

Linda Johnson speaks to meeting called by the Black United Front to organize against recent cuts in welfare allotments voted by the legislature in a

reaction to a deficit in expected funds. (Photo: Richard Brown)

Marable speaks in Portland

Dr. Manning Marable, Black historian and activist who writes a weekly column "From the Grassroots," (see below) in many Black newspapers including the Observer, will speak at "The Red Rose School" Friday Forum on October 24th at 7:30 p.m. Dr. Marable is a professor at Cornell University. He will speak on "Beyond the Civil Rights Movement."

The forums will be held at 4312 S.E. Stark. The school is sponsored by the New American Movement. Call 239-0181 for information.

Governor seeks nominees

Governor Victor Atiyeh will establish a Commission on Blacks and a Commission on Hispanics ad is seeking nominees for both commissions.

Persons who are interested in serving, or who would like to suggest nominees, should call Kay Toran, state affirmative action officer, at 229-5700 extension 6868 or 378-6868 (Salem). Material can be sent to her at the State Capitol Building, Salem, Oregon 97310.

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From the grassroots

By Dr. Manning Marable

What is freedom?

Back in the 1950's and 60's there was the ever-present question that white reporters and politicians, corporate executives and so-called intellectuals always asked the Black community: "What does the Negro want?" Our reply to this question was always the same, and it was only one word: Freedom.

Frederick Douglass was about freedom. That is why he escaped from the brutal clutches of his slaveowner, and followed the North Star toward freedom. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, the founding father of the N.A.A.C.P., was about freedom. That is why he left the ivory tower of scholasticism and became the editor of The Crisis, the initiator of the modern Pan-Africanist Movement, and the advocate of world peace.

The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., was about freedom. Martin devoted his life in the battle to uproot and overthrow the terrible system of racial segregation, America's version of apartheid. Malcom X was about freedom. Malcom told us to be proud of ourselves and our heritage. Martin and Malcom both gave their lives in that pursuit of freedom.

Today, we must ask ourselves what freedom should mean for Black and other oppressed people. All too often, we think of freedom as the absence of oppression. We think of freedom in negative terms, rather than positive terms.

All of us are against Jim Crow and the system of de jure and de facto segregation. But does our opposition to Jim Crow per se' mean that we are furthering the cause of freedom? We are against inferior schools that miseducate our children. We are against the Bakke decision that attacked the principle of affirmative action in higher education. We are against the racist attacks of policemen within the Black community, and we oppose the reemergence of the KKK.

We are against the high rate of unemployment for Black people, and particularly the alarming rate of joblessness among the youth. We

are against the political cutbacks of the Carter Administration in health care, in welfare, in education and in all social and human service areas.

Now we must ask ourselves, "What are we for?" We know what the absence of freedom looks like. Now we must address the positive side of the equation; what are we prepared to stand for, to affirm in our hearts and in our minds, at the voting booth and in street demonstrations, to further the freedom struggle? What are we for?

We must be for the things that are needed to make human life worth living -- the prerequisites of human development -- in all economic, social, cultural and political relations. We are for a national health care program, that places the lives of people ahead of the selfish private profits of the American Medical Association, the hospitals and pharamaceutical corporations. its obligations to its employees, that it should be forced by law to remain -- either under joint management between the employers and employees, or directly financed and operated by working folks themselves. We are for economic equality and an expansion of political democracy inside the factories. shops, warehouses and clerical offices of the nation. We are for a free people, not for an irresponsibly free enterprise -- because the excesses of an unrestricted free enterprise have come to mean an unfree existence for the majority of our people.

What are we for? We are for the self determination of all the world's oppressed and peoples of color. whether in Iran or Afghanistan, South Korea or South Africa, or our own community. We are for the existence of safeguard to protect the Constitutional rights of women, and for an equal rights amendment to extend and preserve those rights.

We are for an independent strategy in our political programs and practices. We are for peace, the reduction of international tensions, the abolition of both nuclear weapons and nuclear power. We are for a decent social and cultural environment for our children, and for their children, and all successive generations. We are for freedom.

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