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Black Conservatives

Part One

For most African Americans the notion of a Black conservative is an oxymoron. The overwhelming majority of us reject conservative political positions because we understand in concrete, everyday, practical terms what conservative policies are and who conservatives are, and we know both are racist.* Conservative policies are Republican vetoes of civil rights bills, opposition to affirmative action, and Willie Horton campaign ads. Conservatives are Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Jesse Helms, David Duke, and Pat Buchanan. Enough said.

Unlike the majority of African Americans, Black conservatives generally oppose affirmative action and government minority business set-aside programs, oppose minimum wage laws and rent control laws, oppose any increase in social welfare spending, and oppose vigorous enforcement of voting rights and desegregation regulations. Black conservatives favor the death penalty, privatization of government ser-

vices, deregulation of business, and voucher systems for public housing and for education.

Also out of step with the Black majority are Black conservatives' right-

“A few dissidents like Thomas Sowell and J.A. Parker stand steadfast, refusing to give in to the cult mentality and childish obedience that hypnotize black Americans into a mindless political trance.”

—JUDGE CLARENCE THOMAS,
FROM A SPEECH AT
THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION,
JUNE, 1987.

ving foreign policy views. Rabidly anti-communist, in the 1980's Black conservatives supported U.S.-backed, right-wing governments and guerrilla movements throughout Central and South

America. In Africa, they support right-wing factions such as UNITA in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique, and the Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa. Black conservatives are often unquestioning supporters of Israel and, more important, are anti-Palestinian.

Politically conservative African American notables traditionally have been an anomaly in the African American community; examples are Booker T. Washington, Zora Neale Hurston, George Schuyler, and Joe Black. Prior to the Clarence Thomas Senate Judiciary Committee hearings' televised parade of Black conservatives, most African Americans outside the academy and policy-making circles were not aware that a number of well-known and influential African Americans make the same imperialist, classist, and, most particularly, racist arguments made by white conservatives.

Academic and media discussions of Black conservatives focus on the specific merits or flaws of their arguments and policy positions. But the more interesting and instructive question which will be explored here is: How can Black conservatives echo the fundamentally racist arguments of white conservatives, and further, be institutionally and organizationally allied with the sector of white America that is historically most racist?

Black conservatives, of course, deny that the policy positions of white conservatives are racist. They claim African Americans' fear of self-criticism blinds us to what is only principled racial criticism. Black conservatives choose to ignore, or consign to “water over the

* The terms racist and racism in this paper refer to the most pernicious form in this country, an ideological outlook or system of beliefs by an individual or institution that incorporate one or more of the following conscious or unconscious premises: that the core values that define America are inextricably linked to the white northern European middle and upper class experience; that the problems in communities of color are primarily due to flawed individual characteristics of the people of color themselves; that racial tensions in America are primarily due to the unreasonable demands of people of color; that people of color, especially African Americans, are biologically inferior to white Americans in terms of mental capacity, moral character, or ambition.

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dam" status, Martin Kilson's trenchant observation that "at no point in the twentieth century have the claims of Black folks for political and social parity gained active support or sympathy from mainstream American conservative leaders, organizations, and intellectuals, whether religious or secular." Indeed, conservative whites are often active opponents of African American civil rights.

I will argue that Black conservatives are able to engage in delusions regarding the racist orientations and activities of their white conservative intellectual mentors and allies because of a congruence between white conservative interpretations of African Americans and the Black bourgeoisie's long-standing negative interpretation of who Black people are. These Black bourgeois attitudes, which denigrate poor African Americans, are very much the result of the socioeconomic development of the Black bourgeoisie within the context of white cultural oppression.

These negative attitudes toward poor members of the community have historically been shared by liberal and conservative Black bourgeoisie alike. At the turn of the century, for example, both Booker T. Washington and a young W.E.B. DuBois shared the view that, in DuBois's words, the way to alleviate "the present friction between the races" was to correct the "immorality, crime, and laziness among Negroes themselves." ("The Conservation of Race," 1897)

The difference between liberal and conservative Black bourgeois attitudes is that Black liberals also recognize the structural obstacles to Black progress. Black liberals believe the primary focus ought to be on creating "a new America." Today's Black conservatives adopt the classic Black conservative view of Booker T. Washington, one focusing on creating "a new Negro." Like Washington, they view African Americans as a somehow "unfinished" product of slavery, still needing to prove ourselves worthy of the rights of other American citizens. This subtle and subversive aspect of Black conservative intellectuals' arguments has gone largely unnoticed and unanalyzed.

Black conservatives echo white conservatives' racist arguments and ally themselves with white conservative racist elements because they share similar views of African Americans and of the causes of Black oppression and Black poverty.

It is Black conservative *intellectuals* who have consistently received media attention and have been most influential in policy formulation. Therefore, Black conservative intellectuals will be the focus here, specifically six men who received the greatest attention throughout the 1980s: Glenn Loury, Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, Robert Woodson, Shelby Steele, and Stephen Carter.

But it is important to recognize that we have yet to see a Black conservative movement *per se*, not only because there are only a limited number of African Americans who hold conservative political views, but also because the same kinds of philosophical splits that divide the white right also divide the Black right.

BLACK CONSERVATIVE FACTIONS

A small group of conservative Black intellectuals and political officials have defined the intellectual parameters of the Black conservative argument. Like Neo-conservatives, almost all were once liberal/left Democrats. Like Neo-conservatives, they are pro-Israel and anti-affirmative action. They are to the left of ultra-conservatives like Patrick Buchanan, but the boundary between the ideological positions of Black conservatives and ultra-conservatives is often porous. Blacks who are philosophically similar to Neo-conservatives share most of the traditional values movement's positions and are more than willing to take advantage of the financial and organizing power of more extreme religious right conservatives, such as Pat Robertson.

The best known of Black conservative intellectuals are Thomas Sowell, an economist at the conservative Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, and Walter Williams, economics professor at George Mason University

in Alexandria, Virginia. Sowell and Williams are conventional "free market" conservatives in the mold of Milton Friedman. Slightly more moderate Black conservatives include: Glenn Loury, an economist formerly at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government and currently professor of economics at Boston University; Shelby Steele, English professor at San Jose State College; Stephen Carter, law professor at Yale University; and the only activist in the group, Robert Woodson, founder and President of a research and development organization in Washington, D.C., the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise.

Throughout the 1980's a group of younger Black conservatives was touted in the media as the "next generation" of Black conservative intellectuals. Representative of this group are Joseph Perkins, a former aide to Vice-President Dan Quayle and the second youngest journalist ever hired by the *Wall Street Journal*, now on the staff of the *San Diego Union Tribune*; Deroy Murdock, who served as an aide to conservative Republican Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah and was the subject of a front page cover story in the Style section of the *Washington Post*; and Kevin Pritchett, former staffer and editor of the infamous right-wing student newspaper of Dartmouth College, *The Dartmouth Review*.

Few women appear in Black conservative ranks. It is unclear whether this reflects Black women's rejection of conservative ideas or if this is due to the combination of racism and sexism that diminishes and obscures all Black women's contributions, or a combination of both. Prominent among the few identifiable Black conservative women intellectuals are Illinois State University sociologist and Ayn Rand disciple Anne Wortham, and Harvard-trained Eileen Gardener, a researcher at the ultra-conservative Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. Wortham is better known than Gardener because her book, *The Other Side of Racism*, has received attention. This harangue against basic precepts of modern human rights and civil rights campaigns is too extreme, however, even for most Black conserva-

tive intellectuals. Wortham is nonetheless influential in some far-right circles. Another Black conservative, Heritage Foundation's Minority Outreach Director Claudia Butts, served briefly as the Bush administration's White House liaison to Blacks.

Another group of Black conservatives who captured media attention in the 1980's were officials and appointees from the Reagan and Bush administrations. In the Reagan administration, the best known were White House staffer William Keyes, State Department appointee and twice-failed Senate Republican candidate Alan Keyes (no relation to William), the late Clarence Pendleton, Reagan's Chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Samuel Pierce, the scandal-ridden director of HUD, and William B. Allen, appointed to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1987.

In the Bush administration, Michael L. Williams, Department of Education Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, was known for his independent 1990 ruling that college scholarships awarded on the basis of race were illegal. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, formerly a member of the Reagan administration, is not only the best known of all Black conservatives, but within the African American community is the only Black conservative whose name is both widely known and is immediately equated with conservative politics.

There is a mistaken tendency to lump all Black Republicans into the Black conservatives category. Representative Gary Franks, for example, is the only Republican in the Congressional Black Caucus and is also a well-known Black conservative. But Franks and other Black conservative Republicans are atypical. It is true most Black Republicans are generally conservative on business-related tax and regulation policy issues and are typically more socially conservative than Black Democrats. But the majority of Black Republicans are also admitted beneficiaries and staunch supporters of affirmative action programs and, as such, are located in the vanishing moderate wing of the Party. During the Reagan and Bush

From the Editors

Political Research Associates is in a period of transition. We are struggling to adjust to the death of two of our colleagues, Margaret Quigley and Susie Chancey-O'Quinn (see *In Memoriam* on page 11 in this issue). At the same time, we are searching for a new Director. Jean Hardisty will be stepping down as Director, though she will stay on as chair of the Board of Directors and co-editor of *The Public Eye*. Francine Davis, archivist and keeper of the books, has left her part-time job at PRA for a full-time position. We have been joined by Judith Glaubman, formerly managing editor of *geneWatch*, the newsletter of The Council for Responsible Genetics. With this issue, Judith begins as co-editor of *The Public Eye*. She also will serve as PRA archivist.

Please see the Job Announcement on page 10 in this issue for details of our search for a new Director. During this transition, we hope for as little disruption in publication of *The Public Eye* as is humanly possible.

administrations, numerous skirmishes erupted between liberal and conservative Black Republicans as both vied for the ear of the White House and fought alongside their respective white counterparts for the soul of the Republican Party.

There is also a cluster of Blacks, former civil rights leaders and/or entertainers, whom most African Americans recognize but do not necessarily associate with conservative causes. Of these, Tony Brown, host of the popular PBS talk show "Tony Brown's Journal," is the most influential. Brown, very much in the mold of Black conservative intellectuals Thomas Sowell, Walter Williams, and Robert Woodson, preaches "self-help" capitalism as the solution to Black problems. Many of Brown's Afri-

can American fans remain unaware he became a Republican in 1991.

Former National Football League star Roosevelt Grier works with World Impact, a Los Angeles-based evangelical Christian organization, and is a prominent Republican celebrity figure. Other Black conservative media stars include Marva Collins, whose Chicago Westside Preparatory School was the subject of a "60 Minutes" story and a made-for-television movie, and Joe Clark, the baseball-bat-wielding principal of Patterson, New Jersey's Eastside High School. Clark became a favorite of then-Secretary of Education William Bennett and his exploits provided the storyline for the feature film "Lean on Me."

African Americans, especially those of us old enough to remember the civil rights era, have been shocked by the conservative turn taken by such former civil rights stalwarts as James Meredith, Roy Innis, the Rev. James Bevel and the late Rev. Ralph Abernathy. In 1962, James Meredith became the first Black student to integrate the University of Mississippi. In 1989, Meredith became the first Black professional on the staff of North Carolina Republican Senator Jesse Helms. Most recently, he ran unsuccessfully for the Mississippi House seat vacated by President Clinton's Secretary of Agriculture, Mike Espy. Although most African Americans know that Abernathy, Innis, and Bevel all adopted conservative politics, few are aware of just how far right these former civil rights leaders have turned, or that they have ties to authoritarian, right-wing organizations. Abernathy worked until his death with Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification movement. Innis has worked in alliance with Lyndon LaRouche's organizations. And Rev. Bevel now works closely with groups controlled by both Moon and LaRouche.

TIES WITH THE TRADITIONAL VALUES MOVEMENT

A more narrowly focused group of Black conservatives comes out of the right-wing traditional values movement within the Black com-

munity. This group merits special attention. Notwithstanding the occasional secular group, it is primarily made up of Black Christian fundamentalist groups, and its followers differ significantly from Black conservative intellectuals and bureaucrats. Unlike the former, the traditional values people are part of a movement and, as such, engage in constituency-building activities. Whereas conservative Black intellectuals and political officials uniformly scoff at Afrocentrism, some of the Black fundamentalist groups adhere to strongly Afrocentric orientations. Indeed the combination of hard-core Christian fundamentalism with Afrocentrism contains the potential for schisms within Black Christian fundamentalism and certainly with the notoriously racist elements of the white Christian fundamentalist movement as a whole.

The larger, predominantly white traditional values movement is well placed to receive more attention as the right gears up to fight the Clinton Administration's policies on abortion, AIDS, and sex education in schools. Indeed, as the right-wing Christian fundamentalist and traditional values movements continue to organize to overtake the Republican Party at the local level, and as their influence on U.S. politics spreads, those Black Americans affiliated with the positions of the traditional values movement are positioned to garner as much attention in the 1990's as the Black conservative intellectuals did in the 1980's. This is particularly true given that the African American community, while traditionally liberal on political issues, is also traditionally conservative on social issues, such as abortion rights and homosexual rights.

Dr. Mildred Jefferson, a physician who was the first Black woman to graduate from Harvard Medical School, has long been a star in the traditional values movement. Dr. Jefferson was a founder and former Chairman of the National Right to Life Committee, and served three terms as the organization's president. She is currently chair of the National Right to Life Crusade. Jefferson is joined by several other lesser lights who are asserting themselves as

movement spokespeople: Los Angeles school teacher Ezola Foster, Rev. Cleveland Sparrow in Washington, D.C., Greg Keath in Michigan, and Rev. Edward V. Hill in Los Angeles.

Keath is the leader of two groups, Rescue Black America (RBA) and the Alliance for Family, both staunch opponents of abortion. Rescue Black America uses tactics similar to those used by anti-abortion groups such as Operation Rescue. Like Keath, Washington D.C. minister Cleveland Sparrow is also adamantly opposed to abortion, but his organization, the National Coalition for Black Traditional Values (NCBTV), increasingly is targeting homosexual civil rights issues and AIDS anti-discrimination laws. Sparrow was formerly head of the Moral Majority chapter in D.C., and is gathering increasing political clout in the white conservative establishment. Sparrow aligned himself with Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-CA) in an effort to overturn a Washington, D.C. City Council ordinance that bars insurance companies from refusing coverage to people who test positive for the HIV virus.

Ezola Foster's Los Angeles-based Black Americans for Family Values (BAFV) also opposes homosexual rights and AIDS anti-discrimination laws, as well as a woman's right to abortion, AIDS education, and sex education in schools. Arguing in 1988 that the issue was whether Republicans want to send voters the message that "it is the party of the family...(or) the party of perverts," Foster has repeatedly supported efforts by Rep. William Dannemeyer and other right-wing Republicans to get the California GOP to ban gay Republican clubs from the Party.

Edward V. Hill is pastor of the 2000-member Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in the Watts section of Los Angeles. He is a close friend of Jerry Falwell and was a member of Falwell's now-defunct Moral Majority. Hill once dismissed protestors picketing his church during a Falwell visit, saying the protestors were "Muslims, homosexuals, and abortionists."

THE LINCOLN INSTITUTE AND CLARENCE THOMAS

In terms of institutional structures for disseminating Black conservative ideas, the Lincoln Institute for Research and Education in Washington D.C. is *the* bastion of Black conservatism. Founded by Jay A. Parker in 1978, the Institute illustrates the typically overlooked importance of Black conservatives to conservative U.S. foreign policy agendas.

Since its founding, The Lincoln Institute has had close ties to the extreme rightist World Anti-Communist League (WACL). WACL aggressively supported right-wing governments and military movements in Central America and Southern Africa, such as the Contras in Nicaragua, the ARENA Party in El Salvador, UNITA in Angola, RENAMO in Mozambique, and the Inkatha Freedom Party in South Africa, among others. Parker served on the Board of the U.S. WACL affiliate and Lee Edwards, another Lincoln Institute founder, was a principal WACL organizer in the United States and WACL's registered agent in 1982.

Clarence Thomas, widely portrayed as a neo-conservative, is a classic illustration of the murkiness of the dividing line between mainstream conservatives and ultra-conservatives. Clarence Thomas and Jay A. Parker served together on Ronald Reagan's 1980 transition team for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). According to Parker, the team "argued strenuously" against affirmative action, which they viewed as "a new racism." By March, 1981 Parker had become a registered agent for the South African homeland of Venda. In June, 1981 Clarence Thomas joined the Advisory Board of The Lincoln Institute's quarterly publication, *The Lincoln Review*. At the same time, Thomas became an Assistant Secretary of Education. Parker's Justice Department filings state that soon after he began representing Venda, he held discussions with U.S. Department of Education officials about his client.

In 1985, Parker and William Keyes, the former Reagan aide (and a contrib-

uting editor for *The Lincoln Review*), founded a lobbying organization called International Public Affairs Consultants, Inc. (IPAC). That same year, IPAC began representing the South African Embassy. Clarence Thomas was listed as one of a handful of guests attending an IPAC dinner for the South African Ambassador in 1987. In 1984, Keyes started Black PAC, with Parker serving as treasurer, to work for Jesse Helms's re-election, and to oppose the "terrorist outlaw" African National Congress (ANC) and "extremists" such as Jesse Jackson and the Congressional Black Caucus. In June, 1987 the conservative weekly *Human Events* reported Thomas, then of the EEOC, and Clarence Pendleton, who was then Reagan's chair of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, attended a Black PAC strategy session to plan for important political battles being waged in Congress.

Also in June, 1987 Thomas made a well known speech at the Heritage Foundation, in which he said: "A few dissidents like Thomas Sowell and J.A. Parker stand steadfast, refusing to give in to the cult mentality and childish obedience that hypnotize black Americans into a mindless political trance. I admire them, and only wish I had a fraction of their courage and strength." Thomas remained on *The Lincoln Review's* Advisory Board throughout the period Parker and Keyes represented the South African government, resigning at the time he was appointed to the Federal Court of Appeals in March, 1990.

BLACK CONSERVATIVE PUBLICATIONS

The *Lincoln Review* and the quarterly *Issues and Views*, published and edited by Elizabeth Wright of New York City, are the most prominent Black conservative publications. Both quarterlies publish articles by and about Black conservatives. *The Lincoln Review* focuses on both domestic and foreign policy. During the Cold War the *Review* was known for its rabid anti-communist editorial line. The *Review* is anti-choice,

pro-death penalty, anti-affirmative action, pro-defense spending, anti-Martin Luther King national holiday, pro-school prayer, anti-Washington D.C. statehood. It is also unreservedly and uncritically supportive of Israel.

Issues and Views focuses on "self-help" and entrepreneurial activity in the Black community. Jay Parker and Walter Williams are advisors to *Issues and Views*. Lesser known publications include Emmanuel McLittle's *Destiny* magazine, published in East Lansing, Michigan, and Earl Ofari Hutchinson's bi-monthly newsletter. Hutchinson is a Pacific News Service commentator and owner of IMPACT! Publications.

BLACK CONSERVATIVE THOUGHT

Given how widely lauded they are in mainstream media, it is disappointing to actually read Black conservatives' work. What comes to mind is Lewis A. Coser's comment in his 1974 edited book *The New Conservatives*: "These new conservatives do not give the impression of having reflected in a sustained and systematic manner on political philosophy. They express a mood and a fashion rather than a deeply felt political stance. They seem to be sustained by a desire to seize the shifting Zeitgeist by its tail, and they batten on the mood of disillusionment that has seized the country after the hopes of the early 1960's."

Black conservatives' work does not exhibit a sustained and systematic examination of conservative political philosophy and its potential usefulness for Black Americans. Nor do the Black conservatives, most of whom are trained social scientists, engage in credible social science research. They ignore reams of data contradicting their underlying assumptions and fail to produce reliable statistical evidence or to generate ethnographic research to support their positions.

Contrary to the impression, presented in mainstream media accounts, that Black conservatives offer "new," "innovative" and "advanced" ideas, there is little new in what Black conservative intellectuals have to say. For the

most part they merely repeat longstanding white conservative and Neo-conservative arguments. They build on a philosophical foundation borrowed from Booker T. Washington, and incorporate self-help bromides of Black cultural nationalist rhetoric. What is new in Black conservatives' analyses is that it is Black people developing an implicitly racist rationale for placing limits on social policies.

In somewhat simplified form, Black conservatives' explicit analysis rests on five fundamental points:

1) Although lingering racism still exists, thanks to the victories of the civil rights struggles, racial discrimination is no longer a critical obstacle to Black progress. We can speak of a racist American past, but not of a racist contemporary America.

2) African American demands for equal opportunity made during the Civil Rights era now go too far in demanding equal *outcomes*. A non-discriminatory America does not ensure equal outcomes. Capitalism maximizes skill and talent and any differences among ethnic groups, or between genders, is a function of each group's particular strengths and weaknesses.

3) Today's problems of race relations and Black poverty cannot be remedied by government policy alone. The roots of today's problems are located first and foremost within African Americans: in our inability to successfully compete in a free market system, in the poor values and irresponsible and offensive behavior of poor Blacks, in our psychological hang-ups about group identity and past victimization, and/or in our failure to take full advantage of existing opportunities. In this light, not only are government social welfare and legal remedies, such as affirmative action programs, unnecessary, they are detrimental to the development of Black people. Social welfare programs destroy Black families, foster debilitating dependency, and reward irresponsible behavior.

4) Affirmative action programs lower Black self-esteem since whites will always diminish Black accomplishment as reflecting only affirmative action imperatives and Black beneficiaries of affir-

mative action programs can never be fully confident that their success stems from their talent. These programs are also detrimental to Blacks because of the white (male) resentment they engender. Affirmative action has, in any case, only benefitted more advantaged Blacks.

5) The appropriate strategy for African Americans is one focusing on self help. First, we need to de-emphasize racial identity and loyalty in favor of an *American* identity. Second, African Americans should compete on the basis of merit only. Third, we need to de-

emphasize government programs and civil rights legislation in favor of racial self-help. Blacks need to focus on Black entrepreneurship, building and supporting Black business, particularly in poor Black neighborhoods. And most important, the Black middle-class needs to teach poor African Americans appropriate values and behavior.

BLACK CONSERVATISM AND WHITE CONSERVATISM

Black conservative thought is related to two analyses of African American oppression promoted by white conservatives. In other words, the grounding for Black conservative thought is found in the work of white conservatives.

Economists Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams come out of the market-centered school of economic thought dominated by Milton Friedman and Gary Becker. This school argues that it is not in the interest of white employers and white workers to oppose Black employment opportunities. Such racist behavior is against market rationality, and therefore prevents the maximization of profits. The best policy is to educate and persuade white employers and white workers to be rational, to function in their own best interest. The market school advocates "pure" market mechanisms to undermine "racist" tastes, without government intervention. Freedom, in the market view, is defined as the extent to which capital is left unfettered in its drive to maximize profit.

Thomas Sowell, a student of Friedman and the intellectual progenitor of today's Black conservatives, promotes this idealized free market approach. In his 1975 book, *Race and Economics*, and in more than eight books that followed, Sowell has argued that government intervention, in the form of anti-discrimination laws and other employment regulations, has had negative consequences for disadvantaged people. Sowell insists that because racism is inefficient and economically irrational, market mechanisms alone are sufficient to erode racist behavior.

Sowell has introduced a market version of today's "culture of poverty" argument. He argues that variations in racial and ethnic success are a function of a differential distribution of values, attitudes, and other cultural traits among different racial and ethnic groups. He argues that a "culture of poverty" hampers Blacks' ability to successfully play the game of market capitalism. "The point," Sowell says in his 1983 book, *Economics and the Politics of Race*, "is not to praise, blame or rank whole races and cultures. The point is simply to recognize that economic performance differences are quite real and quite large."

Walter Williams goes to extreme and bizarre lengths to develop what is, in effect, a defense of racism under the cover of protecting freedom of choice and capitalist rationality. In doing so, Williams makes selective and unscientific use of data, and changes language and definitions to meet his specific needs. In Williams' definition, "prejudice" is simply a process of pre-judging, making a judgment based upon existing knowledge. Hence, if employers refuse to hire young Black males, it is due not to prejudice, but to their pre-existing knowledge about young Black males' low levels of education and/or poor work habits. Discrimination is informed preference, similar to being discriminating in one's taste.

Most Black conservatives are grounded in a second white conservative analysis of the nature of Black oppression and Black poverty, the culturalist school. Black conservatives' culturalist arguments repeat the implicitly classist, sexist, and racist arguments first developed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Edward C. Banfield, Charles Murray and many other white conservatives and Neo-conservatives to explain Black poverty. Like these white conservatives, Black conservatives locate the most significant causes of Black poverty in African American culture, particularly in the culture of Black, female-headed households.

In their claims that poor African Americans are somehow inherently and generically defective, culturalist arguments come perilously close to a third



THE RIGHT LOOKS AT THE WORLD:

"Mildred Jefferson, president of the Right to Life Crusade and a member of the Council for National Policy . . . asserted that the Reagan administration had missed a public-health opportunity by failing to quarantine people with HIV. 'You've heard of the Club Med, why not Club AIDS?' she asked the audience."

*Reported by Liz Galst
"Pious Lies," Boston Phoenix
July 30, 1993*

PRA LOOKS AT THE RIGHT:

The American dilemma is race, inhospitable it's been as a place. To avoid ethnic cleansing we'd best do the right thing: Secure equal rights posthaste!

conservative analysis, the overtly racist claim that Blacks are genetically inferior, made by conservative white sociobiologist theorists such as Arthur Jensen and Richard Herrnstein.

The Negro Family: The Case for National Action, published in 1965 and popularly known as *The Moynihan Report* is the most significant early statement of the current crop of "culture of poverty" and "underclass" theories. Drawing selectively from Black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier's methodologically-flawed study, *The Negro Family in the United States* (1966), Moynihan's central thesis was that the Black family is immersed in a weak and unstable subculture. In this subculture, patriarchy is the dominant form, severe unemployment exaggerates the situation, the weak Black family produces children who are incapable of enjoying educational and employment opportunities, and no meaningful change is possible until that family is strengthened "from within." Government programs, argued Moynihan, are useless until such changes take place. It was *The Moynihan Report* that made it respectable to place the source of Black poverty within the Black community itself.

Edward C. Banfield's 1970 book *The Unheavenly City* developed the class aspects of the "culture of poverty" argument. Banfield concluded that the character and content of low income groups' culture inhibits them from competing with others in American society. Banfield claimed that, "The lower-class forms of all problems are at bottom a single problem: the existence of an outlook and style of life which is radically present-oriented and which therefore attaches no value to work, sacrifice, self-improvement, or service to family, friends, or community. Social workers, teachers, and law enforcement officials...cannot achieve their goals because they can neither change nor circumvent this cultural obstacle."

Charles Murray's 1984 book, *Losing Ground*, goes further, claiming that because Moynihan's and Banfield's theories were correct, government social welfare programs have not only not worked, but have also exacerbated the problem by rewarding "antisocial" and

irresponsible behavior, such as having children outside of marriage, and have promoted a crippling dependency on government hand-outs. Murray advocated, as do some Black conservatives, eliminating every federal benefit program for the non-elderly poor.

Economist Glenn Loury has most consistently and coherently repeated the Moynihan/Banfield/Murray culturalist arguments in a series of articles and in his 1987 book, *Free at Last? Racial Advocacy in the Post Civil-Rights Era*. According to Loury, "What is important to the alleviation of black poverty and racism is not the economic structure of the United States nor the racist behavior of whites, but African Americans' behavior. Further progress toward the attainment of equality depends most crucially at this juncture on the acknowledgment of the dysfunctional behaviors which plague black communities and so offend others."

Similarly, Shelby Steele reckons, "There was much that [President Ronald] Reagan had to offer blacks, his emphasis on traditional American values—individual initiative, self-sufficiency, strong families—offered what I think is the most enduring solution to the demoralization and poverty that continue to widen the gap between blacks and whites in America. Even his de-emphasis of race was reasonable in a society where race only divides."

Black conservatives maintain, as did Booker T. Washington, and as do white conservatives such as Moynihan, that African Americans emerged from slavery "not ready for prime time." Slavery, they argue, left us ill-equipped for full participation in either the economic or political life of the country. As Shelby Steele says, "But, though it [the Emancipation Proclamation] delivered greater freedom, it did not deliver the skills and attitudes that are required to thrive in freedom.... Oppression conditions people away from all the values and attitudes one needs in freedom—individual initiative, self-interested hard work, individual responsibility, delayed gratification.... These values...were muted and destabilized by the negative conditioning of [our] oppression. I believe that since the mid-sixties our

weakness in this area has been a far greater detriment to our advancement than any remaining racial discrimination."

Thomas Sowell puts it more bluntly in his analysis that African Americans came out of slavery with "...the enduring stigma of hard manual, or menial labor," which "has produced an anti-work ethic handicapping blacks...." In other words, African Americans are lazy.

In Part Two, I will discuss the roots of these ideas and the personalities and life experiences of the Black conservatives who hold them.

—by Deborah Toler

END OF PART ONE

Deborah Toler has been a PRA Associate for three years, working on the Black Conservatives Project.

(Write or call for information on footnotes for this article.)

FRANK J. DONNER 1911–1993

Frank Donner's lifetime of work, including his two companion books, *The Age of Surveillance* and *Protectors of Privilege*, is a model of truth-telling. He set an extraordinarily high standard, as a lawyer, a researcher, and a person of principle.

FRIENDS, NOBLES, AND CONSERVATIVE MEN

The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) is promoting the latest book of its leader, Plinio Correa de Oliveira, "the leader of the Counter-Revolution." The book, *Nobility and Analogous Traditional Elites in the Allocutions of Pius XII—A Theme Illuminating American Social History*, will have a special appendix to demonstrate the crucial role elites "have played and must play in our history." Invited to the celebration launching the book are "nobles from Europe and leading conservative figures from Washington and elsewhere."



THE SODOMIST FRONT IS BACK, A BLIGHT, AND RED ALL OVER

The Christian Anti-Communist Crusade has found a new cause in the struggle against the "Sodomist Front." In its June newsletter, it ran two compelling visuals of the Communist Front and the Sodomist Front. Each front is represented as concentric circles. At the center of the Communist Front circle are communists (open and secret) and at the center of the Sodomist Front circle are sodomites (out of the closet and in). Radiating out from each circle are further circles: 2) fellow travelers/bisexuals, 3) sympathizers/promiscuous hedonists, 4) pseudo-liberals/pseudo-liberals and 5) Dupes/Dupes. The article goes on to assert that the Homosexual Revolution has not only caused the AIDS epidemic, but has also "added to the demoralization and despair which provide fertile soil for Communist germination and growth."

A MASSACHUSETTS MIRACLE

Massachusetts, with its relatively liberal voting record and past history of enlightened social welfare policies, seemed an unlikely target for the religious right. But religious right orga-

nizing is gaining ground in Massachusetts at an alarming rate. Much of this organizing has focused on school curricula, especially attacking "moral relativism," and "secular humanism." The religious right agenda includes opposition to condom-availability in schools, multicultural school programs, sex or AIDS-prevention curricula, outcomes-based education, and "self-esteem" or "decision-making" school programs. Religious right tactics include accusing schools of usurping parental rights, discriminating against religious people, or interfering with parents' free speech.

Parents and interested citizens should inquire about affiliations with organizations such as Family First, The Pilgrim Family Institute (an affiliate of Focus on the Family) or other institutions outside a local community. These affiliations are often denied and concealed. Tactics used include: threatening or initiating litigation or legal action against School Committees, using the Open Meeting Law, the Freedom of Information Act, or the Hatch Act; criticizing educators, School Committee members, and other citizens by name in the press or in flyers to intimidate them; claiming that they represent most parents, although few in number; taking material out of context and publicizing it as "frightening" or "shocking;" labeling as "McCarthyite" people who expose their affiliations; and using statistics based on faulty research methodology.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

The Black Conservatives of *Issues and Views* rallied their readers to protest against "business as usual" at the July 10-15 NAACP Convention in Indianapolis. Ostensibly, the issue is the NAACP's "support for homosexuals." Gregory Wims, president of the NAACP Montgomery County, Maryland chapter, and other con-

servatives from local chapters, were reported to be organizing against the NAACP Resolution supporting gays in the military and endorsing the recent Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights March in Washington, D.C. In addition, a newly formed citizens' group that includes "blacks of diverse backgrounds," planned to picket and boycott the conference.

A protest did occur at the Conference. We can assume this is the opening salvo in a well-organized campaign that, according to the Center for Democratic Renewal in Atlanta, is an attempt by conservative members of the NAACP to disrupt the organization from within, using homophobia as a weapon.

ACCURACY IN MEDIA BIT BY WATCHDOG

The consumer watchdog group National Charities Information Bureau (NCIB) has prepared a report on Reed Irvine's ultra-conservative watchdog group Accuracy in Media. While NCIB does not approve or disapprove of specific charities, it has noted that AIM does not meet certain of its standards relating to fund raising, governance, financial management, or public information. NCIB listed eight lapses, including failure to prepare and review financial statements in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. For a copy of the report contact NCIB at 19 Union Square West, New York, NY, 10003, (212) 929-6300.

RUTHERFORD INSTITUTE COURTS AFRICAN AMERICAN MINISTER

The Rutherford Institute, a right-wing Christian legal advocacy group, is providing legal support to an African-American minister fired from San Francisco's Human Relations Commission after making a series of remarks confirming his literalist Biblical interpretation that gay men and lesbians are sinful. According to reporter Tim Kingston, writing in the *San Francisco Bay Times*, Rev. Eugene

Lumpkin's original base of support in the African American community began to erode as he continued to amplify on his negative opinions regarding homosexuality. Lumpkin's supporters are increasingly white Christian fundamentalists, reports Kingston. The Rutherford Institute's president is theocratic fundamentalist John C. Whitehead, who founded the group with the help of Christian Reconstructionist R.J. Rushdoony. While the issue of Lumpkin's firing has been divisive, it has also prompted some long term discussions about stereotypes, including increasing public awareness that some gays and lesbians are also people of color, and that there are Christians and even Christian fundamentalists who oppose bigotry against gays and lesbians. Based in Charlottesville, VA, the Rutherford

Institute maintains regional offices in Sacramento, CA; Grand Rapids, MI; Nashville, TN; Dallas, TX; and Fredericksburg, VA. International affiliates are located in La Paz, Bolivia; Budapest, Hungary; and Nottingham, England.

PARANOIA STRIKES SHALLOW

The first issue of the quarterly magazine *Paranoia: The Conspiracy Reader* recommends reactionary, anti-Jewish, and far right publications alongside progressive and anti-fascist publications. The John Brown Anti-Klan Committee's *No KKK! No Fascist USA!* is listed in the "Resources" section alongside the neo-fascist newspaper *The Spotlight*, published by the Liberty Lobby. The reactionary John Birch Society's *The New American* is listed with progressive periodicals

such as *Lies of Our Times* and *Covert-Action Quarterly*. The aptly-named publication combines Weimar-like anti-regime politics with UFO's and Kennedy Assassination research to expose the "Hidden Hands" that control us all. The publication is designed for "hip paranoids" and their broad definition of conspiracy includes "JFK, Global Elites, Masons, Bigfoot, Organized Crime, Cults, Biblical Prophecy, Mind-Control, Suspicious Deaths, and Hidden Agendas." Like other such publications, the implicit assumption is that promoting racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-Jewish bigotry is tolerable in the service of critiquing a corrupt government bureaucracy and alleged secret power elites. *Paranoia*, POB 3570, Cranston, RI 02910. \$4 for four issues.

BOOKS RECEIVED

A Selected, Annotated List

Bell, Derrick

Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism

New York: BasicBooks, 1992. 200 pages, footnotes and index, paperback \$10.00.

Using a rich and often witty storytelling technique, Bell argues that racism is crucial to the stability of American society. Integrationist strategies are therefore doomed to failure. In the face of this depressing reality, Bell argues for African American resistance and struggle for its own sake. Unorthodox and thought-provoking ideas, not readily classifiable.

Semelin, Jacques

Unarmed Against Hitler

Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1993. 198 pages, including endnotes and index, paperback \$18.95.

Straightforward and thoughtful, this well-written history analyzes civilian resistance to Nazi domination. In a country-by-country examination, Semelin explores the social and historical conditions that determined each country's form of resistance. Of particular interest is the author's focus on non-violent resistance.

Vidal-Naquet, Pierre

Assassins of Memory: Essays on the Denial of the Holocaust

Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman

New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. 142 pages, footnotes and index, hardcover \$27.50

Vidal-Naquet is both rigorous and eloquent in this collection of essays on historical revisionism. Ranging from Thucydides to Faurisson, he elucidates the methods and ideologies driving this practice. In the specific case of Holocaust revisionism, it is a slippery task to refute the deniers without conferring legitimacy. Vidal-Naquet is successful in large part through his scrupulousness as an historian and his irrefutable grief as a survivor.

Gilman, Sander

The Jew's Body

New York: Routledge, 1991. 243 pages, footnotes and index, paperback \$16.95.

Richly illustrated with drawings and cartoons from medical and popular literature, Gilman depicts the social construction of the Jewish body, the locus of difference

both despised and celebrated. Quite readable, the majority of the essays draw on nineteenth century medicine and psychoanalysis, although forays into popular culture prove equally interesting. The book is especially useful in understanding the origins and methods of anti-Semitic propaganda as well as the mechanics of internalized self-hatred.

Lipstadt, Deborah E.

Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory

New York: The Free Press, 1993. 235 pages, footnotes and index, hardcover \$22.95.

An excellent, overdue account of the growing effectiveness of the lies of Holocaust denial. Lipstadt reviews the content of Holocaust revisionism, the organizations that promote it, and the history of its increasing acceptance as a "point of view." Especially important is the technique of cross-fertilization, in which Holocaust deniers cite each other as sources to "prove" their assertions.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Political Research Associates is searching for a new Director

We are seeking a person who is committed to PRA's mission to oppose and expose right-wing and anti-democratic organizations, trends, and individuals, has proven fundraising ability, and has experience in administration. An advanced degree is desirable, but not required.

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CORRECTIONS

In the last issue of *The Public Eye*, an Eyes Right entry titled "The Holocaust and The Lessons of History" referred to a Roper poll but incorrectly identified the sponsoring organization. The poll was commissioned by the American Jewish Committee.

In the "Books Received" section of the last issue, *The Activist's Almanac* was incorrectly listed as *The Activist's Handbook*. Apologies to the author, David Walls.

In William Kevin Burke's feature article "The Wise Use Movement," the editor of *Reason Magazine* should be Virginia I. Postrel, not Sylvia Postel.

The Public Eye

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IN MEMORIAM

Margaret Quigley
1958–1993



Susie Chancey-O'Quinn
1947–1993

Margaret Quigley, for six years a researcher and office manager at Political Research Associates, died August 14 in an automobile accident. She was traveling with her life partner, Susie Chancey O'Quinn. Both died when their car was struck by another in Crestview, Florida. Susie had periodically been a part-time PRA office worker for nearly five years.

Margaret is often publicly identified as an honors graduate of Harvard Law School. But she identified herself as a student of the history of European fascism and anti-democratic forces in the United States, a lesbian feminist, and an anti-racism worker.

Margaret was also proud of her past work in direct care with mentally retarded persons, as well as her position as manager of the Cambridge Food Co-op, where she organized free classes in English as a Second Language.

At PRA we have seen that when a topic interested Margaret, she attacked it with such single-minded focus that the result was a rather startling mastery. Often these chosen topics were in subject areas that were neglected precisely because the material was so difficult and arcane.

During the last six months of Margaret's life she struggled with a debilitating illness for which there was no clear diagnosis. When she was killed, she was fighting to overcome the illness and regain her preferred role as a maverick intellectual. There are no words for the grief and loss we feel with Margaret's death.

Susie Chancey-O'Quinn was a woman of multiple talents. Her first calling was the theater; she had directed and acted for over fifteen years. When she was killed, she was on her way to Baton Rouge where she was to begin her final year of graduate work in Dramatic Directing with Barry Kyle at Louisiana State University. This would build on her MFA in Political Theater from Goddard College.

As an office worker, Susie was a whirlwind who delivered PRA from office meltdown many times. She would arrive, a calming presence full of competence, and organize any amount of chaos we could pile on her. As a result, she was as integrated into the PRA scene as a regular staff person.

As a friend, colleague, and cultural worker, Susie was widely loved. At PRA, she will be remembered with profound affection, gratitude, and sadness.

THE PUBLIC EYE Resources

The Council for Research on Women has just released its comprehensive and extremely helpful report, *To Reclaim a Legacy of Diversity: Analyzing the "Political Correctness" Debates in Higher Education*. Copies may be obtained for \$12.00 from the Council, 530 Broadway, 10th Floor, NY, NY 10012; (212) 274-0730.

Informative and useful, *The State of Black America, 1993*, published annually by the National Urban League is available for \$24.95 from Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02181; (617) 431-1453.

The Sex Panic is a hot new report from the Conference on Women, Censorship and "Pornography," sponsored by the National Coalition Against Censorship. The conference held in May, 1993 sought to find new feminist ways to think about and fight censorship. To obtain a copy, send \$5.00 to "Panic," National Coalition Against Censorship, 275 Seventh Avenue, NY, NY 10001; (206) 807-6222.

RESEARCH CENTERS ON MINORITY ISSUES INCLUDE:

Applied Research Center
440 Grand Avenue, Suite 401
Oakland, CA 94601
(510) 834-7072

Center for Third World Organizing
1218 East 21st Street
Oakland, CA 94606
(510) 533-7583

Women of Color Resource Center
2288 Fulton Street, Suite 103
Berkeley, CA 94704
(510) 848-9272

PUBLICATIONS ON MINORITY ISSUES INCLUDE:

ACHE
P.O. Box 6071
Albany, CA 94706
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Journal of art and culture for women
of African descent.

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The Public Eye

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