

EDITORIAL

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

perspectives

Showing My Race: Politically Incorrect Essays On Identity IV

By Prof. McKinley Burt

More than a little interest (and consternation) was generated by my review of the racial and ethnic categories under consideration for government-wide record keeping and statistical data collection. This is not at all surprising, since the Year 2000 census-taking is near at hand.

We may also be assured that many different spins will be placed on this radical new approach to counting America's population. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) gives the rather brief explanation that "there is increasing criticism that the older standards no longer truly reflect the U.S. populations diversity."

It may be timely to pause here and quote columnist Clarence Page, "It is not biology that determines race. It is bureaucrats". Page is the African American author of an important and eye-opening book of essays that was cited early on in this series (I borrowed freely from the whimsical-yet-serious title).

"Showing My Color: Impolite Essays on Race and Identity," Harper Collins, 1996.

Just as I have pointed out in these columns and at the university, much of the post-slavery economic experience of African Americans is linked to the ebb and flow of European immigration. Page brings a very effective understanding to this problem and sheds light on a contemporary urban situation where open discussion is often considered 'politically incorrect'. I quote him.

"As it happened, the liberalized immigration laws in 1965 that dropped preferences for Europeans coincided with riots and the abandonment of inner-city neighborhoods. Contrary to popular myths, the riots failed to revive inner-city ghettos. Instead, old businesses and jobs fled, often to be replaced by

immigrant shopkeepers who soon became common fixtures in inner-city neighborhoods nationwide." P. 184

This quote is from chapter 9, of Page's book, "Middleman Minorities," a thoughtful study of the not infrequently volatile social environment that develops with the arrival of certain non-white immigrants. Like elsewhere in the nation-except, perhaps, New York - this topic has been quietly-conducted but vigorous 'politically incorrect' topic of conversation for many African Americans in the Northeast community.

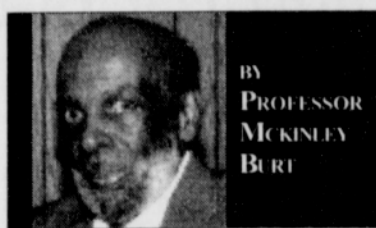
This is especially true for those blacks who have deplored the slow pace of the group's economic development - or who have been equally unhappy with the fact that most progress has been with Federal intervention. Very soon, discussions center around "what eco-

nomic goals should have been achieved in consequence of the means and talent assembled during the 'Million-Man-March'."

Not many blacks believe that they are being racist when their conversation parallels the next quote from Page's book. In most inner-cities, it is about paradigms for success, and what is needed to repeat the drive and motivation of a century ago. 'Why can't we do it again?'

"Great shifts of international population come to ground at the corner grocery. Korean, Arab and even some black West Indian merchants, riding into town on the wave of post-1965 immigration policies, have restored enterprise to many blighted urban neighborhoods. But they also find themselves caught in the middle, a new class of 'middleman minorities on the urban battleground.'"

This series will be concluded next week as we show just how close Mr. Page is to the Portland mindset.



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

Parental drug and alcohol abuse fuels child maltreatment Oregon's crisis mirrors national findings

Oregon's and the nation's children are drowning in a sea of parental substance abuse and addiction, according to a landmark report from the Center of Addiction and Substance Abuse, housed at Columbia University.

The report titled "No Safe Haven: Children of Substance Abusing Parents" describes these children as endangered. "There is no safe haven for these abused and neglected children of drug-and-alcohol abusing parents. They are the most vulnerable and endangered individuals in America."

For the past 10 years, drug and alcohol involvement has been the number-one reason children have been removed from their homes and

placed in foster care, says Kay Toran, director of the State Office for Services to Children and Families. For the period 1995 to 1997, 65.6 percent of the children entering foster care did so as a result of parental alcohol or other drug involvement.

"The fuel behind this calamity of child abuse and neglect is alcohol and other drugs," says Toran. "Our child welfare professionals struggle

to find resources to help parents while trying to protect their children. Alcohol and drug abuse has forced a shift in the way we deliver child protective services."

SFC studied more than 3,700 cases where children had been removed from their homes because of abuse. The study found that alcohol and drug problems are pervasive in families of abused and neglected children and that sub-

stance abuse is a substantial barrier to these children returning home. One-third of children remain in care because of parental alcohol or other drug problems.

The national report calls for more funding for substance abuse treatment and concludes: "The best hope of a safe haven for these children is to prevent alcohol and drug abuse by their parents."

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The Portland Observer
(USPS 959-680) Established in 1970

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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

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Glickman Announces Settlement in Minority Farmer Lawsuit

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman this week announced an historic agreement to settle the discrimination lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture brought by the African American farmers. "More than two years ago, I said that this civil rights struggle was USDA's appointment with history.

Today's agreement will close a painful chapter in the Department's history and allow us to open a more constructive front in our efforts to be the federal civil rights leader in the 21st century," Glickman said. "I want to especially thank President Clinton.

Through his involvement, we passed a waiver to the statute of limitations allowing older cases to be heard, and today we have reached a fair and reasonable resolution." Glickman said, "By the guideposts I established for negotiations, this settlement is fair to farmers and fair to U.S. taxpayers.

The settlement also retains flexibility in terms of how individual farmers' cases are resolved, so we can do our best to meet their needs." U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman today

granted preliminary approval to the settlement and set a fairness hearing for March when the agreement is expected to be given final approval, allowing a processing of cases.

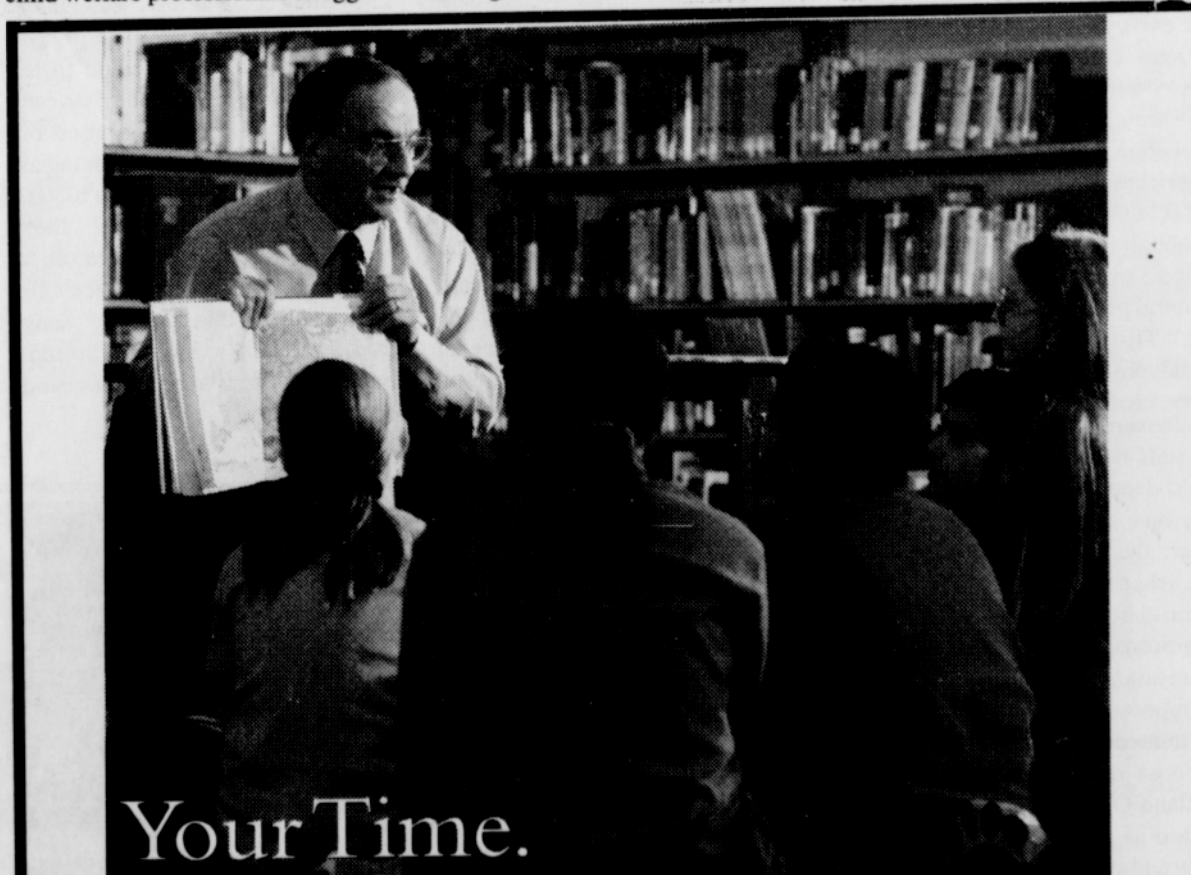
The agreement spells out a process for settling the cases of African American farmers who have sued the Department as part of a class action for discrimination complaints between 1981 and 1996. There are two tracks to the process. The first track allows those who meet the class definition and who can provide substantial evidence of discrimination to receive a monetary settlement of \$50,000, as well as additional relief in the form of debit write-downs and some offset of tax liability.

There is a second track for those who believe they have evidence of extreme wrongdoing. These cases must be well documented, and farmers must justify a larger pay-out. When a farmer meets this standard, this track allows for a tailored settlement that will be determined by a third party. Farmers are not required to take part in this settlement process.

Instead, they can also choose to continue their individual cases in court or utilize the Department's administrative process. "I want to make clear that this is not the end of USDA's civil rights initiative. We still have more to do to ensure that all of our customers and our employees are treated with dignity and respect.

But without question, today we mark a major milestone in our efforts—not just for the farmers but for all the good, decent people here at USDA who have worked hard to help bring us to this day," Glickman said.

Soon, notices will be sent out to all members of the class making them aware of their options under this settlement. Once the final settlement is signed, the cases will begin to be processed. "I want to thank everyone who worked tirelessly on this settlement agreement. I want to recognize the African American farmers across the country who stood up for their rights. We are a stronger department and a stronger country today for their commitment to justice," Glickman said.



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