

EDITORIAL/OPINION

National racism must be fought

As 58 percent of the 31 percent of registered voters who voted placed a crown on the head of Ronald Reagan, Black leaders and organizations sidelined by his politics are shocked as Reagan criticized them for distorting his civil rights record.

In an interview on January 17th with *USA Today*, Reagan said Black leaders have ignored minority gains made in the last four years.

"I have come to the conclusion that maybe some of these leaders are protecting some rather good positions. . . . and they can protect them better if they can keep their constituency agrieved believing they have a legitimate complaint," Reagan said.

Reagan continued his assault of Black leadership and organizations by adding, "If they (Blacks) ever become aware of the opportunities that are improving they might wonder whether they need some of those organizations."

Ronald Reagan's statements are destructive, insulting and racist. How dare he try to undermine leaders and organizations who are just telling the truth. His racist remarks are the aftermath of the Urban League's annual "State of Black America," which said under the Reagan Administration people of color and low-income have had their civil, economic and social rights trampled upon.

The reason Black leaders have not disseminated this so-called progress which Reagan alludes to is because their constituency will not be lied to. Under the Reagan Administration, Affirmative Action has become tokenism, the Civil Rights Commission has become the civil wrongs commission and the number of Americans living below the poverty line has increased.

Ronald Reagan has a lot of nerve. He is employing one of the oldest tricks in the books —

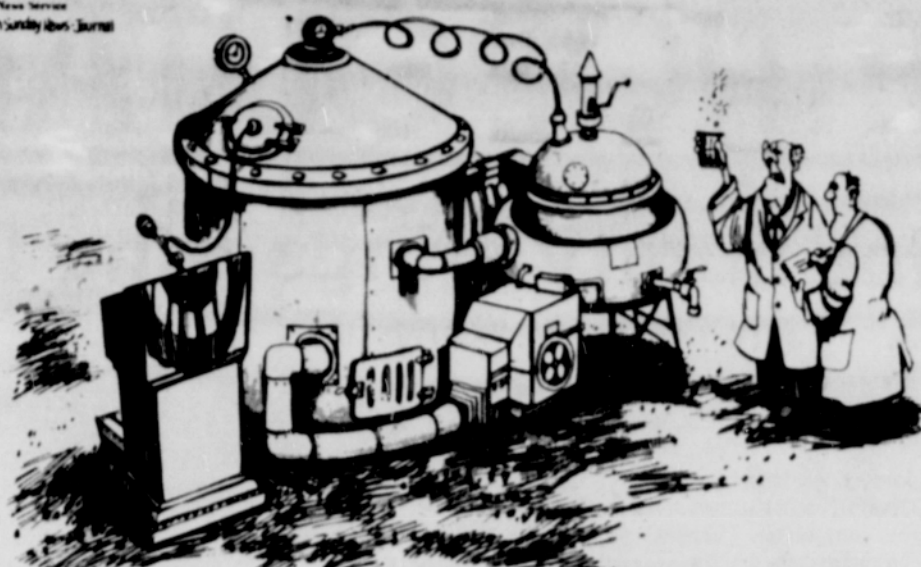
divide and conquer. Nationally, statewide and locally, whenever people of color organize to make change, the institutions or individuals forced to capitulate always question the leadership of the movement.

On the national level, Reagan's tactics are much more destructive to the nation as a whole. The fact that he sidestepped Black organizations and leaders who have traditionally fought for people of color and low-income families is an indication that he is trying to pick our leaders.

Reagan incorrectly assumed that Blacks are "politically committed to the Democratic Party." This same party that locked out the legitimate candidacy of Jesse Jackson is the same party that fought for legalized racism in the form of dual parties in the South. And this same party ran their 1984 presidential campaign as if they wanted Ronald Reagan to be re-elected.

Reagan does our country a disservice by picking bits of information that he wants to hear and choosing the "house Negro" that he wants to hear it from. Reagan may think all's well that ends well, but he is deceiving himself at taxpayers' expense. The powerless and the voiceless will not allow anyone to pick their leaders for them.

This week in Portland, a victory was scored when the collective efforts of many forced the resignation of Oregon's honorary South African consul Calvin VanPelt. It will take this same collective effort to offset the racism from the Reagan Administration. Reagan has surrounded himself with a handpicked Black leadership. As they paint him a picture of calm acceptance of his unfair policies, the civil rights movement will shock him back to reality because the ground will rumble with cries for justice.



"OK... we've gotten religion out of politics, which leaves... two parts demagoguery one part hypocrisy, and a smidgen of hot air."

Letters to the Editor

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.

Editorials lack credibility

To the Editor,

I agree with your editorial of January 9, 1985, that Bud Clark and Gretchen Kafoury should be confronted with their failure to include Blacks on their staff. However, I take exception to one statement you made which dilutes your impact and calls into question your credibility.

You state that the failure to include Blacks on their staffs "can only produce policies that will make the Grand Wizard of the KKK proud." Black involvement with policy ideas will certainly make them more sensitive to Blacks and advocated more strongly. However, just because policies are developed by white people does not mean they automatically will reflect the racism of the KKK.

Pointed criticism is an important function of your paper. However, implying such a negative association for your potential or actual allies leaves very little for those who really deserve it.

BILL MARLOWE

Credit to Carter

To the Editor,

I have attended eight or ten of the Joint Sessions of the Oregon State Legislature.

I was State Representative of District 21 for six terms, 1963-1975.

This Joint Session was the most impressive of all. You were there, I understand. That's great!

Rep. Margaret Carter, Dist. 18, was the ONE person primarily responsible for its momentous success. She and her Joyful Sound chorus, with her own personal singing at times stirred everyone with contagious enthusiasm. Margaret led the whole audience in clapping, some in singing. I notices even many of the august members of the judiciary joined in clapping to the music, some in singing.

Twice the whole audience stood and clapped with applause, longer than any other event on the program.

The chorus' three numbers were beautifully rendered, highly impressive, inovative, stirring and magnificent. Margaret deserves most of the credit.

Margaret had been in office only a few minutes. She has already made a great name for herself. I think she will make a great lawmaker for us all.

HOWARD D. WILLITS

Judge not each other

To the Editor,

Concerning the article which appeared in print about Brother Danny Boyd and of Ron Martin, I find nothing pleasing about the gross interpretation concerning either. What I do find grossly disturbing is that we, as convicts and brothers, have displayed what I feel this system desires: conflict and dissension among our Black-selves.

I am sure that Brother Martin has constructed avenues for Black progress within the system. . . I'm sure that Brother Boyd's comments were not to injure but aid us in understanding what we must conquer through a transition period of a group structure.

To Brothers Ron Martin and Danny Boyd I congratulate you for generating dead minds to live issues, which I see as an affirmative approach to doing something. And as Brother Malcolm X has said, "We are not to judge each other but to judge those actions put forth. . ." He, too, was a convict and a Black man, or have we forgotten? Or have we forgotten that all we have to maintain in this environment is our Black pride. . . Black manhood. . . our Black-selves. . . Walk in Balance.

MARCUS V. COX

POSAF ON SOUTH AFRICA

"Democratic" double standards

by Bill Bigelow

Last August elections were held in South Africa. Just over two months later Nicaraguans went to the polls. How the U.S. government responded to these two events tells us a lot about what is genuinely behind U.S. foreign policy.

We are all familiar with Reagan, Shultz, and company's denunciation of the Nicaraguan elections. They were a "sham", a "phony", a tactic to solidify the iron grip of the Sandinistas in their "totalitarian dungeon."

But what of South Africa's elections? According to the State Department, these represented a move toward "decisive political change." Our leaders quietly lamented the exclusion of South Africa's Black majority from the voting, but expressed hope that the elections would accelerate the process of change.

What is it, really, that determines whether the U.S. responds to an election in another country with congratulations or threats of annihilation?

Our government consistently burps out rhetoric about "democracy". Let's take them at their word. What is democracy? Patricia Kullberg, in an insightful article in the November issue of *Central American Update*, argues that at the very least it means "that the people have equal political power and the capacity to use it." Societies in which few people decide who will have work and who won't, what crops will be grown, and what goods manufactured, is not democratic — even though the powerful and powerless may be "equal" when they arrive at the ballot box.

Nicaragua is attacked. South Africa is applauded. How does the Administration decide?

South Africa's racist social system

is old news: over 70% of the population is relegated to 13% of the most useless land; these same people — Black South Africans — have no vote, cannot live where they wish and can be imprisoned simply for speaking out against this oppression.

What's new are the recent elections. For the first time, all so-called Colored and Indian South Africans were allowed to vote. The South African government's goal was transparent: divide and rule. Split off sizable numbers of Indians and Coloreds and the potential non-white alliance would be dealt a severe blow.

Sound "democratic"? The U.S. State Department ate it up. Their argument was as simple as it was wrong: more people voting — more democracy.

The reality was the opposite — "successful" elections, in which Coloreds and Indians enthusiastically embraced their newly-bestowed suffrage, would have crippled the real movement towards democracy by giving them a stake in an undemocratic system and pitting them against the majority, extra-electoral opposition. (As it was, over 80% of the Coloreds and Indians chose to boycott the elections rather than be co-opted.)

Don't U.S. rulers see through this sham? Of course they do. They fully support this process of democracy-avoidance. For a clue as to why, one might note that direct U.S. investment in South Africa has gone from \$140 million to over \$2.5 billion in the last 25 years. It's no wonder: profit rates in South Africa through most of this period were twice what they were in the United States. Continuing injustice in South Africa doesn't hurt U.S. economic interests; it helps.

It's obscene, but true: the U.S. feigns a concern for democracy to mask its actual goal — a safe and profitable investment climate. The problem is that these two goals tend

to be at cross purposes: real democracy poses a mortal threat to exploitation.

Unlike the restrained optimism the U.S. expressed for elections in South Africa, which excluded over 70% of the potential electorate, continuous vitriolic attacks have been heaped on Nicaragua's elections. This, despite the fact that no Nicaraguan of voting age was excluded, and political parties of all persuasions were allowed—even encouraged—to campaign.

The Nicaraguan revolution has shifted state resources to programs to benefit the majority of the people: health clinics, literacy programs, day care centers. Land has been redistributed and workers offered new rights and encouragement. The economy would still have to be considered capitalist, but owners' prerogatives are limited and profit is no longer the sole criterion for production.

In short, it is the investment climate in Nicaragua that is gloomy, not necessarily the prospects for democracy.

Nicaragua, one of the smallest, poorest, and least developed countries in Latin America, is no big loss for U.S. capitalism. But the possibility that bigger fish, such as El Salvador, Guatemala, or — God forbid — Chile, might follow its lead and take control of their own economic destinies is a chilling thought.

The U.S. government's slander of Nicaragua's elections was as inevitable as its glorification of the South African balloting. Ultimately, these decisions stem from economic considerations not from a lust for worldwide democracy. We should recognize the deeper roots of U.S. policy. However incomplete and still undefined, the Nicaraguan experiment challenges the domination of U.S. economic control.

Street Beat

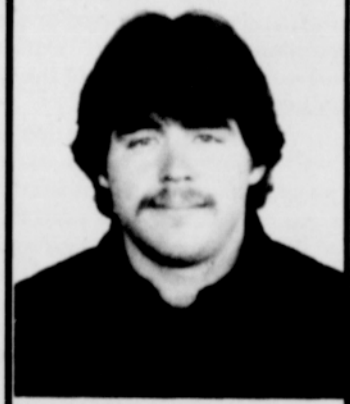
by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown

As the 12th anniversary of legalized abortion passes, the Street Beat team asked, "Should the Supreme Court adopt an amendment to make abortion illegal?"



Kenneth Crumble
Retired

"No. That should be the choice of the individual. Why bring a child into the world who is unwanted or the parents cannot afford to take care of?"



Dan Korynten
Box Baler

"Yes. I'm a Catholic and it's against my religion."



Tina Tackett
Courier

"No. everyone should have the right to choose."



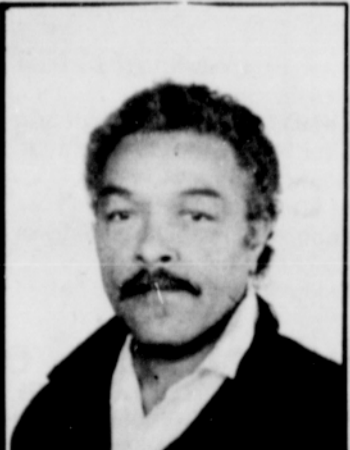
Levell Harrison
Supervisor
Cement Masons Union

"Yes. I'm against abortion. It should be abolished to preserve the lives of those babies."



Yvonne McKinney
Housewife

"Yes. It's murder. It is not fair to the baby."



George Christian
Electrician

"Yes. I just do not believe in abortion."



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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.

The *Portland Observer* was established in 1970.
Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P. O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

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Al Williams, General Manager



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National Advertising Representative
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