

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Your vote is important!

Oregon and the nation face a crucial election year. In Oregon the day is May 18th.

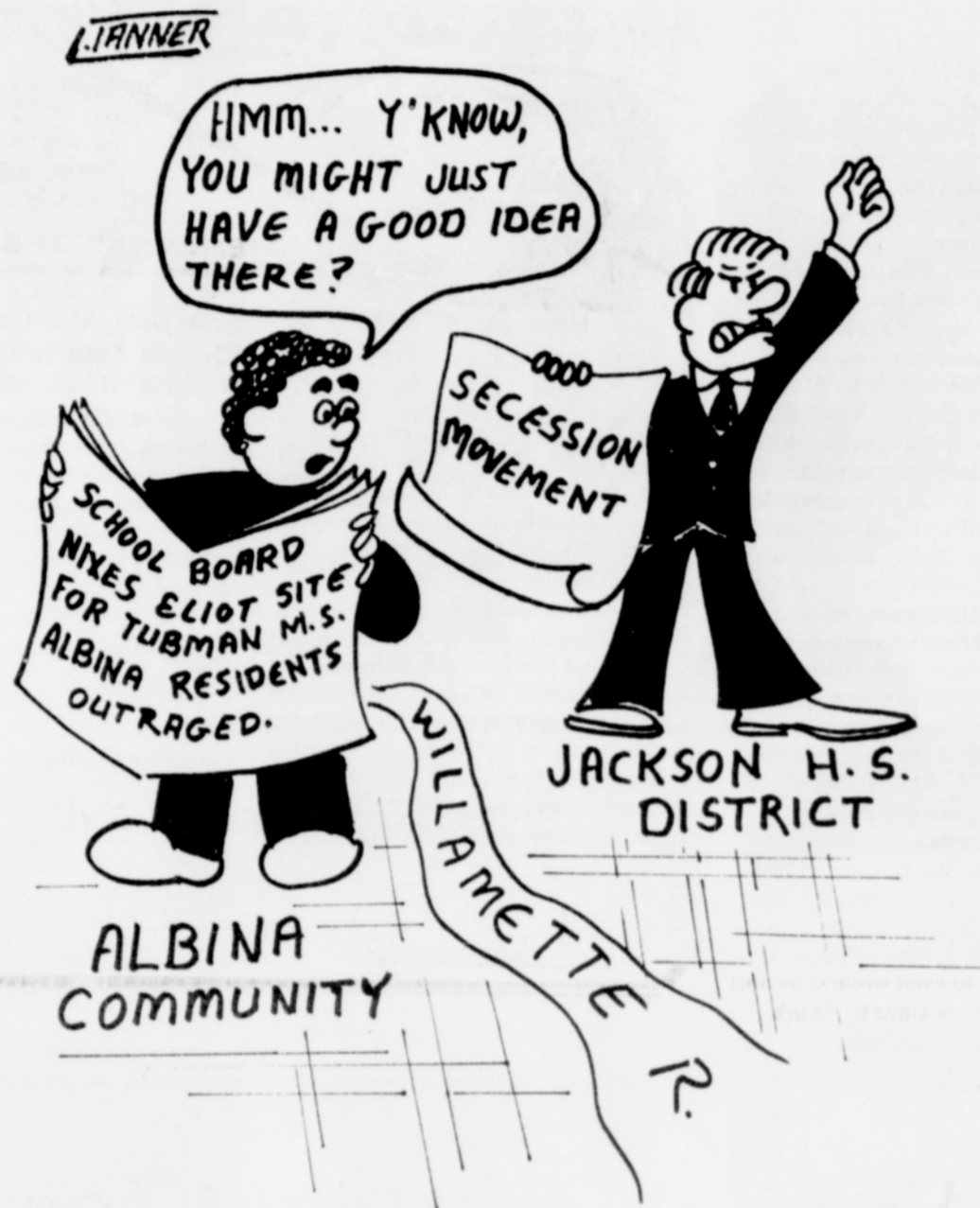
Members of Congress, a Governor, members of the state legislature, along with local candidates, all will be elected this year. District 18—the "Black district"—will elect its first representative.

In recent years the American people have been foregoing their hard-won right to vote. Many say the choices are few, the candidates of poor quality, the issues irrelevant. Others are too lazy to study the candidates and the issues and then get to the polls to vote. Others think their votes don't count. In Oregon, and in Albina, the record is not much better.

Every vote does count. Last year a governor of New Jersey was elected by eleven votes. Many races in Oregon have been so close that a few families could have made the difference.

Just as important as voting is correctly assessing the candidates. Take time to read their literature; go to forums and candidates' fairs and ask questions. Don't vote for a handsome face or a familiar name. Vote for a record of service to the community.

Any candidate who asks for your vote should have a specific program to offer—at least a few answers—and a record of effort to make positive changes. Words are not enough.



Letters to the Editor

NAACP leader breaks promise to prisoners

To the editor:

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

—Revelations

I am a living witness that one of the Negro's most respected organizations has, at least here in Oregon, divorced itself from the concerns of those at the bottom of the ladder. Those who weren't just laid off, but are perennially underemployed or rarely employed. Those who have come to the conclusion that it is fair to turn to prostitution, drugs, and thievery to survive. Those in the streets and in the prisons. Unless it is true that we are innately lazy and criminal-minded, sooner or later we are going to have to come to grips with this problem. Do we as a people steal 10 times more than white folk? Are Blacks in this Northwest corner so terrible we deserve to be caged at a higher rate than anywhere in the U.S., and indeed the world, with the possible exception of South Africa?

We still have a long way to go as a people, but we made it this far with "fat cat" leadership and organizations that were too big and busy to deal with the problems of the people on the bottom? I don't

think any of us have gotten so big that we can now afford to turn our backs on the people whose hope is the ancestral spirit that has sustained us as a people through all the Hell and Death we have suffered. No, you can't get that big, sir and madam. If you cannot feel that spirit still burning in you, then quit using the good name of our organizations and the good faith of the people. Those lives and organizations don't belong to you. If the spirit is dead in you, then move out of the way so that the ultimate and irretrievable investment our foreparents made—their lives—will go towards realizing our potential as a people.

People on the bottom are hungry and getting hungrier. Our potential strength—our strong, virile young men and noble young women are turning to thievery, prostitution, and drugs, because we have become selfish.

"Sorry, but my schedule is completely full," you say. Our young men and women are being caged like animals by the hundreds in this Northwest corner, yet the leadership and their organizations say: "We're sorry, but our schedule won't permit us to be concerned with your problem."

Proverbs says: A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children.

The Bible Revelations does not paint a pretty picture of the happen-

ings of the last days. It talks about Hell and Death. Many welcome those things that are prophesied because they have been catching so much Hell and seeing so much Death, that they want to say to God and His Angels, "Just bring it on." "We know we must suffer too, but we know that in the end you have promised to raise us with Your 'Master Grip.' As long as You take care of that rich man, that mighty man that has refused to listen to our suffering, bring it on. Just make sure you get that fat cat."

The Urban League's Freddie Pettett and the Black United Front, particularly brother Ron Herndon, have offered their organizations' aid and their personal assistance on so many occasions that the 50 miles and one hour separating us obviously have no weight whatsoever when balanced against their commitment, love, and concern.

"It was a privilege for me to be with you prisoners today. And if I am ever in Oregon and receive an invitation to return, it will be my highest priority." (Benjamin Hooks, July 3, 1978, Oregon State Penitentiary).

Dr. Hooks, none of our great leaders of the past that we know of have become loved by our people and great by failing to keep their promises to those at the very bottom.

Larry Baker

Teacher supports Tubman decision

To the editor:

It makes me very uncomfortable to disagree with such a large group of friends and respected representatives of organizations in the Black community over the siting of Harriet Tubman Middle School, but when I consider the youngsters with whom I have spent many years, I feel that I would like to speak out on their behalf. I believe that the Boise site for Tubman would be a better choice than Eliot because it would afford a better chance that Boise students would attend a middle school. I would like to see my young friends have a truly complete educational experience.

For the past several years Boise has been geared to serve the part of its student population that has shown need of concentration in the basic skills. According to Fall, 1981,

test scores, this represents approximately 57 per cent of the students in grades 5, 6 and 7. To accommodate this special need, the other 43 per cent (who scored average or higher) have not had the opportunity to have Home Economics, Shop, Art, Music. The allotted time for Social Studies has been minimal; time for Health and Science is even less adequate.

If the building at 620 N. Fremont should become the site for Tubman there would be space enough for extra programs in basic skills as well as for the larger curriculum that a middle school affords—which most students in Portland have available to them. As I understand it, the Eliot site would not accommodate such a large program.

Even if Boise students were "allowed" at Eliot, (despite the tilting of the racial balance), the number who would actually attend would be

less than if it were at Boise, simply because of the tendency of most to utilize the closest facility.

Are the supporters of the Eliot site doing so because it was promised or because it is a better site? I respect, and to a certain degree, share, the disillusionment over a broken promise, but if it is not educationally the better location, why should we support it? The needs of students in the Black community ought to have priority over our feelings, justified though they may be.

My identification with Boise students makes me care not so much about promises as about opportunity for some wonderful youngsters to get the best education possible. I would like to see a first rate middle school brought right into the heart of the community.

Beth Nance
Librarian, Boise school

Black Capitalism: Profile in Poverty

Part II
"From The Grassroots"
by Manning Marable

Over eighty per cent of all Black-owned businesses fall within two years after their initiation. Those fortunate or lucky enough to survive become part of what can be termed the "intermediate level of Black entrepreneurship."

These Black businesses total roughly 38,990 firms, 16.9 per cent of all Black enterprises. The common traits they share are the following: 1) all retain paid personnel, with an annual workforce between 1 to 19 employees; 2) average gross receipts are between \$30,000 to \$300,000; 3) almost all employers work full-time in their enterprises; 4) almost all firms receive loans from banks and savings and loan establishments to continue business expansion; and 5) a substantial minority number of these firms are involved in real estate, finance, manufacturing, and other traditionally all-white sectors of private enterprise.

The corporate core of Black Capitalism is the 1060 Black businesses with a workforce of 20 or more employees, led by *Black Enterprise* magazine's top 100 firms. Number one is Motown Industries of Hollywood, producers of soul records, films and tapes, with 1979 gross re-

ceipts of \$64.8 million. Numbers two through five are Johnson Publishers (\$61 million), Fedco Foods supermarkets (\$45 million), H.J. Fussell Construction of Atlanta (\$41 million), and Johnson cosmetics of Chicago (\$35.4 million). This select group also includes Independence Bank of Chicago (\$98.3 million in 1979 assets); Seaway National Bank of Chicago (\$80.9 million in assets); Industrial Bank of Washington, D.C., (\$59.9 million in assets); Freedman National Bank of New York City (\$57.9 million in assets); United National Bank of Washington, D.C. (\$56.2 million in assets); North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company (\$5.1 billion insurance policies in force); and Golden State Mutual Life of Los Angeles (\$2.7 billion insurance policies in force). Although these figures seem impressive, all of these major Black corporations combined could be purchased, for instance, by Mobil Oil Corporation with its liquid assets!

White corporations allow these Black companies to exist for symbolic value alone. John H. Johnson of Johnson Publishers is also a member of the Boards of Directors of Twentieth Century Fox, Greyhound Corporation, Zenith Radio Corporation, and Marina City Bank. H.G. Parks, Jr., Black millionaire, owner of Parks' Saus-

age Company of Baltimore, sits on the boards of First Pennsylvania Banking and Trust Company and W.R. Grace and Company. Former Tuskegee Institute President Luther H. Foster, the modern representative of Washington's conservative philosophy, was elected to the Boards of Directors of Sears, Roebuck and Company and Norton Simon, Inc. The modern proponent of Black Capitalism, *Black Enterprise* publisher Earl Graves, was rewarded with posts on the boards of International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation and the Liggett Group. Black millionaire and Atlanta Chamber of Commerce President Jesse Hill Jr. serves on the boards of Delta Airlines and Sperry and Hutchinson Company. The number of executives who truly dominate the Black corporate core within the Afro-American political economy amount to less than 200 individuals. They have earned the confidence of the white corporate hierarchy and the government by keeping alive the bogus illusion of Black Capitalism.

Black people will not have real political equality in this country until and unless we also have economic justice. A democratic reorganization of America's economic system, from top to bottom, is our only solution.

Children need news of Black contributions

To the editor:

I'm sure I can voice the sentiment of countless thousands, throughout the entire Northwest, in congratulating you, and your staff, on the magnificent job you've done, on the recent issues of your paper; especially during the month of February (Black History Month).

I cannot possibly find adequate words, within my limited vocabulary, to express my personally, sincere thanks and gratitude, for the tremendously successful effort you have exemplified, in the "special issues."

Through the reading of these latest issues, and through the outstanding "pictorial lay-outs," one could easily comprehend and visualize the tremendously painstaking effort on the part of both you and your staff.

It seems that the entire paper has been given a "media type of face lift," and has taken on an aura of new proficiency, and a new special interest and concern. You have been most explicit and informative, in both a contemporary and historical manner.

The special edition printed the week before last, can easily be considered an education within itself,

for through your presentations, many persons, both young and old, as well as Black and white, were able to gain a greater insight and perspective of many of the contributions made by the Black Man.

As older Blacks, we grew up within a most limited and biased white culture, possessing very little knowledge of our own. Yes, we heard a great deal about George Washington Carver, and his outstanding and unique accomplishments with the peanut. We heard of the great singers, Marion Anderson and Paul Robeson and a few others.

But for the most part, our actual knowledge of the countless thousands of contributions and achievements made by Blacks, throughout the world, and especially here in America, where we reside, were very carefully and intentionally buried, deep, in the (supposedly non-existent) "dark past." Never once, being put into the history books of this country.

In essence, we were led to believe that we were actually likened to "the man without a country." What a shame! In essence this situation can also be likened to an adopted child, always wondering, "Who are my real parents? What do I know about them? And what do I know about my past?"

I cannot help but wonder, as to what a difference it just might have made within the lives of the little Black boy and girl "in days of yore," had we known of our people's greatness. What kind of a difference or impact, could this same information have made, where white society is concerned. I'm certain that this available knowledge, could so easily have been used as leverage, to have bridged the gap between our two societies and cultures.

But thank God, due to the unceasing and tireless efforts, on the part of many Black educators, books, and the Black news media (like the *Portland Observer*) our young people of today have, at last, been given the opportunity to become "tuned in" to our long, delayed, mislaid and betrayed cultural past.

Again, words simply elude me, to express my personal and sincere thanks to you, for a job most superbly done.

I sent copies of your last issues to friends in various parts of the country, with the express purpose and intention of affording them the opportunity of reading a truly great paper.

Mary Jean Berry

Portland Observer

The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exile 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 the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

A. Lee Henderson, Publisher
Al McGilberry, Managing Editor
Al Williams, Advertising Manager



283-2486

National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
New York

Subscribe today!
Receive your *Observer* by mail.
Only \$10 per year

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Portland Observer
Box 3137
Portland, OR 97208



MEMBER

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER Association - Founded 1885