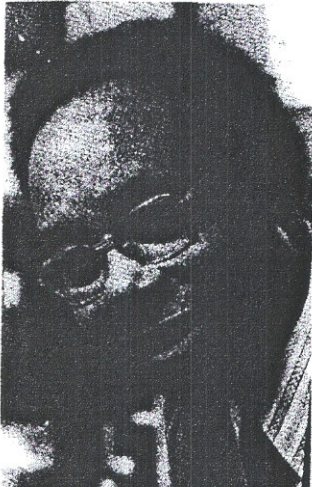


# Pontiac school executive retires with great honors



JOHN F. PURDUE retires with honors after two decades of outstanding service to the Pontiac community.

By Margaret Min'imah Zarif

PONTIAC, Mich.—With one of the greatest outpourings of love and commendation, John F. Purdue, the first Bilalian Central Office administrator in the history of Pontiac, retired after 21 years of service to this Michigan community.

Those in the audience of more than 600 persons who remember the racial tensions in the city that reached National attention, found it hard to believe that they were in the same place.

But the strength and achievement of the man whom they had come to honor, made it believable, because it was largely due to his firm, professional dealing with persons of all races and persuasions that had made this day possible.

From all walks of life they came: from education, government, and all areas of the community; former co-workers, and students, each recalling the great influence John Purdue had had on his or her life.

Born in Michigan, the son of a foundry worker and grandson of slaves, John remembers his grandfather often telling him, "Every night when you pray, ask God to help you to help someone."

He attended public schools in Ypsilanti, (Mich.) and Detroit, and graduated in 1929 from high school in Ypsilanti, the first black male to have attained this goal. Being the eldest of eight children, the family could not afford to send him to college then, so John re-entered high school to take some extra courses.

In 1931, after working many odd jobs, he was able to begin college at Michigan State Normal, but had to drop out before finishing.

The family moved to Philadelphia where Purdue began working with people. He organized the West Philadelphia Civic League in 1936 and the group is intact today. After a stint in the armed forces, John moved to Toledo, Ohio, where he completed his education at the University of Toledo.

John Purdue launched his educational career by accepting a teaching position at Grant School in Ferndale, Mich. Six years later, Bagley Elementary School in Pontiac needed a principal and he was offered the position.

This was 1956 and a Bilalian (black) administrator in that city was unheard of. Purdue's acceptance of that job was the beginning of a "new" Pontiac.

During his eight years at Bagley, he

began to recruit black teachers from the south, he worked with the Urban League, Boy Scouts, and many community projects. His teachers said, "He ruled with an iron hand, but we loved, feared, and respected him."

In 1966, Purdue began another "first," that of director of school, community and human relations at the Central Board Office. One of his duties was to make sure the district was responding to the Bilalian community at a time when racial tension was on the rise throughout the country.

He is credited with introducing Bilingual education in Pontiac and establishing a Black History course in the high schools. Pontiac today is 42 per cent Bilalian, and 6.4 per cent Latino. When court-ordered busing took force in 1971, Purdue was appointed director of the Emergency School Aid Act.

The awards, citations, plaques, and gifts received by this educator were unparalleled. They came from church, club, educational and governmental sources, including the U.S. Office of Education.

The scholarships established in his name are too numerous to mention, but Jefferson Jr. High School will now be known as the John F. Purdue Educational Center.

In retirement, John Purdue and his wife, Trunetta, also an educator, may relax for awhile, but he will always be about the job of helping someone else.

## Oakland realtor advocates

# 'Two-party' policy for Bilalians

By Abdul Seifullah

OAKLAND, Calif.—"We need to stop criticizing blacks who have the guts to join the Republican Party and encourage it," believes Oakland businessman C.J. Patterson.

In case you're in doubt, Patterson, one of Oakland's more prominent and successful businessmen as president of his own realty company, is a Republican. He believes that the lack of participation by Bilalians in the Republican Party has cost as much as has been gained.

"Democrats don't do what they could do for blacks because they know that they have the black vote regardless, and Republicans don't do anything because they know that blacks are not going to vote for them."

"All other ethnic groups, with the exception of blacks, have a dual political system in their communities," Patterson claims. "They have Democrats and they have Republicans. They are politically divided. The Hispanics have it, the Asians have it and certainly the whites have it."

"They have some leveraging power and regardless as to who is in power

they have access to those officials—they are not shut out."

But, as Patterson claims, most Bilalian communities are more than 90 per cent Democratic in their voting patterns. He said Democratic officials would be much more efficient if they knew they had to deliver on promises or face the possibility of losing votes to their Republican opponent.

The founder and president of the C.J. Patterson Realty Co. said that even with a ratio of 70 to 30 of Democrats to Republicans, noticeable concessions from both could be obtained.

"We're at a crossroads in this country and at a dilemma where we don't get what we should from either party because we are almost 100 per cent on one side and no per cent or very little on the other. We have the numbers but we haven't been able to get the execution together."

Patterson suggested that Bilalians should even go so far as to decide among themselves who should become members of the Democratic Party and who should become Republicans.

"We ought to devise a strategy like they do in some small communities. We ought to be able to sit around a table and say you be a Democrat and I'll be a Republican," he said. "That's what others do. They make donations to both political parties."

"I think that we ought to have a



C. J. PATTERSON, Oakland businessman, believes that Bilalians must develop a dual-party system in their communities by participating in the Republican Party.

visible Republican Party in our urban communities so that we can have the kind of leverage that other groups have, so that when one party is in and the other is out, there isn't benign neglect of our community."

The Oakland businessman said there are ranks in the Democratic Party as conservative as any Republican, and Republicans as liberal as any Democrat. Republicans are aware that they now must have a platform that will attract Bilalians, he contended.

"They know now that if they want the presidency of the country back that they are going to have to attract blacks to their party," Patterson said, "and I believe this is the most opportune time for blacks to move into the Republican Party and make a contribution to their community

from either side.

"Don't put all of your eggs in one basket," he cautioned.

In addition to his realty company and involvement in local and state politics, Patterson is one of the founders and president of the Golden State Business League, an affiliate of the National Business League, established and chartered to assist the Bilalian and other non-Caucasian business communities at large.

"If we are going to have any future as far as black people are concerned, we are going to have start building some business institutions in our communities. There are programs to help blacks get into business but none to keep them in business," he added. "We try to assist in the latter area as much as possible."

"If government was serious about blacks moving into the economic mainstream of this country they would give them the tools to work with," he said.

"They spend as much on one fighter plane as they do on the entire one-year program to help minorities (the Office of Minority Business Enterprise has a budget of \$50 million) and that includes blacks, Indians, Hispanics and others. That's tokenism."

There is enough commerce in this country for everyone, Patterson contends. "If we just got the market in our communities we could build some institutions, but we must not limit ourselves to just doing business in the black community."

"Whatever success that I have had is because I believe in doing business in the total community, Patterson revealed. "We have to think in terms of how we can start sharing in the total market, not in just the black market."

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