

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

NEW AGE RECONSTRUCTION

By Bernice Powell Jackson

Someone once said those who don't know their history are destined to repeat it. And the baseball philosopher Yogi Berra was once quoted as saying, "it's deja vu all over again." Which ever way you look at it, what is happening now has happened before as legal challenges in five Southern states attempt to erase newly-drawn majority African American congressional districts.

It happened after the Civil War, when the South sent 22 blacks to Congress and dozens to state legislatures and county courthouses. It was called Reconstruction. But with the election of Rutherford B. Hayes and the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, blacks had been totally disenfranchised and all the black members of Congress were gone by 1901. Indeed, George White, the last black congressman of this Reconstruc-

tion period predicted in his final Congressional address that blacks would rise again some day, phoenix-like. He warned, "These parting words are in behalf of an outraged, heartbroken, bruised and bleeding, but God-fearing people, faithful, industrious, loyal, rising people — full of potential force."

George White was right — blacks did return to Congress from the South. He probably had no idea it would take nearly

a century to do so. 71 years to be exact — when Barbara Jordan was elected in Texas and Andrew Young in Georgia.

And he probably had no idea that no more African-Americans would be elected for two decades until a new strengthened Voting Rights Act in 1990 required redistricting to maximize Black voters influence. As a result, in 1992 five Southern

states which had no African American representation since Reconstruction each elected at least one African American member — Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama and Florida.

But all of that can now change. "We began this century with no Black representation in Congress and the prospect is we could end it that way," said

Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney of Georgia in a recent *En-core* magazine interview.

Why does McKinney make such a dire prediction? In 1993 the Supreme Court's *Shaw vs. Reno* decision disregarded this century's voting record when it came to black representation from the South in Congress. Ironically, it used the 14th and (See Civil Rights, Page 24)

THIS WAY FOR BLACK EMPOWERMENT

ZAIRE: NEXT ON THE LIST FOR DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

By Lenora Fulani

On April 18 the democratic opposition to the Zairean dictator Mobutu Sese Seko officially designated their leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, to be the prime minister of Zaire's transitional government once again. Tshisekedi received 89% of the vote.

Tshisekedi, who I am proud to have known and supported for the last five years, was first elected prime minister in August 1992 by Zaire's Sovereign National Conference, a democratic assembly of over 2,800 delegates which created interim institutions - a constitution, a parliament, and a government - charged with leading Zaire to democracy within two years. However, the dictator Mobutu - originally installed by the CIA after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba - has refused to cede power to the democratic government transition. The United States, while giving lip service to support for the legitimate transition government, has continued to give political and diplomatic support for the legitimate transition government, has continued to give political and diplomatic support to its long-time ally Mobutu.

Starting last September, the United States along with France, Belgium and a special UN representative pressured the opposition to sit down and "negotiate" changes to Zaire's transitional constitution - changes which drastically undermine the democratic gains of the Sovereign National Conference and increase the formal powers of President Mobutu. The opposition reluctantly agreed to "enlarge" the High Council of the Republic (the transitional parliament) to include all the deputies from the former one-party National Assembly, a Mobutist institution that had been abolished by the Sovereign National Conference. This "enlargement" gave Mobutu a majority of the

High Council of the Republic.

The thinly-veiled objective of these U.S. brokered negotiations is to dislodge Tshisekedi - the most popular Zairean political leader since Partice Lumumba - from the post of prime minister, and replace him with a "neutral technocrat" more acceptable to international financial institutions. American embassy personnel travel around Kinshasa openly promoting the candidacy of Kengo wa Dondo, a former prime minister under the Mobutu regime who is enormously unpopular with the Zairean people.

Despite enormous pressure, the opposition refused to give up Tshisekedi. The terms of the deal finally concluded between Mobutu and the opposition specified that the new prime minister had to come from the ranks of the opposition, and Tshisekedi was once again the choice. Since then, the Mobutuists have renewed their campaign of sabotage. Celestin Anzuluni, the acting head of the transitional parliament and a Mobutuist, held up Tshisekedi's appointment, while 13 Mobutuists who had infiltrated the opposition declared their own candidacies. The Mobutu-controlled radio and TV reported on these candidacies, and broadcast the false information that no opposition candidate had received a majority of the vote.

The Clinton administration, which has come under fire from the Congressional Black Caucus for its Zaire policy, blames the continuing impasse in Zaire on the inability of the "political class" to rise above its petty ambitions. "There are no George Washington's there," a Defense Department staff member told Nancy Ross and Deborah Green, partners in the DC lobbying firm of Ross & Green, which advocated for the Zairean democratic transition.

On the contrary, American foreign policy toward Zaire must



LENORA FULANI

bear the lion's share of blame for the tragic delay in Zaire's democratization. The Clinton administration has adopted the policy of President Bush in its entirety: hang on to Mobutu, and use him to interfere with Zairean people's right to self-determination. Now that democracy has finally come to South Africa, we must turn our attention to the struggle for democratization in all of Africa. Zaire must be at the top of the list.



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NLV...THE WESTSIDE STORY

TO BE FREE

By R.K. Brown

To many conservative circles it might be bewildering to imagine, the continued dominance and grace of the black spirit. Racism started the moment we got off the boat, and has lasted for 400 years.

Through the clan, Jim Crow, public lynchings, and blatant job discrimination, we continue to keep our heads to the sky. How many times do we look in the paper to find were someone has cracked and killed dozens of people. Or someone had decided that life is too hard, and they should end it all.

Well if hard times are an excuse, then there should be no blacks living in America today! Rich people kill themselves over millions while boys with just loose change, fight to stay alive each day. This is the undeniable pattern of not giving in. The harder the going gets, the tougher we like it. I will admit that sometimes when the going gets a little easier, many times we slack up. Simple example, the chance for tremendous growth after the civil rights era. That is another matter however.

It has been established in public texts, that the black ability to survive under any condition is

unmatched. Things have only gotten better! Yes there is still overt racism from time to time, but the influence of the new imperialist arm now comes from covert racist elite.

How could a people live through such miserable times? Any black American from 1790 until 1990 knows what it is like to be hated for the color of their skin. Yet we continue to be happy and free. In fact, as black America goes so goes the country. Sports, entertainment, politics, music, clothing and American language, can't be introduced without highlighting black influences.

Our black pride allows us to be free inside this eternal prison, contradicting white logic. We can live to be happy and to understand other men, because we possess that strength. As we continue to focus on the present not getting caught up on the historical legacy of our racist culture, we learn to move on.

As the new clan, Neo Nazis and some police forces continue to make blacks their eternal targets, they must wonder if we are like rain. No matter what you do, ya' just can't stop them! The African world's freedom is our ultimate destiny, and all the burned crosses in the world won't stop that reality. peace.....

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