

Clarence Pendleton and the rhetoric of paradox

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In his role as chair of the Commission on Civil Rights, Clarence M. Pendleton created a paradoxical worldview by playing the role of a clown to express the Reagan-Bush administration's policy on affirmative action. He sustained this worldview through a formal paradox, "I am the nonblack black leader." Three speeches that Pendleton gave show that he sustained this formal paradox by rhetorically creating a constituency and by incorporating African American styles of address into his speeches.

KEY TERMS: Paradoxical worldview, Clarence M. Pendleton, Jr., civil rights, affirmative action, black English, messiah.

In the 1980s affirmative action emerged as an election issue in the presidential campaigns of Ronald Reagan (Smith, 1990). Opposition to affirmative action also was a cornerstone in the Louisiana election bids of David Duke for seats in the state congress and in the United States Senate. Duke, a former member of the Ku Klux Klan and head of the neonativist National Association for the Advancement of White People, is now a state representative. Although Duke lost his 1990 bid for the Senate, he received 46% of the vote. Duke included opposition to affirmative action in his platform "Equal Rights for White People." Duke's successes have shown that opposition to affirmative action has the potential to be a rallying point for white Americans and may help to secure their votes.

It is true that there is a distance between Ronald Reagan and David Duke, but it is not so great in the case of the president's contradictory position on civil rights and one of its results, affirmative action. President Reagan was staunchly opposed to affirmative action, yet he fought Congress to keep alive the United States Commission on Civil Rights, an independent government agency whose reports had helped shape civil rights law and policy. It is my contention that the goal of this paradox was to use a credible organization to redefine civil rights and to destroy affirmative action. President Reagan's aims, like David Duke's, was to appeal to white voters' sense of fairness and to seem to be a protector of their rights.

To demonstrate my contentions, I examine three speeches by Clarence Pen-

dleton (1984; 1985; 1987), the 1981 Reagan-appointed chair of the Commission on Civil Rights. Pendleton's speeches articulated the aims of the Reagan administration toward civil rights and created strategies for opposing affirmative action. I argue that in these speeches Pendleton assumed the role that J. G. A. Pocock (1973) described as that of a clown, albeit a sinister one. I argue further that paradox was the symbol that facilitated Pendleton's role of clown. Pendleton's speeches and his role as a clown are analyzed using Chesebro's (1984) concept of the *paradoxical worldview*.

The Clown and Paradox

Verbalization can constitute a political act because words express our intentions and rationalize them, according to Pocock (1973). Similarly, in a polity, meanings are institutionalized and the use of language is both an act of definition of a subject and an assertion of actions toward it. Brutus's soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, for example, is both an assertion to kill and a rationale that it is just to kill a tyrant. Brutus chose language that not only expressed his intentions, but defined his subject and the actions appropriate to it. Brutus, thus, used language to create a world by altering the perceptions of the auditors.

When power is unshared in a polity, there exists a master-slave relationship. Masters use language to express their power to define the slave and his or her actions. However, because communication is possible between master and slave, both have access to the same language and are capable of altering perceptions. For the slave, liberation exists by being a clown who plays "on the margins and at the buried roots of language" where "there is a rich field of ambiguities, absurdities, and contradictions awaiting our exploitation" (Pocock, p. 41). Pocock (1973) states further:

His strategy is an obviously effective means of dealing with a language universe conceived of in alien, impersonal, or third-person terms: as Other, as a system or power-structure in which I am not as free as I could be and other persons or groups, or impersonal institutions, are enabled by the language to impose roles and universes upon me. I therefore set out to shake up, send up, and generally disconcert Them and It. (p. 41)

This is the clown as liberator who "reverse[s] roles," "discovers contradictions and negations," and "set[s] off resonances whose subversive tremors may be felt at the heart of the system . . ." (Pocock, 1973, p. 42). Pocock recognizes that the clown/slave is not the master, but he or she has temporarily and deliberately confused both the master and his institutions. He states:

By discerning a latent irony or absurdity in the role you have assigned me, I have reversed some language-game and sought to imprison you in a role assigned to you; but there should still be opportunity for you to discover ambiguities in the language by which I do this and to maneuver between the role I seek to fix on you and the roles which language otherwise makes available to you. (Pocock, 1973, p. 42)

The master, thus, must devise new language strategies that send "frictions" back into the medium and continue "the comedy of strategies" (Pocock, 1973, p. 43).

Paradox is, clearly, the rhetorical figure of the clown. Chesebro's paradoxical worldview is a method for examining paradox as a strategy employed and manipulated by a specific rhetor, such as Pocock's clown. It argues that "rhetorical figures can create, maintain, and mediate the perspectives of reality which control social bondings and social divisions" (Chesebro, 1984, p. 170). Within this view, paradox is "an organizing construct, creating a kind of 'order' among phenomena typically felt to be at odds with one another" (Chesebro, 1984, p. 165). Thus, paradox can be conceived as similar to an archetypal metaphor or governing rhetorical trope.

I Am the Nonblack Black Leader

A paradox emerges in Pendleton's persuasion and it is a formal contradiction. Formal contradictions exist whenever the content of a symbolic system is inconsistent with the form of thought employed to convey that content (Chesebro, 1984, p. 168). For example, a formal contradiction exists in the statement, "I'm an apolitical politician." Pendleton creates a formal contradiction in his denials of being a black leader. In his Akron address Pendleton (1984) states that "there are differences between the black leadership in America and me. I'm not a black leader" (p. 12). The remark echoed a similar one he made to the press in an interview shortly after his appointment in 1981 (Cummings, 1981). Pendleton's remark is contradictory because he is black and, as he implies, he is a leader, yet he is not a "black leader." In other words he is a "nonblack" leader who, paradoxically, happens to be black.

Pendleton casts himself as one who is the conscience and voice of African Americans. Because he is their conscience and voice, he is their legitimate leader. This method of constituting leadership is reminiscent of Reid's (1949) concept of *racial leadership* that is identified "with individual achievement in spite of the group-limited handicaps rather than with group activity directed toward group goals" (p. 363). Reid's concept permits leaders to include entertainment figures such as Marian Anderson and Jackie Robinson, as well as politicians and intellectuals. Reid (1949) used the terms *race leader* and *messiah* to refer to individuals who possessed "the quality and ability of directing and persuading socially defined groups known as races . . . toward a specific goal . . ." (p. 363). Race leaders came almost exclusively from the middle classes "who 'made good' as individuals," and "who fought against the odds of being Negro and won acclaim" (p. 362).

This leadership model describes the biography that Pendleton helped to create for himself (McLane, 1988; "New Commission," 1984; Pendleton, 1983). In it, Pendleton overcame the obstacles set in place by segregation and rose to national prominence. He grew up in segregated Washington, DC, attended predominantly black Howard University, where he earned a B.A. and an M.A., and joined the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity. He worked at Howard University as a coach, secured several minor government posts, and worked diligently in civil

rights organizations such as the Urban League, which eventually brought him to the attention of Edwin Meese. Meese became his mentor and recommended him for appointment to the Commission on Civil Rights.

In his speeches, Pendleton establishes his messianic leadership in two ways. First, he incorporates African American styles of speaking into standard English texts to define and, then, to discredit black leaders. Second, he creates a rhetorical constituency. Each of these motifs functions to bolster Pendleton's ethos, thereby demonstrating that he, alone, is the conscience of African Americans.

African American Styles of Speech

Pendleton's speeches are, for the most part, written in standard American English. Having heard him on the radio, on televised talk shows, and in person, I can state that there are few phonological elements in the language that he uses on the platform that deviate from standard American English. He does, however, incorporate two African American styles of address into the texts of the speeches under examination. They are *woofing* and *marking*, and he uses them to criticize black leadership and feminists.

Woofing

Woofing is an acknowledged form of verbal aggression in African American communities. It consists primarily of threats and insults, and may also include challenges to fight another person. Woofing, however, does not have violence as its goal. Kochman (1981) noted that its purpose is

... to gain, without actually having to become violent, the respect and fear from others that is often won through physical combat. To accomplish this it is necessary to create an image of being fearless and tough, someone not to be trifled with. Once someone's reputation in these respects has been established, he may never again be called upon to prove it and can then walk the streets with impunity. (p. 49)

There are some important implications that need to be stressed about woofing. First, woofing has an ethos function. Woofing is about creating an image that audiences will attribute to a speaker. In this case, it is using confrontational language to create an image of being fearless and tough. Second, woofing implies that there is a shared system of meanings. The effectiveness of woofing depends upon its recognition. Third, it is also possible for woofing to fail. Fighting clearly signifies the failure of woofing. In addition to fighting, however, there is another signal of failure—when the woofers are ignored because either he or his assertions are unimportant or insignificant.

Pendleton's use of language when he speaks about feminists and particularly African American leaders can be viewed as an example of woofing. When he mentions these two groups his language becomes insulting, confrontational, and combative: the strategies of woofing. However, the audiences for such speeches were not composed of the people upon whom he woofed. Rather, the audiences

were completely the opposite, such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, or associations composed mostly of white conservative businessmen. Pendleton's insulting and confrontational remarks, however, were the ones usually quoted by the news media (Bell, 1985; Reston, 1986; Starr & McDaniel, 1984; Weiss, 1982). The fact that the news media usually quoted Pendleton's insulting remarks strongly suggests that the statements were, in fact, intended for feminists and African Americans. These intended audiences and the confrontational tone, I believe, strongly support my claim that Pendleton was woofing.

In the Akron, Ohio, address that first brought him media attention, Pendleton (1984) launched a savage attack against black leaders. The speech was given on November 15 but was not widely reported until November 20. A tape-recorded excerpt of part of the Akron address was played on the National Public Radio program "All Things Considered." The excerpt is an excellent example of woofing and it demonstrates the selectivity of the media. Pendleton (1984) defined black leaders as "media creations" who have "made an industry out of racial politics" by creating and selling "their only product, race, primarily to the government and to the liberal white establishment who are riddled with fear and guilt" (p. 13). Their motives, he said, were greed and self-promotion. He stated, "These leaders made, and make, lots of money; have gained social acceptance, and attract broad-based media attention" (Pendleton, 1984, p. 13). Pendleton (1984) demanded that black leaders "open the plantation gates and let us out! We refuse to be led into another political Jonestown as we were led during the presidential campaign. No more Kool-Aid, Jesse, Vernon, and Ben! We want to be free" (p. 14). The cultural specificity of these remarks clearly suggests that Pendleton was woofing. Jesse, Vernon, and Ben are all esteemed leaders within their community. Jesse Jackson, self-proclaimed heir to Martin Luther King, Jr., is the founder of Operation Push, a Chicago activist organization that led successful boycotts against companies that did not recruit minorities for management positions, and he was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984. Vernon Jordan, Jr., is a former president of the Nation Urban League and Pendleton's former boss. Benjamin L. Hooks was the executive director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Both Hooks and Jordan had made negative remarks in the national press about the president's appointments to the Commission on Civil Rights ("President Draws Heavy Criticism," 1983; "Jordan Assails Reagan," 1983; "Reagan Civil Rights Policies," 1983).

The references to plantation gates and Jonestown were sensitive points and laden with meaning for blacks; both addressed the nightmarish side of the black experience in America. Plantation gates, of course, referred to the ordeal of slavery. Jonestown and Kool-Aid referred to mass murder that had occurred under the Rev. Jim Jones in Guyana in November 1978. The Jonestown metaphor was obscene, considering its indictment of the messianic and the emigration impulses in African American political discourse that have existed as reactions to violent expressions of racism in this country (Asante, 1987; Cronon, 1969; Cummings, 1982; Moses, 1982; Painter, 1977; Reinders, 1962; Reinders, 1965; Smith, 1972). The fact that more than seven hundred blacks had to choose

between death by armed guards or by suicide in the jungle of Guyana was an analogy more fitting to the infamous middle passage than to electoral politics.

Furthermore, the historical experience of African Americans suggests that suicide is an inappropriate metaphor for blacks in electoral politics. Berry and Blassingame (1982) point out that since enfranchisement African American leaders and their constituents have been confronted with the dilemma posed by party loyalty and racism. Neither their party loyalty nor their support of equal rights proponents have brought about major changes in their social and economic conditions, so African Americans have seen "increasingly that direct action, protest, whether violent or nonviolent, . . . [is] an essential ingredient of successful political action" (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 194). Suicide, then, is a cynical metaphor used to describe the fact that black leaders had urged their constituents to vote for the Democratic candidate in the presidential elections of 1980 and 1984. Instead, Pendleton's selection of the suicide metaphor is designed to woo African American leaders and activists.

In "Comparable Worth Is Not Pay Equity," Pendleton (1985) extended his wooing from African Americans to women. *Comparable worth* is a plan that seeks to address the problem of pay inequity between traditional masculine and feminine jobs. Comparable worth advocates that new pay scales be instituted that assess the worth of a job, not the sex role of the job. Pendleton ridiculed comparable worth by calling it "the looniest idea since Loony Tunes came on the scene" (1985, p. 382). This was insulting to the intellect of women, but Pendleton went even further. He associated feminists with trendiness and suggested that comparable worth undermined women's ability to perform traditional roles of wives and mothers. He claimed that as president of the San Diego Urban League, he had successfully followed "the feminist rage" of training women for nontraditional jobs (p. 382). However, he claimed that he learned something important from that venture: "Most women do not want nontraditional careers. They do not want to be plumbers!!! Most women prefer traditional women's jobs. They want to be secretaries, school teachers, or nurses" (p. 383). Continuing, Pendleton stated that women prefer these jobs because they desire to have families and in these jobs they "can more easily enter and exit the market place" (p. 383). It is the feminists who have not learned this lesson, and "in their stubbornness" (or, one wonders, intellectual ineptitude?), he states, "want to reevaluate these women's jobs, compare them to men's jobs, and set an administered wage scale based on this subjective comparison" (p. 383).

Although Pendleton decries feminists, his statements emphasize the contradictions of some feminists who, Mednick (1989) argues, "place maximal emphasis on sex differences" (p. 1120). Indirectly, these feminists glorify traditional feminine roles that have provided a means for the exploitation of women. Pendleton frames his anti-comparable worth rhetoric as protecting the traditional role of women to be so-called helpers (as though plumbers are not helpers) and, thus, to receive low wages for their efforts.

Marking

Pendleton also used marking, a narrative tactic in African American speaking, to attack African American leaders. Marking is a form of indirection in

speaking. Mitchell-Kernan (1972) defined it as "a mode of characterization" in which the "marker attempts to report not only what was said but the way it was said, in order to offer implicit comment on the speaker's background, personality, or intent" (p. 176). It is also a form of shorthand by which "information is conveyed by reproducing or sometimes inserting aspects of speech ranging from phonological features to particular content which carry expressive value" (p. 176), rather than introducing personality or character traits in summary form.

Pendleton marks the style of speaking associated with the African American sermon in two of his speeches (1984, 1987). Because many African American leaders have come from the clergy, this style of speaking has come to be associated with African American activism. In the Buffalo speech (1987) he marks this style quite explicitly in a doggerel verse called "A Soul Sermon: Black Folks," which is discussed later in this essay. In the Akron speech (1984) he marks the sermonic style by using metaphor, hyperbole, and parallel structure to accuse African American leaders of contributing to bureaucratic regulations "designed to take blacks on the pathway to glory; from rags to riches, from poverty to parity, from 'obscurity' to prominence" (p. 13). His purpose in marking the sermonic style in the Akron address is a desire to characterize African American leaders as greedy and insincere. In the Buffalo speech, he uses the sermonic style to challenge the intellect of the black minister.

Explicitly, Pendleton uses marking and woofing to attack and discredit black leaders and feminists. But these also have an implicit and a more subtle function in his speeches. His ability to use black styles of speech signify his ethnicity. They become signs that Pendleton is indeed African American and is not a man who has shed his race, or who, colloquially, "has forgotten his roots." Rather, he is a concerned man of the folk, using their language to emphasize an important point. That point is always that African American leaders and feminists are out of touch and dangerous to their constituents.

Nevertheless, the ability to use black English is an insufficient signifier of concern. After all, African American leaders use black English, a fact that Pendleton marks. To show his concern, Pendleton must demonstrate that he genuinely knows "the souls of black folk" and that they constitute his following.

The Souls of Black Folk

W. E. B. DuBois's landmark *The Souls of Black Folk* (1969) contained an essay, "Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," that criticized Washington's belief that political rights were not a precondition for economic advancement; that rights for African Americans could be gained only after hard work and accumulated wealth had gained the respect of whites. Instead, DuBois (1969) counseled activism to secure political rights: "Negroes must insist continually, in season and out of season, that voting is necessary to modern manhood, that color discrimination is barbarism, and that black boys need education as well as white boys" (p. 91). The essay provided a rallying point for opponents to Washington who, until then, had chosen to remain silent (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, p. 162).

Pendleton believes, as DuBois advocated in "Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others," that he knows and must speak the legitimate demands of African Americans. Unlike DuBois, who by 1903 had devoted a decade to the study of African Americans that had resulted in the publication of groundbreaking monographs in sociology and history, Pendleton offers little empirical evidence about their aspirations. Rather, Pendleton presents stereotypical evidence and demands in a way characteristic of former president Richard Nixon: the invention of a silent majority (Campbell, 1983; Newman, 1970). Using repetition and referring to freedom and thereby marking once again a black sermonic style, Pendleton (1984) hears from "the people . . . the call for freedom that the press will never report" (p. 15). Throughout his travels, Pendleton (1984) claims that he hears these calls

. . . from the busboys at the Anatole Hotel in Dallas during the Republican National Convention; the waiters and cooks in New York, the shoe shine boys [men] in Chicago and Philly and San Diego. The students at the University of Mississippi. I hear it in the phone calls from blacks in Valdosta, Georgia[;] Lubbock, Texas[;] Omaha, Nebraska[;] Columbia, South Carolina[;] Detroit, Michigan[;] and Cleveland, Ohio. I even hear it from the guys at 9th and U Streets in Washington, D. C., with whom I used to hang out. . . . I read it in letters from grade school students, mothers, fathers, preachers, teachers, rich and poor. (p. 15)

Their continual want is "to be free from special government favors" (p. 15).

In his travels, Pendleton hears these calls for freedom from old people who are described in stereotypes reminiscent of faithful Negro retainers. Pendleton (1984) describes one Preston Bruce, "a proud black man in his seventies" (p. 15), who worked for twenty-five years as a doorman at the White House and who served Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. Pendleton even attributes to Bruce a fantastic statement that recalls the sentimental claim by Ashley Wilkes in *Gone With the Wind* that eventually he would have freed his slaves had there not been a Civil War. Pendleton claims that Mr. Bruce said "each of these [p]residents wished he could have done more for civil rights. Two of them said they wished they could have joined the [1968] rioters as they took to the streets" (Pendleton, 1984, pp. 15-16). According to Pendleton, "Mr. Bruce . . . follows me closely and supports what I'm doing and saying. He watches me today as he watched me growing up in Washington, D.C. He was the neighborhood barber prior to going to the White House" (p. 16). Curiously from those credentials of Mr. Bruce, Pendleton asks rhetorically, "Who could know me better?" (p. 16).

In the comparable worth address, Pendleton (1985) recounts a speaking engagement at the University of Mississippi that led him to "a conversation with a woman I will never forget" (p. 384). Pendleton tells us nothing of the conversation. Instead, he states: "The woman was black and old. She works in the cafeteria of Old Miss. Her hands are swollen and scarred. Years of hard work show on these hands" (p. 384). Pendleton's juxtaposition of the first two sentences invites questions. Is he implying some relationship between the woman who is "black and old" and "Old Miss" (The University of Mississippi)? If he is, it seems that the comparison might suggest that both are venerable institutions that have

served their populations well. Of course, in the case of the woman, the institution that has served the South and the United States well is the stereotypical *mammy* who is usually depicted in racist literature and film as black and old (Bogle, 1989).

This implied image of an African American woman as mammy is reinforced by the image of her as a suffering, selfless provider for her children. He states: "This woman has sent 9 children to college on a salary earned from serving food in Old Miss' cafeteria" (Pendleton, 1985, p. 384). Pendleton makes no mention of a father, so presumably the old woman is a widow or a single mother. Despite the absence of a man and her sufferings, she carries the badge of hard work and selflessness: "She is a proud old woman, and so she should be" (p. 384). Pendleton concludes his narrative of the old woman with what seems to be very peculiar reasoning: "What do you think a policy of comparable worth would do to her occupation? The answer is obvious—eliminate it" (p. 384). Pendleton offers no further rationale that might explain why this woman's job would be eliminated if a comparable-worth policy were instituted. None, of course, is really needed. The old woman, Mr. Bruce, and the other workers who call and write Pendleton are needed only to show that he has a following among the African American working classes and that he cares about them in ways that greedy black leaders and trendy feminists do not.

Pendleton also knows the aspirations of the working class. These aspirations are alluded to at the conclusion of the Buffalo address (1987) in "A Soul Sermon: Black Folks," by Booker T. Jackson of Little Rock, Arkansas. Although "A Soul Sermon" marks the sermonic style of black preachers, Pendleton does not claim authorship of it. He states that "he happened upon [it] . . . in the *Arkansas State Press* during a recent visit to Little Rock" (Pendleton, 1987, p. 21). Written in a Southern patois, the poem is a consumerist fantasy expressing a Langston Hughes-like "Life ain't been no crystal staircase" sentiment:

Black folks can have somethin, times was when
They couldn't have nothin, just a shack to
Live in, just skimpy clothes to wear, just
What they was give to eat, now they have a
Whole lotta things. (p. 21)

Among the things African Americans now have are radios, records, telephones, refrigerators, "homes that belong to them, even pools for swimmin" (p. 21). "A Soul Sermon" continues:

Yessir. They can have just
About anything now-a-days.
Black folks done worked in the sun, in the fields,
In the kitchens, shoe shine parlors, on the railroads,
Everywhere that's hard. Now they singin['] on records,
Playin['] in the shows and on tv, flying them planes,
And learnin how to do most anything. Why, they can
[W]ear them fancy clothes, drive them pretty cars and
Eat almost everywhere just 'bout any kind of food
They want. (p. 22)

It closes with the lines "It an't for free, (have to rise off your rumps),/ but its worth the fret. Black folks gettin'/ Some sense—an't that something! A change's gonna come./ Sisters and brothers, a change is gonna come./ Black folks is learnin'./ Yessir. They finally learnin'./ Halleluiah!" (p. 23).

"A Soul Sermon" and Pendleton's depictions of his followers appeal to what one historian calls *romantic racialism* (Fredrickson, 1971), and are representations that recent literary scholarship about colonial and imperialist writing terms *orientalism* and *essentialist metonymy* (JanMohammed, 1986; Pratt, 1986; Painter, 1990; Said, 1978) which tend to deny the individuality of a native or colored subject by reducing him or her to a type that stands for the whole, such as in Pendleton's rhetoric: the black servant is "old" and "proud"; African Americans express simple aspirations in equally simple language. Like colonialists and racists, Pendleton creates imaginary Others whose identities are defined by either deficiency or romanticized virtues.

Perhaps this essentialist metonymy in Pendleton's speeches is an effect of the use of a messianic strategy. Because Pendleton casts himself as the messiah who has won acclaim as signified by his government post, his so-called followers are Others, invariably working-class African Americans who have not won acclaim in the white world. Thus, essentialist metonymy becomes Pendleton's strategy for creating Others.

Pendleton as Clown

Pendleton plays the role of clown and goes to the roots of language to discover the absurdities and contradictions in his masters' rhetoric. His masters are feminists, white liberals, and so-called black leaders. They manipulate the media and control public policy. This is a world that must be set right and to do that the truth must be spoken. The masters must be exposed in order to liberate the slaves—working-class blacks.

In order to speak the truth, Pendleton creates a formal paradox that he is the nonblack black leader of blacks. He is a messiah and his mission is to liberate his people from the clutches of the so-called black leaders. To do this, he must state what other elected or appointed administrators close to the White House cannot say for fear either of dismissal or of controversy, as in the case of former secretary of the interior James Watt. To liberate himself and his people from the roles that these black leaders have assigned them, Pendleton resorts to attacks so savage as to be unbelievable in contemporary political discourse. This language of liberation, however, is paradoxical. It evokes racism. It obliterates history, and it plays with the inherent contradictions in some branches of feminism.

Pendleton's accusations that black leaders are the media creations of white liberals echo the white racist response to African American participation in politics during Reconstruction and Redemption, following the Civil War. Typically, these responses coalesced around the belief that blacks wanted social equality with whites. To racist whites, *social equality* meant

most of all, that a black man could court a white woman. It also meant that the Negro could send his children to the white man's schools, use the same recreational facilities, ride on the same streetcars and trains, attend the same theaters

and galleries, join the same clubs, and eat in the same restaurants. (Wood, 1970, p. 130)

In the press, speeches, literature, drama, popular entertainment, and, during the twentieth century, film, white racists would argue that social equality between the races was impossible, and they would create offensive stereotypes of African Americans to demonstrate this spurious claim (Berry & Blassingame, 1982, pp. 342–387; Bogle, 1989; Craig, 1980, pp. 8–18; Logue, 1976; Roberts, 1983; Tygiel, 1983). White racists would denigrate African American politicians and activists by accusing them of greed and of grasping for social acceptance from whites (Williamson, 1984, pp. 134–135). Pendleton, like the white racists of the nineteenth century, asserts that African American politicians and civil rights leaders are corrupt and insincere as a whole. Therefore, Pendleton's definition of black leaders implies that their motives are to elevate themselves above African Americans and to amalgamate with whites.

Pendleton's descriptions of his followers rely upon racist strategies. They are simple, hard-working people. They have no aspirations other than to serve whites and to work hard. If his followers are African American women, then they are characterized as having large families and absent fathers. They are suffering matriarchs who endure in silence in order to send all their children to college on meager salaries.

In Pendleton's fictional America, unscrupulous so-called black leaders and their cohorts, white liberals, manipulate the media and control public policy. The effects on public policy have subverted the law, "[so] that the framers of the Constitution, the fathers of this great country, in their wildest imagination or most creative thinking, would be shocked . . ." (Pendleton, 1984, p. 16). They would be shocked to know of, as Pendleton calls them, "today's myriad of more than 130 civil rights laws and regulations" and "more than 12 thousand full-time federal employees and a budget of more than one half billion dollars for the full enforcement of [them] . . ." (Pendleton, 1984, pp. 16–17). No doubt, Pendleton neglects to tell us, our founding fathers might also be shocked by the fact that women vote, that the enslavement of blacks no longer exists, and that ownership of property has been disqualified as criteria for suffrage.

Pendleton is, thus, a sinister clown using a language of racism and sexism. Like a clown, he says in his speeches what many (especially white male politicians) cannot afford to say in public. For example, his remark about black leaders leading their people to a "political Jonestown" did not produce a reprimand from the White House. When asked to attend a March 14, 1984, meeting between Reagan and African American Reagan appointees, Pendleton, according to one report, said "I don't attend anything for blacks only" (Williams, 1985, p. 13). Pendleton was officially reprimanded by the White House, but the severity of the reprimand was countered by personal telephone congratulations from President Reagan.

Conclusion

Pendleton was in an ambiguous position. He was one of a few African Americans in the Reagan administration. He was an appointed official, not an

elected one. The commission he headed has no legislative or enforcement power. Instead, the power of this commission is based upon its studies of discrimination, its recommendations to the president and to Congress, and, ultimately, its reputation for fairness, independence, and bipartisanship. Pendleton exploited this ambiguous position to further the aims of the Reagan administration. Because of his racial membership and his relatively powerless office, he was able to confront and insult African Americans and women with impunity. Not only was he able to exploit his ambiguous position, but he was able to frame affirmative action discussions. If one follows the logic of his discussions, black people do not really want affirmative action. In fact, the majority are so simple that they demand little and are happy servants.

Perhaps this is the reason that the African American media either ignored Pendleton or treated him unsympathetically. He appeared infrequently in *Jet*, a pocket-sized news and entertainment weekly, and the articles generally depicted him as a person under siege ("Pendleton Faces Ire," 1984; "Mitchell Rips Pendleton," 1985). The *Index to Black Periodicals*, which lists major scholarly and national sources, contained only one article about him during his entire tenure on the Commission on Civil Rights. He never appeared in the May issue of *Ebony* magazine's annual list of the hundred most influential African American leaders, a remarkable feat considering that Pendleton was clearly the most visible black appointee in the Reagan administration and that Samuel Pierce, the secretary of housing and urban development, appeared in the list from 1981 to 1988.

The fact that the African American press ignored Pendleton suggests a counterattack on his ethos. The African American press's relative silence about Pendleton indicates that it considered him insignificant. Perhaps he was to them little more than a mouthpiece for his masters in the White House. It could be argued that the silencing of Pendleton by the African American press indicates that his rhetoric failed. He was unsuccessful in influencing African Americans. However, the goal of his rhetoric was not to gain African American followers. Fictively, he had those already.

Yet Pendleton's rhetoric was a success, and it indicates the power of paradox as a rhetorical weapon. On the one hand, he was able to speak in a manner that a person of another race or in a higher administrative position could not. Through creating and sustaining a formal paradox, Pendleton was able to influence how affirmative action and civil rights would be viewed. More important, he was able to establish hypotheses—affirmative action is racist to whites; it doesn't really benefit African Americans, it only benefits so-called race leaders; and it undermines the credibility of African Americans—which the White House consistently used to veto the 1990 civil rights bill.

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