

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Time to take a stand

On March 13th uniformed, on-duty Portland police officers killed four possums and threw their dead bodies in front of a Black-owned restaurant. The restaurant owner reports this was perpetrated by a group of officers who have harassed him over a period of months.

Police brutality and harassment against Portland citizens is not uncommon. Although it has been prevalent, and perhaps more open against Blacks, recent news series by KPTV and the *Willamette Week* demonstrate that it occurs all over the City, against all races of people and that the Bureau is failing to deal with it effectively.

With serious economic problems upon us -- both because of the economic crisis in this country and because of the drastic budget cuts proposed by the Reagan Administration -- racial violence is increasing and will continue to increase. We cannot afford insensitivity, brutality and incompetence by the police officers we must depend on to protect us and our communities.

A society must have confidence in its government and its police force -- to know that in times of crisis the police will use reason,

sensitivity and humanity in enforcing the laws and in protecting our communities. The "possum incident" -- together with continuing police harassment and brutality against Blacks, minority people and white people who seem to be vulnerable -- prevent us from having that confidence.

We call on Commissioner Jordan to:

1. Fire all officers involved in the "possum incident".
2. Appoint a Citizens Police Review Board.
3. Carefully investigate the administration of the Police Bureau with special attention to supervision and training.

Efforts to deal effectively with police problems, efforts to hire more Black and minority officers, attempts to eliminate racism and brutality, have been met with successful opposition. Commissioner Jordan has stated that there are "some bad cops" but has been unable to get rid of them. One of the reasons he points to is lack of community support.

The community has demonstrated its desire that these police officers, and the thirty or so "bad cops" on the force, be shown that their behavior will no longer be tolerated.

### □ Newhall, Bauman, Cawthorne

The March 31st School Board election is crucial to the continuation of a new direction of the School Board - a direction that represents community concerns and needs.

With the election of Steve Buel to join Wally Priestley on the Board, and the appointment of Herb Cawthorne and Sarah Newhall, the era of the rubber stamp "old board" ended and a "new board" took over. With an open process of community discussion and decision, a new, more equitable, desegregation plan was drawn, the superintendent was removed and the board took over the policy making function that had been reserved to the superintendent (with a little help from his friends.)

For the first time the majority of the board represents the interests of the parents and children of the district, rather than the downtown business interests.

If this achievement is not to be lost, three board positions are crucial.

Herb Cawthorne, who was appointed to the Board, has done a creditable job. In his first public office he has worked hard, researched areas of special interest such as student discipline, and has spent long hours on behalf of issues and individual students' problems. In most cases he has stayed in touch with his community, has sought and accepted counsel.

Coming on the board during the controversy over desegregation - and as a result of that controversy - Cawthorne has been most closely identified with the issues related to education of Black children. Although new to the board, he found himself not only representing Black demands but having to provide leadership to the board in finding equitable solutions.

Cawthorne has had criticism from the Black community - including this newspaper - for certain crucial votes and for his occasional negligence in keeping his roots in the community secure. However, he has met some of the elements that could have weakened his role head on - the Portland Association of Teachers, for example - and has held his ground.

We endorse Herb Cawthorne for election to the School Board, Position 3.

Sarah Newhall was appointed to the School Board and as she worked with the serious issues confronting the board at the time, she became philosophically aligned with Cawthorne, Buel and Priestley, providing the deciding vote for many of the desegregation issues and for the termination of Superintendent Banchard. She is one who studies the issues, takes her time, talks to the public, and then votes according to her own perception of the issues rather than according to pressure politics.

She supported and worked to pass the desegregation policies requested by the Black United Front; she developed a new student discipline policy to address disproportionate Black suspensions. She is proposing a training center to provide vocational/academic alternatives for high school students.

Ms. Newhall, who has worked with youth programs for many years, is especially valuable to the board because of her credibility among young people and her experience with those youth who have difficulties with the school system. She also is working to establish closer ties between the school district and youth serving agencies.

The Observer endorses Sarah Newhall for School Board, Position 1.

The most difficult decision facing the voter is the selection of the person to fill the position being vacated by Wally Priestley. This person will become the "swing vote" who can continue the work of the "new board" or revert to the "old board" domination.

We were very impressed with former teacher Helen Mason, who expressed great knowledge about education and the Portland district, and who is an independent person who would put educational issues first.

However, our choice is Rick Bauman. Bauman would bring several needed attributes to this position. His natural inclination and his political record indicate service to the people, the children of the district, without consideration of the benefits of serving the establishment. He represents an area of the city - Southeast Portland - that includes many of the low-income and working class areas but which has not had representation on the School Board.

As a member of the Oregon House of Representatives, Bauman understands the political pressures of public office and would not bow to them. As Chairman of the House Education Committee he not only has gained knowledge of school financing - one of the major problems facing the district - and school law, but he has established relations with the education community.

We recommend Rick Bauman for election to the School Board, Position 2.

### □ School Levy

The School District needs this levy to continue current programs. Vote "Yes" on both the A and the B ballot. A server financial crisis is upon us because of inflation, decrease in state funds, and an expected 25 per cent or larger cut in federal funds.

No lengthy discussion of the issue is needed, although we have disagreements with the allocation of funds and believe some changes should be made, there is no question about the need for the money.

If this nation refuses to provide for even the minimal requirements of education for its children, then all is lost.

### □ Strachan - City Council

Margaret Strachan has spent many years working with neighborhood organizations on neighborhood issues. She is very familiar with the barriers facing citizens who would like to effect city government. She has learned how to cut through the red tape and make the City's agencies work for the people.

Because of her relationship with neighborhood organizers in the North/Northeast area and the mutual respect shown, we believe Margaret Strachan would continue to be attentive to the needs and concerns of our community.

Ms. Strachan's interest in housing, citizens participation, and economic development that respects neighborhood integrity will benefit our community and the City. Her concern for human rights will insure her attention to the human issues met in city government.

The Observer endorses Margaret Strachan for City Council.



## Letters to the Editor

### Possum incident racial harassment

To the Editor:  
The Black Cultural Affairs Board of Portland State University, is in full agreement with the viewpoints of Bruce Broussard, editor and publisher of the *Portland Observer*, and Ron Herndon, Co-chairman of the Black United Front, when they called for the firing of the police officers involved in a form of racial harassment. When Governor Vic Atiyeh proposes legislation for racial harassment here in the State of Oregon, and police officers of the Portland Police Bureau consider it a

joke to lay down dead opossums outside of the Black owned restaurant, there is no excuse that can be accepted. When members of the public respect the police for the employment they hold, and understand the difficulties involved in being a law enforcement officer, it is totally unacceptable for any form of action that is disrespectful to the citizens that pay their salaries.

There can be no excuse from Commissioner Charles Jordan, or Chief of Police, Bruce Baker in forms of action by officers they employ. It is not necessary for any ex-

planation to be given, when an investigation is now going on regarding officers in the Drug Detail Department. How long must we, as citizens of Portland, have to listen to the many excuses given by our city administrators? How long, will it take before those acts of racism are corrected? How long, will it be before the element of racism is erased in any form of action here in the United States? How long?

Respectfully,  
Charles Flake, Coordinator  
Black Cultural Affairs Board

### Possoms abused

To the Editor:  
I'm writing this letter in support of your efforts with regard to the opossum - police incident as reported in today's issue of the *Oregonian*, p. C3.

My primary work is as a volunteer to animal welfare -- exploitation and cruelty to domestic and wild animals; however, my overriding concern is the welfare of all living beings; I have actively demonstrated and disseminated information with regard to oppression of women, minority races and the environment.

### Not in the line of duty

To the Editor:  
I know it is dreadfully biased, but I feel that if the free press can imply and be truly free directly or indirectly to influence public opinion, I am not violating that right either.

On another subject which the *Observer* covered extensively (the Possum incident). Having four teenagers and being the Mary Poppins of my immediate neighborhood deep in the inner city, I can attest to the fact that most police officers

patrolling our area are good professionals. However, there is no doubt in my mind that too many officers cannot relate with urban problems and the people (one is too many).

First of all, even though some think possums are "filthy" animals, it is hard to believe that anyone would intentionally run them over with a car, never mind a police car. That is not in the line of duty. When Mr. Jordan reported that he could

After all, Oregon is not Alabama -- or is it?

Let me know what I can do to help your efforts as a concerned citizen.

Sincerely,  
Sydney Hopper

### Prays for justice

To the editor:  
I want you to know I share in your outrage related to the opossum incident. I hope and pray that justice is served with respect to those responsible for this incident.

Yours sincerely,  
Rev. Benjamin M. Parouiek  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

### Not becoming to City

The recent incident where dead possums appeared on the doorway of a local Black-owned restaurant concerns me greatly and heightens the concerns of many of our Black citizens. It is not becoming to a City with a reputation of the livability of Portland. I join with others urging that every effort be made to get to the bottom of what this incident is all about.

In this time of high inflation, high

unemployment and proposed cuts in services to the Black community, we cannot afford to be side-tracked from making important economic decisions - decisions that affect all our communities, Black and white.

I think it's essential that all of us join with the Black community in putting the possum incident behind us and getting on with the task of really building an economic future for the families that make up this community.

Congressman Ron Wyden

### More letters on Page 3



Bruce Broussard  
Editor/Publisher



### Portland Observer

The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

Subscriptions: \$10.00 per year in Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

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 minority 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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