

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Symptom of institutional racism

The tragic incident that occurred last week, when a young Vietnam student who in attempting to help a smaller, defenseless student, stabbed a white student, has brought to the forefront a problem that has been fermenting quietly for months.

Indochinese children, along with the adults, are exposed to cruel racist harassment and abuse. Unable to speak English, brought from largely rural areas to a big city, separated from family and friends, placed in a culture with customs entirely different from their own - they are also faced with physical and mental abuse.

The racism that has traditionally been heaped on Blacks has been extended to the Indochinese. But what makes the situation even more tragic is that many Blacks have joined in the abuse.

The Indochinese people are blamed for the problems that Americans have faced for years - unemployment and poverty. It is common to hear adults - Black and white - complaining that Indochinese have taken their jobs or their

welfare checks. Those who have jobs and don't need welfare checks complain that their tax dollars are supporting the Indochinese.

But think about it. The same school system that miseducates Black children is insensitive to the needs of Indochinese children. The same police who abuse and harass Black people are abusing and denying their protection to Indochinese people. The employers who have refused to hire Black people are misusing the Indochinese people. The stereotypes who cheat Black customers are stealing from Indochinese customers.

It is no accident that the first incident to receive wide public attention happened at Roosevelt, a school and a community with a long history of abuse of Blacks. Black people and the Indochinese, and even the white families of St. Johns, have been placed in a position of fighting each other over crumbs. This effectively keeps them from assessing the national resources and asking where they are going and who is profiting from them.

'Good' board candidates sought

The Committee for Good School Board Candidates has announced that it is ready to begin interviewing and endorsing candidates for the Portland School Board in its effort to see "good" candidates elected.

Founded at about the same time that the unsuccessful effort to recall the four school members who voted to fire Superintendent Robert Blanchard was launched, the organization claims to be separate from that

group, however, many of the members were active in both organizations.

The membership sounds like a roster of Portland's most noteworthy business executives, with a few former school board members thrown in.

The organization seeks to provide "good, sound people" who are not "one-issue candidates" as opposed to those board members who are running for re-election.

While the organization is scheduled to announce its choices - and the recipients of its funds - the end of January - rumors have been rampant for weeks that the choices have been made: Charlotte Beeman is a former member of the PDC board, a former aid to Mayor Goldschmidt, and an unsuccessful candidate for appointment to the school board. Dean Gisvold is an attorney in the same firm as Jonathan Newman, campaign chairman for Frank MacNamara and also an unsuccessful candidate for appointment.

A real question is who will get the nod for Herb Cawthorne's seat? In fact, who will run? Or have they decided it is better to have a Black on the board if there is a possibility of him/her being co-opted or isolated?

Money first!

President-elect Ronald Reagan is having trouble finding people that will accept appointment to his cabinet. There's not enough money in it! Most of his choices can make more money in private industry.

Is there another country in the world where prominent citizens would refuse the honor of heading government's major departments, of being the closest advisors to the President? Is there another country where money is more important than the honor of being chosen to serve at the highest level of government?

It seems that in the quest for money, we have lost something.

Letters to the Editor

And the police never came

An open letter:

Dear Commissioner Jordan:

I am writing to you as the principal of Boise School to advise you of an impression that was created here by the acts of the Portland Police Bureau. I am fully aware that I do not have all of the facts and I am not writing to gain those facts. Neither am I writing in expectation of any specific action on your part. I simply wish to make you aware of how impressions, especially negative ones, can be created and hope that this will aid you in avoiding such impressions of your bureau in the future.

At 8:20 A.M., on December 10th we were told by several students that there were two young men in the building with guns, searching for a third youth. We were also advised shots had just been fired right down

the street by these same two while in pursuit of the third. The pursued, and ex-Boise student known to many of us, fled into the school for safety, came to the office of the vice-principal and was given sanctuary. The pursuers were observed in the hallway searching. At this point, because there seemed to be imminent danger both to the young man hiding in the office and the several hundred students waiting in the stairways for the bell to ring, the police were called, the situation clearly stated and immediate help requested.

What occurred at the bureau after this call was placed I of course have no way of knowing, but after a very long five minute wait, the police were again called and we were assured help was on the way. "It never arrived!!"

There are many reasons for this but I can conceive of none. What I am certain of is that when a call comes in from a public school housing 600 children that armed men are on the premises trying to shoot another man presently in that building, help should be there in minutes.

We are therefore left with the impression that for any number of reasons we might find, situations like this at Boise School are maybe not quite as urgent or important as they would be at some other school. In your wildest imagination can you feature a similar call from Ainsworth School going unanswered?

Very truly yours,

David M. McCrea
Principal, Boise School

Portland Observer

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The Portland Observer was founded in October of 1970 by Alfred Lee Henderson.

The Portland Observer is a champion of justice, equality and liberation; an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the Black population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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In my father's house

By Fungai Kumbula

We all sat around a camp fire, my father, mother and all my brothers and sisters, telling stories and eating homemade popcorn. Father would always go first then mother and then each of the children in turn in order or seniority. Those were the fun years when we were so young and still together in one great big happy family.

Without saying it, my father was passing on to us the children, the ancient African tradition, of storytelling, the medium by which countless generations of Africans have learned about the world. It was during those early years that I learnt all the gems of African wisdom: such saying as: It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and erase all doubt.

Every story I heard in those days had a lesson to teach us all though the significance of these lessons may not have dawned on us until much later. A strict disciplinarian, one of my fathers strictest rules was that we all had to be home by dinner time: dinner was a family affair. Maybe it was a father's intuition but an early stage he seemed to have realized that the family would soon be scattered to the four winds. Accordingly he

took every opportunity to gather the family and spend what time there was with us.

Times were rough as anyone who has lived in Rhodesia or South Africa or the South will testify. Many a time I saw him push away his half-eaten dinner so that we the children could have a few more bites. There were even times when he and mom went without and gave what little there was to us the children. To keep us in school, it was not unusual for him to go pawn a jacket, a pair of shoes or whatever else he had. No sacrifice was too much for his children.

In any normal society my father would have been a successful businessman or a well-to-do entrepreneur. He had the drive, determination, and the brains to succeed at most anything but his numerous ventures were thwarted by the successive, racist, colonial regimes then in control. He was hard working and frowned upon any slovenliness on our part.

His most admirable quality is his tenacity. Through all the lean years he stayed right by mother's side. It hurts any man's pride to be struggling so and it would have been so easy for him to walk out on all of us, but not him, not my father. He

would just as soon have starved with all of us.

I always think if I could be half the father to my children that he has been to us, I still would be more father than any children that he has been to us, I still would be more father than my children will ever need. Growing up in such forced poverty was hard but it had its one compensation: it showed us the boundless love of a father and mother that we never would have seen had the home life been rosier.

I am so glad this tower of strength is still there for me to lean on anytime. This fount of wisdom is still available as it has been all my years and may even still be there for my children to turn to also. Today I can say: Thank you mother; thank you father. Now I understand what you were and are all about. Today I can say I love you for all the things you have taught me and the things you have done for all of us. Today I can say I love you and will never again be "Hard-headed."

The last time I saw my father was at the bus depot December 26, 1972. He shook my hand and simply turned away (he had done all the talking he had to do) but...were those tears in his eyes? I may never know.

Black folk and the military

By Dr. Manning Marable

The relationship between Afro-American people and the American state has been characterized by economic exploitation, brutality and the systematic assault against our humanity. That arm of the government in which physical coercion is both glorified and institutionalized is the armed forces. It follows logically, therefore, that the heritage of a racist state and society would produce its most striking cases of victimization within the patterns of non-white participation in the military establishment.

The colonial experience of Blacks in the military began with the promise of freedom. At the beginning of the British emigration to the Americas, African slaves were legally excluded from militia service since white colonists feared, quite properly, that Blacks would aim their muskets upon their masters rather than at the French or Indians. A few free Blacks were allowed to serve alongside the Minute Men at the battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. In general, however, the signers of the "Declaration of Independence and no intention of freeing their slaves." On November 12, 1775, General George Washington ordered army recruiters and officers to turn away any Black volunteers.

Virginia's royal governor, Lord Dunmore, recognized a golden opportunity to sow dissent within the rebel's ranks. In his famous Proclamation, he promised immediate emancipation to all slaves who "joined his Majesty's troops...to speedily reduce this colony to a proper dignity." Thousands of slaves escaped to British lines, 30,000 from Virginia alone between 1775 and 1778. Meanwhile, American leaders recognized gradually that they would have to draft some Black troops in order to win to revolution.

New York responded by allowing whites draftees to substitute Blacks in their places. All Black militias were created in Massachusetts and Rhode Island by 1778. Eventually about 5000 Blacks served in the Continental Army. Many Black former slaves who joined the British left the country after 1783, over the strong objections of Thomas Jefferson and other slave owners. Relatively few slaves who joined the Continental Army, however, were ultimately given their freedom.

One generation later, the Americans confronted the British again in the War of 1812 (1812-1815). Few Blacks were recruited, but New York passed an act in 1814 which promised over 2000 slaves their freedom if they served in the state's segregated militia. Black sailors fought with Captain Oliver Perry on the Great Lakes, and Black soldier served under Andrew Jackson at the Battles of New Orleans. As historian John Hope

Franklin notes, "many negroes entered the way on the side of America expecting to secure their freedom. Some did, but others were actually sent back to their masters at the end of the struggle."

The Civil War, the central domestic conflict in American history, was not fought to liberate Black people. Few contemporary Americans realize that the war was fought, in Abraham Lincoln's words, "To preserve the Union" by whatever means necessary. When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed on January 1, 1863, only Blacks living in the South were freed; slaves in Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland and even parts of Louisiana remained in bondage.

As the war progressed, the Northern army's policies and practices towards Blacks were scarcely superior than those of the Confederacy. In Louisiana, Union General B.F. Fuller ordered all runaway slaves to return to their slavemaster. Captured Blacks were leased to loyal slaveholders for 10 dollars per month. It was only after whites' casualty figures began mounting, and many Northerners opposed participation in the war effort, that the government "liberalized" its policies toward Black recruits.

When Blacks were allowed finally to participate in the conflict, thousands of Afro-American men volunteered for service. Over 186,000 Blacks served in the Union Army, about 100 percent of the total enrollment. About one third of them, 68,178, were either killed or wounded. The death rate for Black soldiers was far greater than it was for whites. Historian Leon Litwack notes in his study of Black culture, *Been In The Storm So Long*, that the confederate soldiers adopted a special policy in their dealings with Black regiments. After the battles of Milliken's Bend and Fort Pillow, for example, captured Black troops had their throats slashed. "Not only

were some Black prisoners summarily executed," Litwack writes, "but captured Union wages were also driven back and forth over the bodies of wounded Blacks." Many Black soldiers who were captured were sold back into slavery. White southerners felt "betrayed" when former slaves were caught in Yankee uniforms, and were generally of the opinion that Black soldiers should not be regarded as prisoners of war. Because of southern white atrocities, Blacks in the Union Army fought with a special elan since they had sufficient cause to suspect that if they were captured they would be executed or tortured. Their bravery in battle became almost legendary, forcing many northern racists to have second thoughts about the capabilities of Blacks. "I never believed in niggers before," a Wisconsin cavalry officer confessed, "but by Jesus, they are hell in fighting."

Litwack documents the extensive racism and brutality meted out by northern white troops against former slaves. "The average Union soldier brought with him certain notions about Black people, based largely on the racial beliefs and exaggerated caricatures with which he had been inculcated since childhood." Towards Black women, this "mixture of revulsion and attraction" often culminated in instances of rape and sexual abuse. Almost every white northerner took advantage of the Blacks' illiteracy. Blacks discovered that many of their new "liberators" were scarcely less brutal, less sadistic and cruel than their former masters, and were occasionally much worse. Union officers often kept slave concubines as did southern planters. Northern troops often destroyed what little property Blacks had and abused them without mercy. Sadly, Litwack notes, "it was as if one set of masters had been replaced by another."

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