

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Honor our elders

As Black History Month progresses, there is one historical contribution constantly overlooked. The foundation, sacrifice and resiliency of Portlanders born between 1900-1940. It was this honored generation who weathered the storm of oppression, poverty and inequality.

Also, those Black families who were drawn to Portland from the South to fill a labor gap created after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in World War II. They worked on the railroad or in the shipyards and their contributions to the growth of the Pacific Northwest demands that they be viewed and defined as pioneers.

Many in our over-40 population are industrious and committed to helping their families live as comfortably as possible. In 1966, Gospel Singer Mahalia Jackson said it best when appraising who was behind the social challenges of the 1960s: "When I hear people talking about communists being behind the college students I have to laugh. It's not communists. It's the Negro mothers who believe it's time for their children to fight for their rights and a good education."

Many in the honored generation had their formal education terminated before they completed elementary school. In spite of overwhelming overt discrimination, they were able to give their children decent clothes, nourishing food, a high school and college education.

The generations of the 60s and 70s have forgotten the sacrifices their predecessors endured to achieve a higher quality of life for their grandchildren. Thus, they now lounge around living with the misconception that the world was created by them, for them. This "spoiled rotten" perspective threatens everything that has been achieved. Adding insult to injury, this generation treats Senior Citizens as if they had the plague instead of remembering that they have the medicine of life — wisdom.

Now, we are not war mongers or crisis seekers, but if this generation could experience what their grandparents overcame they would appreciate everyday comfort, the ability to go to school and the freedom to speak their minds a great deal more.

As Black History Month does a rollcall of contributions, let's not look elsewhere to award accolades while ignoring those at home who deserve it. To those in this honored generation, thank you for refusing to ride in the back of the bus. Thank you for desegregating public and private facilities. And, thank you, for working 12-hour days to pay the mortgage and feed your families.

It would be ludicrous to credit our achievements to the public schools, social agencies, the federal government or to politicians. The sacrifices, resiliencies and loyalties instilled in us by you have and will continue to provide us with the strength to recuperate and overcome.

I'M SORRY WE HAVE TO FORECLOSE ON YOUR FARM, BUT AGRICULTURE IS IN TRANSITION...



AND THE FAMILY FARM IS THE VICTIM OF CHANGING ECONOMIC REALITIES



BUT SOCIETY DOES OWE YOU PEOPLE SOMETHING, AND WE'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU —



JUST LIKE WE DID THE STEELWORKERS



POSAF ON SOUTH AFRICA

by Marcus Cheatham

There are growing signs that the movement to cut American links with South Africa is meeting with success. Officially South Africa denies that international pressure will have any impact on apartheid. But more and more voices are being heard from within the South African establishment calling for change. Whether such change will be meaningful — on the terms of the Black majority rather than the White minority — will be in part determined by the success of the effort to isolate the apartheid regime.

Many *Observer* readers may already be aware that Seafirst, a large Seattle bank, has joined the ranks of those refusing to make more loans to South Africa. In the past five years, U.S. loans to South Africa more than tripled. Staunching this flow of funds is a major goal of the Free South Africa Movement.

Seafirst made their decision under considerable pressure from anti-

apartheid organizations in Seattle. Seafirst had been among the largest sources of funds for South Africa, thus their decision is viewed as a dramatic victory.

In a January 16 article in this column it was incorrectly reported that Seafirst was still making loans to South Africa, however the new policy was adopted in September, 1984 and made public in December. POSAF is pleased to set the record straight.

The following is the text of a Seafirst memo announcing the new policy:

SEAFIRST SOUTH AFRICA POLICY

Seafirst's South Africa policy is based on the belief that the South African government's official policy of apartheid is racist and regressive. In no way will Seafirst condone or support apartheid.

—The official policy of Seafirst Bank is that it will make no loans to South Africa.

—Seafirst has no loans to South Africa at this time.

Seafirst has no investments in South Africa, nor will it make such investments.

—Seafirst will not sell Krugerrands, official gold coins minted by the government of South Africa.

Seafirst has no offices or employees in South Africa, nor does it consider South Africa as a "market" for any activities of this corporation. Seafirst's primary mission is to serve consumer and business markets with a presence in the northwestern United States.

Seafirst will review this policy if South Africa makes changes in its legal system to eliminate apartheid.

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.

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown

The Street Beat team gave Oregonians a chance to assess their city with "What things would you like to see more of, and what would you like to see less of, in the City of Portland."



Nicole Beasley
Student

"More sport activities for teenagers and less drunk drivers."



Marty Montgomery
Homemaker

"I'd like to see less rain. Most of the things I want to see more of, people are working on."



Ken Bowden
Utility Worker

"More community involvement at every level in politics and economic. Also, more unity in the Black community in the age groups of 20-40. We need less of this non-trust."



Martha Moss
Warehouse Worker

"More construction. Haven't seen enough work. Also, I would like to hear less of people talking about how well-off they are, when they really don't know."



Grace Urban
Shopowner

"More free family activities in the parks, etc. And less rain."



Why we should remember Malcolm X

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

February 21, 1985 marks the twentieth anniversary of the assassination of Malcolm X, the greatest Black nationalist since Marcus Garvey and a major spiritual and political spokesman of the 1960s. It is tragic that many youth know so little about this revolutionary figure. The Cooperative Research Network in Black Studies, based in Chicago, has urged us to plan programs on Malcolm in schools, churches and community centers during Black History Month. Martin Luther King, Jr. will be honored next year when his birthday becomes a legal public holiday. "It is our responsibility to turn our focus to the life of Malcolm X," states the Network in Black Studies. "Malcolm X was just as important as Martin Luther King, and must never be forgotten."

What is the relevance of El Majj Malik El Shabazz (Malcolm X) to Black struggles of the 1980s? First, Malcolm is an ideal role model for Black youth. Part of his greatness as a social figure was derived from his oppressed origins. Malcolm began adulthood as "Detroit Red," a small-time ghetto hustler who was sentenced to a ten year prison term. Inside prison he transformed himself, struggling to overcome his lack of education and political backwardness. He became the powerful minister of Temple Number Seven in Harlem of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam. Word of his sermons brought hundreds of poor and working class Black people together to hear the message. Malcolm's life illustrates graphically the inherent power we all have to challenge our own weaknesses, self-hatred and fears to become leaders and participants in the struggle for Black freedom.

We remember Malcolm X because he loved us, despite the social and political contradictions within our

community. In his autobiography, Malcolm notes that after hours on the speaking platform, he would "become so choked up sometimes I would walk in the streets until late into the night. Sometimes I would speak to no one for hours, thinking to myself about what the white man had done to our poor people here in America." During a period when most Afro-American leaders favored non-violent tactics, Malcolm urged activists to start "rifle clubs" to defend their neighborhoods and families against police brutality and white vigilante violence. When perplexed white journalists asked Malcolm why he taught "Black supremacy," Malcolm's response was to "pour on pure fire in return": "For the white man to ask the Black man if he hates him is just like the rapist asking the raped, or the wolf asking the sheep, 'Do you hate me?' The white man is in no moral position to accuse anyone else of hate!" Contemporaries recognized that Malcolm articulated, as John Lewis once wrote, "the aspirations, bitterness, and frustrations of the Negro people."

We remember Malcolm X because he was one of the very few Black leaders of the period who recognized the limitations of "integration" as a political demand. When civil rights leaders condemned Malcolm for favoring racial segregation, he exhibited a surer grasp of Black social history. "It is not a case of wanting integration or separation, it is a case of wanting freedom, justice, and equality," Malcolm responded. "It is not integration that Negroes in America want, it is human dignity. . . An integrated cup of coffee isn't sufficient payment for 310 years of slave labor." Malcolm understood that getting rid of Jim Crow laws and establishing Blacks' voting rights in the south were only

preliminary steps in the battle for real democracy. He criticized Blacks' endorsements for Lyndon Johnson's 1964 presidential candidacy, predicting with grim accuracy that Johnson would stop far short of providing a meaningful economic and social program for Blacks and the poor. Attacking the Negro middle class' blind allegiance to the corporate system, Malcolm declared: "You can't have capitalism without racism. And if you find (anti-racists) usually they're socialists or their political philosophy is socialism." Years before Martin broke with the Johnson administration's genocidal war in Vietnam, Malcolm stated that the conflict "shows the real ignorance of those who control the American power structure, their ignorance and blindness." While the NAACP and Urban League were silent on international affairs, Malcolm's Organization for Afro-American Unity, founded in 1964, established the direction for the entire Black Power Movement which followed.

After Malcolm X was assassinated, Bayard Rustin described him as "a tragic victim of the ghetto. Now that he is dead, we must resist the temptation to idealize Malcolm X, to elevate charisma to greatness." Carl Rowan described him as an "ex-convict who became a racial fanatic." But Black actor Ossie Davis' 1965 tribute to Malcolm is what Black history says about his true legacy: "In honoring him, we honor the best in ourselves. He was and is, a Prince — our own shining Prince! — who didn't hesitate to die because he loved us so."

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

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