

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Welcome police coalition

We commend Commissioner Charles Jordan for his decision to terminate two police officers involved in the "possum incident". This decision was essential to the encouragement of proper police demeanor and to public respect.

We do not think the decision has gone far enough - at least not yet. Only a complete revelation of the facts on activities leading to the incident, the incident itself and the conduct of the investigation will allow the public to believe that only two officers were involved.

We also cannot accept the explanation that the incident was not racial in intent. True, every act of a white against a black is not racist in intent - but we believe this one was.

What happens next is crucial. Portland needs a good police force - one that can and will protect citizens and treat all citizens with respect. That respect has been too long lacking. Abuse by the police has been reported repeatedly and yet the same officers are still on the street.

We have been told that the union contract precludes reassigning officers for disciplinary

reasons and also that investigations and disciplinary findings cannot be made public. If this is true, changes should be made in the next contract. Although the union is charged with representing its members, the protection of a few "bad cops" is a disservice to those who want to provide a public service. It is unfortunate that all police officers are tarnished by the acts of a few and the quiet consent of others.

Another question that needs to be addressed is the Probasco Case, why its orders are not carried out, and who should be monitoring the police in this regard.

A community coalition - based somewhat on the successful Community Coalition for School Integration - is in the formation stages. This is a forum that can study and investigate the Police Bureau from all angles. It should be greeted with pleasure by the Commissioner and by the police union. All records, information and personnel should be made available in the interest of an independent assessment of just what is going on in the Bureau and why.

Two must go

If press reports are correct, Secretary of State Alexander Haig informed the press after the assassination attempt on President Reagan that he had taken charge of the US government. This is the same General Haig who ran the government during the closing days of the Nixon Administration. There were reports at that time that because Nixon was emotionally unstable, and Vice President Ford did not care to intervene, Haig, as assistant to Nixon, was in control of the government.

By declaring himself in control as Reagan lay in the hospital, Haig demonstrated that he does not understand our system of government. The President was still very much in control, and if he were declared incompetent to serve, the Vice President would take charge

-- not the Secretary of State.

In light of Haig's earlier attempts to become the Chief of foreign policy - a power held by the President and Congress - Haig should be dismissed.

It seems like only a short time ago that US Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young was fired because of his indiscretion in holding unauthorized meetings with the PLO. Amid a great uproar, his services were terminated. Now Jeane Kirkpatrick the current ambassador to the UN has met with military and intelligence officers of South Africa - clearly a violation of US policy. She should be fired.

Both Haig and Kirkpatrick are dangerous people - to this country and to the world. We would be better off without them.



Malagasy: Island paradise

By Fungai Kumbula

Three hundred miles east of the Mozambican coast in the Sea of Shaka. (sometimes erroneously called the Indian Ocean) lies one of the most beautiful islands in the world. The island in question is Malagasy perhaps better known by its old name Madagascar. At 300,000 square miles in area, it is almost twice as large as California.

Though separated from the African mainland by the Mozambique Channel, Malagasy is part of the African continent and belongs to the Organization of African Unity as well as several other intra-African organizations. It is populated by Africans and descendants of the Polynesians and Mayaysians. The island is therefore, a mix of African and Polynesian culture producing a unique and interesting hybrid.

If there is one word that can be used to describe Malagasy, the word is "green." Everywhere one looks, there is a proliferation of green and a profusion of flowers. Malagasy is for lovers; Malagasy is for the young-at-heart; Malagasy is for the romantic. The flowers, the green,

the clear blue skies and the spotless beaches are just intoxicating.

The Malagasians do not help matters any at all either. Like their counterparts throughout Africa, they have an irrepressible zest for life and living. Here and there one bumps into home-grown and self-taught troubadours. Using drums, banjos and a wide array of instruments fashioned out of the simplest materials, they accompany themselves singing as they go about their everyday business be it vending or working at some craft or driving a cab.

They are by no means wealthy, but that is only because we tend to count wealth in terms of possessions. In terms of contentment, there is hardly a people anywhere on the face of the earth to rival them.

Since gaining independence from France in 1962, Malagasy has had her fair share of problems; developmental, political, economic and unfulfilled expectations. There have been two coups, first against President Tsiranana and then against his successor President Ramanan-

tsoa. The current President, Ratsiraka, seems to have done quite a job of stabilizing this island paradise.

Malagasy does not boast too many resources and so her pace of development has been rather slow and not quite at pace with her young population. She is still heavily dependent on former colonial exploiter, France, for much of her trade and foreign exchange. As the African Economic community envisaged for the mainland takes shape by the turn of this century, Malagasy hopes to benefit from that and become healthier economically.

Lying on the beach looking over the hazy blue Sea of Shaka with green palm fronds providing shade in the background under the bluest of blue skies, it is easy for one to imagine that one has died and gone straight to paradise. One can easily forget the real world of polluted skies, crowded freeways, guns, possums and the like. When I finally screw enough courage to walk down that long, long aisle, you know where I will be going for my honeymoon!



A time for unity

By Calvin O. L. Henry

There have been many different reports about four dead opossums being thrown in front of a Black-owned restaurant in Northeast Portland. The culprits were uniformed, on-duty Portland police officers. This incident was an affront to all Oregonians.

Two white police officers who admitted their participation in the escapade were fired last Friday by police Commissioner Charles Jordan and Chief Bruce Baker. However, these officers denied that there were any racial implications to their indiscretion.

And it was reported that Jordan and Baker said they believed the incident was not racially inspired but was meant as a prank. They said citizen outrage over the opossum dumping had hurt the department and the officers had to be terminated.

But, should the credibility of Portland police department be the real issue rather than the citizen outrage over the incident? The editorial writer of the *Corvallis Gazette-Times* noted that this incident "showed there is a lack of discipline in the department that allows officers to goof off when they should be tending to the business the taxpayers are paying them to do."

According to the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, "the officers' explanation that the possum affair was an attempt to relieve tensions and get people to laugh again has a

hollow ring to it. If that were truly their intentions, they need a little psychological instruction in the department."

On March 25, 1981, the *Oregonian* reported, "City Commissioner Charles Jordan charged that 'opportunists' in the Black community have 'exploited' the incident in which policemen threw dead opossums in front of a Black-owned restaurant in NE Portland." Bruce Broussard, publisher of the *Portland Observer*, and Ronnie Herndon, Co-Chairman of the Black United Front, were identified as the "opportunists" who held news conferences and organized a march on city hall.

Broussard and Herndon are relatively new voices to the struggles of Blacks in Portland. They have not limited themselves with old definitions of Black involvement. And they do not have the complete sanctions of the traditional groups and organizations. But, should they?

The *Oregonian* quoted Jordan as saying, "the news conferences only promoted ill will, have been an embarrassment to the Black community, and have not had any influence on what I will do."

It is unfortunate that these opportunistic statements were made, and that more collective efforts were not expended to solve this issue. Personalities should not get in the way of solving problems affecting the Black community.

Should Blacks be condemned as opportunists just because they are willing to break with traditions, and speak out against wrongdoings by the police in the Black community? On this possum incident, Herndon and Broussard were right to express the citizen outrage. More Black leaders and citizens should have joined the effort of holding the Portland Police Department accountable for the actions of policemen.

Many questions are still left unanswered. Was this an example of abuse of power by policemen? Where was the Mayor of Portland on the incident? Is there a need for citizen-police review board?

Many whites and Blacks have discussed this incident with me. They were appalled that Portland policemen had so little respect for Blacks or the Black community. It was equally difficult for these individuals to understand why this incident was seen by the police commissioner as not being racially motivated.

One white public official stated that if the policemen had dumped dead opossums in front of the Hilton Hotel, there would not be any question about the actions taken.

Perhaps the real challenge is yet to come. The old and new voices must work together to insure that the Black community is protected rather than victimized by the police.



Letters to the Editor

More on possums

To the Editor:

As Oregon taxpayers, we need to take a close look at our City government. The situation of boosting police morale by gathering dead animals and placing them in front of a public restaurant, on city time, outrages me. I no longer have faith in our city government or our local police department to protect my rights as a citizen or my home from local businessmen like Robert Harris and various high local government officials.

Ironically, in two situations, the same family and the same individual have been victimized. My father is

fighting to hold on to the home he has owned for more than 23 years. Without his knowledge, Bob Harris, a close friend to several government officials, purchased my father's home for \$176.35. To add insult to injury, local police decided to raise their morale by dumping dead animals in front of my father's place of business with no regard for his rights or anyone else's.

We are living in dangerous times when the George Powes of the world remain the victims of their own government.

Valerie Powe Robinson

To the Editor:

The Black community and concerned citizens from diverse sections of Oregon, have made it known how they feel about the dumping of four dead possums, in front of the Burger Barn restaurant.

And, all would seem well and good; the possums have been buried in a secret grave; two Portland police officers who confessed their participation in the dumping, have been fired; and April came in like a lamb. But, all is not well.

There seems to be some question concerning who speaks for the Black community. For example, prior to the March 25th demonstration, some Blacks and whites

were upset that the community chose to express its sentiments without first seeking approval from the city fathers. One of the main expressions that emerged from this attitude was "Opportunists."

It's amazing that the city fathers and their cohorts should continue to under estimate the Black community's ability to mobilize its forces to deal with many of the serious problems facing Blacks. No one thought the one-day, school boycott was going to be successful. No one thought hundreds of people (Black, white, red, and yellow) would participate in the demonstration. What this means is, the city fathers will continue to under

To the Editor:

For the two policemen who were fired for gathering and delivering the carcass of dead animals upon private property (a violation of city law), before their dismissal, these policemen should have been required to walk that beat for eight hours with a "POSSUM" in each hand, with Commissioner Jordan, his Police Chief, and the officers who ignored the incident standing guard.

This behavior may have been innocent and stupid, but these were policemen "on duty" carrying guns while supposedly protecting the city.

Sincerely,
Julius Stokes

estimate the community's ability, and the community will continue with its efforts at mass mobilization. This is one of the reasons the word "opportunists" ended up being the created expression of a few. It was not the cry of the Black community.

The for real shock waves will come when the city fathers realize that new voices are emerging from the Black community; voices not dictated by tradition, but by necessity. You see the community knows that it was possums yesterday, but it might be our children being dumped on our doorsteps tomorrow.

Nyewusi Askari



Bruce Broussard
Editor/Publisher

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 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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