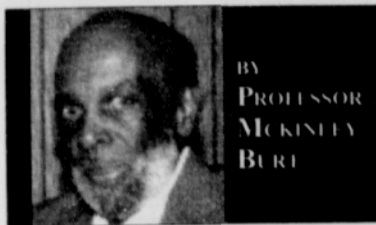


EDITORIAL

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

Showing My Race: Politically Incorrect Essays On Identity



BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

I was not surprised that some readers needed an extra week or so to mull over my—rather disquieting comments on the U.S. Census process (Perspectives, Jan. 6, 1999). But, they are back on the phone and fax, now, after my deferment last week to the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. - the martyr whose personal census took in "all of God's children".

And no one proved surprised that I leaped right on the issue of direful economic consequences should the Year 2000 count be structured to the preferences of the 'Right Wing' politicians and their fellow-travellers who vehemently oppose Affirmative Ac-

tion, Equal Employment Opportunity, and similar concepts.

The "undercounting of minorities" was seen to seriously impair government and business decisions affecting every category of their existence - from employment and housing to health care and elections. Among those strongly warning against a repeat of the 1990 errors, we find Mr. High B. Price, president - National Urban League. And others warn against the deceitful "color blind" rhetoric of those to whom race has always mattered and always will. There follows here the government's proposed scheme for restructuring the count of you-know-who for the year 2000 Census. This is where the 'feds' were at the middle of this decade and they have been tinkering with the process ever since (at stake are a lot of jobs, votes, loans, mortgages, childcare, food stamps, health care, seniors aid).

The U.S. Office Of Management

and Budget (OMB) is reviewing the racial and ethnic categories used by federal agencies for government-wide recordkeeping and statistical data collection. The review is the result of increasing criticism that the standards no longer truly reflect the U.S. population's diversity since they were first issued 17 years ago.

While the most commonly known use of racial and ethnic categories is census reporting, the categories are also used for evaluating public and private sector affirmative action plans, monitoring minorities' access to home mortgage loans, enforcing the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and assisting firms under minority business development programs.

Proposed changes include:

- *Adding a "Multi-racial" category so that respondents would not be forced to deny part of their heritage by having to choose a single category;
- *Adding an "other" category for

those individuals with multiracial backgrounds and those who want the option of specifically stating a unique identification;

- *Providing and open-ended question to solicit information on race and ethnicity, or combining concepts of race, ethnicity and ancestry;
- *Changing the category for Black to African American;
- *Changing the categories for American Indian or Alaskan Native to Native American;
- *Including native Hawaiians as a separate category or as part of Native American rather than as part of the Asian or Pacific Islander categories;
- *Including Hispanic as a racial designation rather than a separate ethnic category; and
- *Adding a "Middle Easterner" category to the list of ethnic designations.

Be sure to save this federal blueprint for your future to compare to next week's startling revelations.

Oregon Employment Department

Department Steps-Up Evaluation Of Employment Service Quality: The Oregon Employment Department has installed a process for evaluating the accuracy and completeness of information received from employers and job seekers that is needed to provide quality employment services. The Employment Service Quality Assurance (ESQA) Program will take an intense look at the quality of job seeker enrollments and job orders on a quarterly basis. Department officials say ESQA is designed in response to federal guidelines and involves self-appraisals by local field office management and staff. Contact: Rod Simmons (503) 947-1661.

Workforce Investment Act Of 1998 Goes Into Effect: the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 went into effect January 1. The act calls for job placement and training, and other employment-related

services through local "one-step" systems overseen by local work force investment boards. Oregon has 18 months to submit a plan of implementation to the U.S. Secretary of Labor. Contact: Steve Tegger (503) 947-1478.

November Unemployment Claims Up: Oregon Employment Department officials report the effects of the state's economy slowing is now being felt in the local employment offices. In November the department filed 16,928 new unemployment insurance claims, up 13% from November 1997. Contact: Frank Richey (503) 947-1691

Department Obtains Fraud Convictions: The Oregon Employment Department successfully prosecuted three individuals for unemployment fraud in the month of December illegally collecting unemployment benefits as a class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$100,000 fine. Courts ordered those convicted to pay \$13,659 in restitution to the department. The convictions came from Douglas, Linn, and Multnomah counties. In Douglas County, Carla Renee Starnes of Roseburg received 24 months probation and 20 days on a county work crew for illegally claiming

\$3,939 in unemployment benefits. In Linn County, Derek Dearment of Albany received 18 months probation and 10 days community service for claiming \$3,512 in benefits.

And in Multnomah County, Daniel Frank O'Brien of Portland received 24 months probation and 16 hours of community service for taking \$6,208 in benefits. In 1998, the Employment Department successfully prosecuted 88 individuals resulting in \$396,215 to be returned to the unemployment insurance trust fund. Contact: Craig Spivey (503) 947-1303.

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Charles Washington
Publisher
Gary Ann Taylor
Business Manager
Laphael Knight
Graphic Designer

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.
Editor
Joy Ramos
Copy Editor
Iesha Williams
Graphic Designer

Mark Washington
Distribution Manager

Contributing Writers:
Professor McKinley Burt
Lee Pearlman
Yema Measho

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

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Scare Tactics

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

In a recent column, I reported the good news that the arrest rate for juveniles involved in violent crimes fell 23 percent from 1994 to 1997, and included a drop of more than 40 percent in the juvenile murder arrest rate. But how does that jibe with the words of U.S. Representative Bill McCollum, who predicted before a House Committee on Early Childhood, Youth, and Families in 1996 that a "coming storm" of youth violence was on the horizon? "Brace yourself for the coming generation of 'super-predators'," McCollum warned.

Super-predators? When you looked at your children beside the Christmas tree, or gathered around the candles celebrating Hanukkah or Kwanzaa this year, did you see in their faces the viciousness of a super-predator? Or did you see a child, confused perhaps, too easily influenced, angry, or just plain scared maybe, but most of all, a child who needs love and guidance?

I recently read an excellent book by Franklin E. Zimring, a law professor at the University California at Berkeley. His American Youth Violence does a great deal to debunk the myth that your youths are becoming irretrievably violent and beyond control. This is important because this kind of wrong thinking and fear are behind a lot of half-baked policy proposals that keep surfacing at the federal, state, and local levels.

In the last Congress, sanity prevailed, thank God, and S. 10,

proposed juvenile crime legislation that would have turned the clock back 25 years on protections for children, did not pass.

Had it become law, juveniles could have been jailed with adult criminals, yet the legislation did nothing to promote prevention programs we know work, like after-school and mentoring programs that keep children out of trouble.

And it did not do anything to control the proliferation of guns that have resulted in increased homicides.

In his book, Zimring shows how easily statistics can be manipulated and distorted. For instance, if aggravated assaults are up, is it because of more violence, or new and/or non-standard classifications of aggravated assault versus simple assault? And statistics showing increased teen violence seldom note the increase in the number of teens.

Zimring writes that the "teen population increased rapidly during the 1960s and early 1970s...followed by fifteen years of decline [and the expectation now that] the number of teenagers will grow 16 percent over the fifteen years ending in 2010, to a total of 21.5 million."

Most of all, I want to make the point that many scary predictions are based on the assumption that all conditions will remain the same. But that is only one of the choices we as a nation can make. We can instead choose to do something about the factors that lead an innocent, beautiful child created by God to turn to crime. Can't we,

individually and jointly, decide that it is no longer acceptable to condemn our children to poverty, sub-standard education and health care, and unsupervised, violence-plagued homes, neighborhoods, and schools?

Or we can continue to choose to put our money and our faith into cleaning up afterwards. We can continue to allow our children to waste their precious lives in more and more prisons, attempt to find solace in drugs and guns, or fantasize about funerals instead of graduations because they see many of their friends die so young.

Zimring poses and interesting question. "How does it happen," he asks, "that a child-centered and optimistic culture embraces such a narrow and negative view of a future generation in prosperous times?"

Perhaps it is not because of what we see on the street but rather what we see in the mirror. What are we doing to make tomorrow a time of success, safety, and satisfaction for our children? What are we not doing?

Refuse to be swayed by scare tactics and hopeless, nothing-works rhetoric and racism. Stand for Children in your homes, neighborhoods, school districts, and with those who make public policy at all levels. 'Super-predators' are not born, they are made; and the darkest clouds of a 'coming storm' will fade in the light of love and care we can choose to give to all the children in our country.

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