities as well as improve lo-

cal connectivity for auto traffic.

The CLF plan was formally presented to Metro at their Beaverton "listening post" that evening. The Beaverton event is the second of four listening posts Metro is holding to solicit public reaction to the voters' defeat of funding authority for the south/north light rail project. Other listening posts are scheduled in North and Northeast Portland on Thursday, January 14th and in Clackamas on Thursday January 21st.

In addition to the listening posts, Metro is in the process of revising the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Public hearings on the RTP are planned for this spring. The CLF plan, called "A Transportation Plan for Everybody", is designed to address the wide range of issues under consideration as part of that

process.

James Corless, the Research Director of the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP), a national transportation reform organization, will discuss their recently released report that concludes investments in increased road capacity do not reduce traffic congestion.

Other speaker at the news conference included representatives of CLF member organizations: Lawrence Dark, Executive Director of the Urban League of Portland, Robert Liberty, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Oregon, Mike Houck, Urban Naturalist of the Portland Audubon Society; Tasha Harmon, Community Development Network and Rex Burkholder, Bicycle Transportation Alliance and chair of the CLF's Transportation Reform Working Group.

## What Are The Chances You'll Remember Your New Year's Resolutions?

According to the new book "The Memory Cure" the odds are not in your favor. It's a matter of fact as you age your memory goes, as much as 50% in healthy adults. Age related memory loss begins in our early years and is accelerated by non-optimum lifestyle choices such as: poor nutrition, smoking, drinking, drugs and stress.

Authors of the Memory Cure, Dr. Thomas Crook III Ph.D., international expert on memory retention and loss, and Brenda Aderly, co-author of The Arthritis Cure, state that memory loss may be a function of aging, but it is not an inevitable fact of

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enhancing benefits of taking PS.

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