

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Demand affirmative action now

With the passage of the Citizens Utility Board and a State-run lottery, Governor Vic Atiyeh has his hands full considering a smorgasbord of proposals and applications from well-meaning groups and individuals.

Overtures from the Northeast community, people of color and the rainbow political apparatus need to be heard, represented and incorporated if Oregon is to remain true to the tune of "liberty and justice for all."

The inner city and the rainbow constituency have been ignored for decades by legislators and Senators in Salem. The fact that aid to two-parent families was cut and the elimination of supplemental funds to pregnant mothers should send a signal to the Rainbow Coalition that there are people in policy-making positions who are insensitive to the needs of low-income families, single mothers and people of color.

This is not the time to let other people speak for you. The catch word and key response is to monitor, monitor and monitor again. An election year is always around the corner and it's time to make our representatives earn our votes.

The inner city resident, single mothers and people of color constituencies must not allow any politician, board or commission to take our input for granted. We must demand Affirmative Action in board and commission placements. These boards and commissions must do the necessary outreach to silence, once and for all, the cop-out, "We can't find any qualified women or minorities."

If this perspective is not adhered to, whatever plans, boards and commissions are formed will be incomplete. Sooner or later the elitist, narrow policies resulting from exclusion will be in direct conflict with the aspirations of the inner city and the rainbow community. The boards, commissions and plans will eventually be altered to incorporate a fairer perspective.

Save time and money by getting involved now. Demand a seat on the Citizens Utility Board, the Lottery Commission and any and all others. Lobby, write and call the Office of Citizen Representatives, 160 State Office Building, Salem Oregon 97310, 1-378-4582.

Don't let others speak for you, because they may sing or represent a different tune.



## POSAF ON SOUTH AFRICA

by Marcus Cheatham

Three men of color have been living in the British consulate in Durban, South Africa since mid-September. They are there seeking asylum from their government which has issued detention orders for them. The orders were issued because the three are opposed to apartheid, South Africa's racist social and economic system. In South Africa, anyone who advocates such change is labeled a "communist" under the notorious Suppression of Communism Act and is liable to punishment that includes the death penalty. Among the men in the consulate is Archie Gumede, a widely respected president of the United Democratic Front (UDF), a coalition of organizations formed to oppose elections held in September from which Africans were completely barred.

The men in the consulate have good reason to fear detention. Former detainees with scars and marks to prove it report that torture is commonplace in interrogation centers such as the infamous John Vorster Square station. Amnesty International says, "All evidence indicates that torture is extensively inflicted on political detainees and the Government sanctions its use."

Deaths in detention are frequent and many go unreported. Often the death of a detainee is called a "suicide," as when a young teacher, Ahmed Timol, was said to have leapt from an escape-proof tenth story room which had bars on the windows. At other times the deaths are investigated. When Steve Biko, leader of the Black Consciousness Movement was killed in prison in 1977 an inquest was held. But before it had even started two attorneys general said that no criminal

proceeding would be instituted no matter what the result. In fact, despite clear evidence that Biko had been beaten to death by his interrogators no one was charged with his murder.

People of all races have died in custody in South Africa. As long as the victims were people of color white South Africans were relatively unconcerned with prison conditions. But the 1982 death of Neil Agate, a lawyer who defended African trade unionists, called a "suicide," showed that white skin is no guarantee of safety.

The men in the consulate are not the only ones in trouble with the law in South Africa. In September a wave of protests against the elections, corrupt local government, inferior education for Africans, and political detentions broke over the country. Demonstrations, blockades, and rioting paralyzed many of the impoverished African townships. To restore order, the army occupied the townships, literally searching and checking on every single person and handing out colored stickers to those "cleared." Now a nationwide strike has been called to demand that the army leave the townships. As a result, thousands of people have been arrested. Many have been charged with no crimes. Indeed they have committed none. A battery of laws such as the Terrorism Act and the Internal Security Act allow the authorities to arrest anyone on the flimsiest of pretexts, to hold them indefinitely without charges, and to deny them access to legal representation or any communication with the outside world. The number of political detainees in South Africa is now around six hundred. That figure does not include other hun-

dreds held for political reasons but charged with non-political crimes, or thousands arrested under laws that are blatantly racist.

Archie Gumede was originally detained with dozens of other opponents of the government in September when the government tried to squash protests against the elections. He was subsequently released by a judge, only to be slapped with another detention order. He fled underground, emerging in the British consulate with five other men. They asked for political asylum in Great Britain, which was denied, but they were allowed to remain in the consulate. They then turned to the United States for help, but under "constructive engagement" the Reagan administration's foreign policy toward South Africa, actions which may alienate the South African government are being avoided and asylum was denied. Last month, while the six were awaiting the result of a legal challenge to their detention order, three of them decided to leave the consulate. They were immediately detained and their fate is unknown — a grim lesson to Gumede and his two companions. As these men struggle to remain free despite an indifferent world reaction, now is the time for us to focus our attention on the fate of all political prisoners in South Africa.

Marcus Cheatham is a member of Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom (POSAF), a local multi-racial citizens action group that supports black majority rule in Southern Africa and an end to U.S. support for apartheid. For more information, call 230-9427.

## People lose with Reagan Court

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

Two-thirds of the white American electorate endorsed the politics of reaction and racial inequality by reelecting President Reagan. Now millions of us who understood what was at stake — Blacks, Latinos, Jewish Americans, low income families, and unemployed people — will be forced to pay the price of the political recklessness of the electoral majority.

The features of the coming political maelstrom are already discernible. Joan Claybrook, head of the civic advocacy group, Public Citizen, noted recently in the *New York Times* that the Reagan administration's record on civil liberties is "the worst in modern times. Reagan has endorsed lie detectors, wiretapping, blacklisting and censoring." Coretta Scott King and other liberals have been barred from speaking on the Voice of America. Reagan has restricted Americans' rights to travel to various nations, and has prohibited many foreign critics from entering the U.S. Next, the President will attempt to undermine citizens' rights by weakening the Freedom of Information Act. To suppress public information and discussion, Claybrook notes, the administration "wants to eliminate the fairness doctrine, which permits people to talk back to television and radio programs transmitted over the public airwaves." Reagan slashed federal aid to libraries, and favored postal rate hikes for nonprofit groups. His press conferences are manipulated to limit direct contact, and "further isolate him from public accountability."

To muffle the voices of the left, Reagan signed into law a series of "anti-terrorism bills" on October 12. In theory, the legislation focuses

on stiff penalties for the taking of hostages, airline sabotage, and provides cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals who commit terrorist acts. In practice, the new law permitted four hundred FBI agents and police to arrest nine New York City activists on October 18, on the grounds that they were planning jail breakouts and robberies. On the legislative horizon is HR 5613/S2626, which failed to pass but will be reintroduced for debate next year. The bill permits the Secretary of State to classify any foreign governments as "terrorist"; once in effect, any political support, fundraising activity or related efforts inside the U.S. on behalf of these states could be considered violations of criminal law. One legal expert has described the bill as a threat to "freedom of speech and of association, (by) defining support for national liberation movements and socialist countries as criminal." Meanwhile, Reagan continues to violate U.S. Laws by funding anticommunist terrorists, sanctioning contra military actions in Nicaragua, and supports the terroristic policies of apartheid South Africa.

The most serious challenge to our civil liberties and human rights, however, is presented by Reagan's expected selections to the Supreme Court. Five of the justices are 75 or older, including the three most liberal justices. Recent decisions of the Court have already voided Fourth Amendment rights to prisoners, and allowed police to circumvent the "exclusionary rule" in the collection of court evidence in the "Massachusetts vs. Sheppard" case. The Court's endorsement for "last hired, first fired" employment

rules will weaken affirmative action and equal opportunity programs, as well as increase minority and female joblessness. With the addition of three or four more Reagan appointees over the next few years, abortion rights could be outlawed, and the cause of racial desegregation could be crippled for a generation. Even moderate Republicans have recognized the ominous threat to justice. Justice John Stevens, a Ford appointee, recently described the conservative Court members as having replaced "judicial analysis with their own political agenda." Justice Harry Blackmun more accurately noted that the Supreme Court was "moving to the right, where it wants to go... by hook or by crook."

The bottom line of Reagan's state of siege can be reduced to a single word: inequality. Reagan pushed through a \$4.5 billion bailout for the grossly mismanaged Continental Illinois bank, yet plans to cut one-half million participants off the federal nutrition program for women, infants and children. The administration's tax cuts gave households with over \$80,000 annual income a \$35 billion after taxes, while more than 35 million Americans have been out of work at some point since 1981. Four more years will mean higher infant mortality rates for the poor, a reduction in civil liberties, and a Supreme Court which could perpetuate Reaganism easily beyond the year 2000. As Reagan gloated last month, "You ain't seen nothing yet."

Dr. Manning Marable teaches political sociology at Colgate University, Hamilton, New York. "Along the Color Line" appears in over 140 newspapers internationally.

## Letters to the Editor

### Save lives

To the Editor,

Operation Lifesaver is an ongoing safety program to educate the populace of the potential hazards that may occur at rail-highway crossings, and the program has been implemented in 41 states throughout the nation.

The Oregon railroads, in cooperation with state agencies, traffic safety, railroad transportation, engineering, insurance and police organizations, have undertaken the development and implementation of this program in the State of Oregon.

There have been unnecessary fatalities at rail-highway crossings in Oregon during recent years, as well as numerous accidents and injuries at these crossings. Through education, engineering and enforcement, this program will bring a greater awareness to all our citizens of the need for rail-highway safety.

Therefore, as Governor, I hereby proclaim the week of November 18-24, 1984, as "Operation Lifesaver Week" in Oregon.

I call upon our citizens to exercise extreme caution when approaching railroad-highway cross-

ings, not only during this week but throughout the year.

VICTOR ATIYEH  
Governor

### No democracy

To the Editor,

Brother Jesse believed the dictum of Empedocles, "Similia similibus percipiuntur," must be supplemented by a second dictum, "Similia Dissimilibus." All things are alike in being objects. But knowing is distinguishing, and there must be contrast between objects to awaken our attention. The Supreme Architect of the Universe (God) knows sin, though it is the antithesis of his holy being. The ego knows the non-ego. We cannot know even self, without objectifying it, distinguishing it from its thoughts, and regarding it as another. In dealing with humans, we should remember what Hermann Lotz said: "Color in general is not representable by any image; it looks neither green nor red, but has no look whatever. So one could say, the generic horse has no particular color though the individual horse may be Black, White, or Bay. God is not necessarily infinite in every respect. He is

infinite only in every excellence.

Brother Jesse opened up the decadent, abnormal cellular growth in the political process in this country, to let the world see though America claims to be a democracy, she's as far away from a democracy as Russia. This is not a democracy. It has never been. It may evolve to be that one day, only when there is an enlightened electorate.

I'm not a politician, but I know that America is not a democracy. I know that America does not work for the masses of the people, Black or Caucasoid. I know that America is set up to work for the aristocracy and a class that makes laws to protect their wealth. I'm under no illusions whatsoever. I've watched the games that people play. I'm sick of game playing, and those who play games with the aspiration of the people.

DR. JAMIL CHEROVEE

The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be typed or neatly printed and signed with the author's name and address (addresses are not published). We reserve the right to edit for length. Mail to: Portland Observer, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

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