



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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The Skanner Newspaper, established in October 1975, is a weekly publication, published each Wednesday by IMM Publications Inc., 415 N. Killingsworth St., P.O. Box 5455, Portland, OR 97228. Telephone (503) 285-5555. E-mail: info@theskanner.com World Wide Web site: <http://www.theskanner.com> Fax: (503) 285-2900

The Skanner is a member of the National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association.

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What Did Burris Do in the Senate?

‘How’s that hopey, changey stuff working out for ya?’ - Sarah Palin

Political empowerment continues to elude Black Americans. Under current systems no matter how high Blacks go in it, it’s the individual that’s empowered. The more Blacks are “working for the man” the better maintenance of his interest and neglect of ours.

In his farewell speech to colleagues in the U.S. Senate, Roland Wallace Burris reminded an empty chamber that with his departure “there will be no African Americans in the U.S. Senate”, a fact he called “unacceptable” and “troubling.” But, what is troubling and much more “unacceptable” is the fraud Burris’ perpetrated pretending to represent Blacks. Speaking as if he has been the paragon of Black Causes Burris said: “Letters, emails, telephone calls have poured into my office from Black Americans from all across the country and ... at times, as I have tried to bring their voices into this chamber; I have acutely felt the absence of any other Black person to represent them. When the 112th Congress is sworn in there will not be a single Black American to take office in this chamber.” He said “This is simply unacceptable. We can -- and we will — and we must do better”.

The questions for Black Americans are: “How did Burris being there help me?” and “Could he have done better?” African Americans seem to go brain-dead when they get to Washington. During Burris’ tenure, the issue of “an apology” and “reparations for

BUSINESS EXCHANGE

William Reed

slavery” came before the Senate. But, like his “mainstream thinking” predecessor, Burris is reluctant to discuss reparations for Blacks in “polite society.” Blacks’ unemployment and poverty numbers are twice national numbers, but both Burris and Obama have rejected open discussions of the legacy of slavery, segregation, and

economic standing. A change did not come with a Black presidency. Institutional racism is built into the structure of American society. As institutional discrimination is built into the normal working relationships of institutions, its perpetuation requires only that people continue “business as usual.”

It can occur regardless of the desires or intentions of the people perpetuating it. Institutional discrimination is easily seen statistically. If a particular group is disproportionately absent in compari-

I have acutely felt the absence of any other Black person to represent them’

--former Sen. Roland Burris

racial violence against African-Americans.

So-called “Black political leaders” like Obama in the White

son to the pool of those possessing the relevant skills, discrimination is occurring. Under the current system, Blacks elected to “high

Burris in the Senate and John Conyers and Company in the House have long abetted establishment practices that prevent Blacks from attaining an equal ... standing

House, Burris in the Senate and John Conyers and Company in the House have long abetted establishment practices that prevent Blacks from attaining an equal political or

political offices” have proven to be as mediocre as their predecessors.

Too many Black politicians, like Artur Davis of Alabama, have

State ‘Education Summit’ December 7

Tough times can bring conflict and despair and failure. Or, tough times can compel people to strip away the petty concerns that don’t matter, and to focus. To focus on working together, and solving problems.

Right now, Oregon’s education system faces possibly its most challenging time ever.

Challenging because school district budgets will be strained beyond anything we’ve seen before. But also challenging because of the maddeningly ingrained issues within our schools that continue to prevent all Oregon children from getting the education they need, and deserve.

We believe Oregonians expect their leaders to approach these tough times by focusing and working together. And we believe Oregon’s leaders want to — and can — do that. That’s why the four of us — two Republicans, two Democrats, two state senators, two state representatives — are inviting all Oregon legislators to a first-ever Oregon Education summit. The summit will be in Salem on one day — Dec. 7 — eight weeks before the 2011 legislative session begins.

Its purpose: to get legislators thinking about the significant challenges that face Oregon’s schools. And to get them thinking about the common ground that

EDUCATION SUMMIT

Sen. Rod Monroe,
Sen. Frank Morse,
Rep. Betty Komp,
Rep. John Huffman

exists among all of us, and the real solutions that, even in tough times,

education researchers, principals who’ve led school turnaround efforts and people who run Head Start programs for preschoolers. We’ll talk about early childhood education. We’ll talk about ways that other states and school districts have been able to reform and improve the teaching and learning that happens within their schools, even with limited funds. We’ll talk about the need for Oregon to adopt

Tough times mean leaders must find common ground

can bring about better schools for our children.

We’ve invited education experts

an overall vision for the future of its schools.

We’ll also talk about the chal-

... we must ensure that the schools that educate Oregon’s children are on a solid foundation

from around the country, and from throughout Oregon, to join us. They are school superintendents,

lenges of Oregon school funding. And we’ll talk about those funding challenges with two basic real-

bought into the argument that neither the victims nor the perpetrators of slavery are alive today, and it is unfair to hold the descendents of slave-owners responsible for the actions of their ancestors. And further argue that Civil Rights measures passed in the 1960s— especially affirmative action programs meant explicitly to compensate for the injustices of the past by leveling the playing field for Blacks in the future — have effectively discharged the debt owed to African-Americans.

What should be a recurring theme within American Black culture is that the USA owes a debt to Blacks because of slavery. Conservatives, both Black and White, try to short-circuit this claim by arguing that slavery was not profitable, but even if profitability was arguable, it still was a theft of service. Now what is needed are processes that establish the point when it became theft, and worthy of damages. America needs legislation that does the following: (1) acknowledges the fundamental injustice and inhumanity of slavery; (2) establishes a commission to study slavery and its subsequent racial and economic discrimination against freed slaves; (3) studies the impact of those forces on today’s living Black Americans; and (4) would allow the commission to make recommendations to Congress on appropriate remedies to redress the harm inflicted on living Black descendants.

William Reed is available for speaking/seminar projects via BaileyGroup.org

ities in mind. We must invest in our schools — the state of Oregon will ultimately fail if we don’t. But today’s financially tough times compel us to be certain we make only the smartest investments in our schools. We must focus our money on things that are proven to help kids learn, and that give them a chance to succeed in and out of school.

No taxpayer should be paying for school investments that don’t work. And no Oregon child should have to wait for an economic recovery to learn well.

None of this will be easy. The 2011 legislative session will be the most difficult in years, as state leaders try to plug a 2011-2013 budget gap that right now is forecast at \$3.5 billion.

And no one expects that at the end of the day on Dec. 7, we will have easy answers. But we believe this: as we work to balance the budget and improve the economy to get more Oregonians back to work, we must ensure that the schools that educate Oregon’s children are on a solid foundation, and on a path to get better.

And all of us who call ourselves state leaders must commit to exploring ways to make that happen, by finding common ground and agreeing on real solutions. Dec. 7 can be the day we start. We’ll see you there.