

EDITORIAL/OPINION

YOUTH WATCH:

Keep 14-year-olds out of jail

by Linda Johnson

To keep an eye on issues affecting youth, the greatest resource of this community and others throughout the nation is indeed a task worthy of undertaking. "Youth Watch" will approach youth issues to develop a youth, family and community continuum for you to preview. "Youth Watch" is meant to stimulate thought, to provoke actions on behalf of youth and to provide a voice for youth.

Bills in the Oregon Legislative Assembly need to be examined. Senate Bill 414 and HB 2955 are bills related to lowering the remand age to 14. The litmus test used to measure whether a youth should be tried in the adult court system for specific violent crimes or the attempt to commit any crime on this laundry list is... "the child at the time of the alleged offense was of sufficient sophistication and maturity to appreciate the nature and equality of the conduct involved..." The youth in our community will be adversely affected by these bills since

they are predicated on institutions which are biased to children who are from different ethnic backgrounds and face socio-economic deprivation. These two factors alone should alarm and outrage our community.

Perhaps in areas where the institutions are more culturally sensitive, this approach would make these bills acceptable but the State of Oregon is not one of these areas. These bills attempt to preclude the Death Penalty for children who will be remanded. The fact is the constitutional amendment passed last November 1984 on the Death Penalty could supercede the amendment found in SB414 and HB2955.

Different states boast about their lower juvenile population in their detention facilities. I submit to you, their juvenile population is down because they are locking children up in their jails and penitentiaries.

Did you know some states think 12-year-old children can be considered adults? If the Oregon legislature is

able to lower the remand age to 14 and deny the resources of the juvenile system to children who most need and would benefit from it, Oregon will also attempt to lower its remand age to 12.

Concerned citizens should write their Oregon legislative representatives and Judiciary Subcommittee members, encouraging them to vote "No" on HB2955 and SB414 and call Legislator Access: 1-800-982-1211, or Legislative Bill Information: 1-800-452-0290, to acquire more information on the status of these bills. Speak to Rep. James Hill, the representative from Salem who is a sponsor of these bills, and ask him to withdraw his sponsorship publicly, based on the abusive effects on children in our community.

Linda Johnson, youth and community advocate, encourages community response and suggestions in the development of "Youth Watch." Contact: P.O. Box 12088, Portland, Oregon 97212.



Mark Twain no racist

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

With the possible exception of Clarence Pendleton, virtually every Black person in the U.S. has directly experienced racial discrimination. In its more overt forms, racism has meant Jim Crow restrictions, the inability to obtain jobs, education, and decent housing, and the lack of political rights. More subtle are other manifestations of racism, such as the assignment of school texts which foster racial stereotypes. Both forms of racism have forced Afro-Americans to initiate strategies of resistance which, in turn, raise serious questions about the relationship between the rights of the oppressed vs. free speech and civil liberties.

Examine the controversy surrounding the 19th Century novel by Mark Twain, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Most literary critics agree that the book is a classic in American literature, ranking with Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man" and the works by Herman Melville, Ernest Hemingway, Alice Walker and other great writers. Mark Twain was a staunch opponent of white supremacy; nevertheless the book contains racial stereotypes and racist language. Thus for years, a number of civil rights coalitions have advocated the banning of "Huckleberry Finn" from public schools. In 1982 the chair of the human rights committee at a Fairfax, Virginia, school termed the book "racist trash." Last year Waukegan, Illinois, school administrators banned the book from a required reading list. And in February, 1985, one member of the Chicago School Board declared that the novel "ought to be burned." Dr. John H. Wallace, a noted educator, describes "Huckleberry Finn" as "the most grotesque example of racist trash ever written."

But other scholars have now established the fact that Mark Twain provided the funds for Warner T. McGuinn to attend Yale Law School in the 1880s. McGuinn went on to become a NAACP leader and a major contributor to desegregation campaigns in Baltimore. Twain's language in his novels and essays is racially slanted by contemporary standards, but it is simply incorrect to attribute to him a Reaganite contempt for Black people. "Huck Finn" tries to condemn white society for its own perpetuation of racial inequality. If Hitler's "Mein Kampf" is available in school libraries as a testament to racism and anti-Semitism "Huck Finn" should be present as a flawed but noble effort by a white liberal who attempted to challenge the racism of his era.

A second, slightly different, controversy relates to the efforts of anti-apartheid activists who have urged the boycotting of artists, athletes and entertainers who have traveled to South Africa. Several months ago the NAACP was pressured to drop two Black performers, Tina Turner and Danieelle Hall, from their 17th annual "Image Awards" ceremony in Los Angeles, because they had toured South African resorts. The United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid has initiated a "cultural boycott" against any artists who have performed inside South Africa since 1981. Most of the entertainers on the U.N. list — including Ray Charles, Frank Sinatra, Cher, Goldie Hawn, Linda Ronstadt, and the Beach Boys — are millionaires who had no direct need to travel to Johannesburg and provide cultural legitimacy to a dictatorial regime. But these artists now find themselves "black-listed" from performing at any func-

tion sponsored by the United Nations.

Liberals such as Harvard Law professor Alan Dershowitz are outraged that artists who have profited from the racist regime should be censured in any way. The UN's action is a "civil liberties violation," Dershowitz complains in a recent essay: "Consider an artist who is against apartheid but who performs to a Black audience in Soweto... the artist shouldn't be punished for his or her political decision." First, such "logic" would scarcely be applied by Dershowitz and other white liberals about American artists who performed let's say, in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Second, virtually none of the artists on the U.N. boycott list have been active in the Free South Africa Movement. Most had no contact or solidarity with oppressed Africans inside the apartheid regime. They went to South Africa for the money, period. And in their lust for profits, they tacitly reinforced the cultural viability of the immoral state. U.S. consumers, Black and white, have a right to know whether the artists they support are in turn supporting fundamental, human rights issues. Artists who have profited directly from institutional racism abroad should not be overtly harassed or subjected to personal attacks by anti-apartheid proponents. Yet we have a right to initiate "selective buying" campaigns, as we did against Jim Crow businesses in the 1960s, targeting those celebrities who contribute toward Black oppression.

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

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown

During the Pat Gillis controversy, one of our participants suggested that we ask if politicians should submit to lie detector tests. The Street Beat team asked, "Should politicians take lie detector tests prior to distributing information to voters?"



Debby Yenser
Housewife

"No, lie detector tests have not been proven effective."



J. L. Fletcher
Retired

"Yes, if we have to take them, then they should."



Sandra Malone
Assembly Worker

"No, it would put all of them out of business."



William Brown
Self-Employed

"I would hope that lie detector tests aren't necessary. However, I'm fully in favor of Gillis' recall."



Willye Goss
Nurse

"It would be hard to say. If they took the test and the test is not accurate, then what do we have?"



Ken Hovey
Registered Nurse

"No, it's a violation of their constitutional rights. Gillis, I hope, was an isolated incident."

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.

Beware indeed

To the Editor,

In the March 20 issue of the Portland Observer, Joe "Bean" Keller wrote an article entitled "Verbal Agreements — Beware," in which he castigated me, Ken Adair, for breaking a verbal agreement. The facts surrounding our contracting Mr. Keller's services for Youth Week Kickoff are so far removed from Mr. Keller's reality that they demand clarification.

As a Commissioner for the Metropolitan Youth Commission and as Chairperson for Youth Week Kickoff, I was responsible for contracting services for the Kickoff. Joe Keller called me about providing lighting for the event. I told him I was strongly considering someone else for the job, and that I would call him back to discuss it in detail with him. In classic unprofessional manner, Mr. Keller attempted an end around by calling a fellow Metropolitan Youth Commissioner and a staff person and was promptly referred back to me. His demeanor appeared to be almost one of desperation to secure the job. I finally gave him the job despite the fact that the other person I was strongly considering for the job could bring it in for less money; but, keep-

ing in mind Mr. Keller is a young and struggling Black businessman, I gave him the job.

Joe Keller's anger apparently stems from March 1, the day of Youth Week Kickoff. With one hour to go before the start of the program, Joe Keller informed us that he was not prepared and needed some additional equipment which he had to rent. I reminded him of his written contract for \$225.00 to provide for all lighting arrangements and that yes, if he needed the equipment he had better get it. With the mayor of Portland, Dr. Prophet, the performing bands, and the crowd awaiting the start of the program, lighting was crucial; however, I at no time said WE would pay for it. And what was the cost of this extra item? The incredible sum of fifteen dollars.

Finally, Mr. Keller could not wait to receive his check for service like the rest of the contractors. Against advice of the Metropolitan Youth Commission staff, I gave him a personal check from my checking account and paid him in full. At that, to show the measure of the man, he stormed out of my office when he was informed he would have to absorb the \$15.00 for lighting.

Yes, I agree with you, Mr. Keller. Beware of verbal contracts; but also be aware of written contracts people commit to, and are unable to live up to. If you can't handle them, I suggest you get a job and work for someone who can.

KENNETH R. ADAIR
Commissioner,
Metropolitan Youth Commission

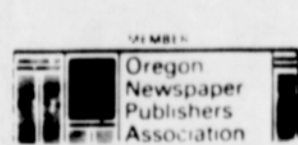
Help Black Americans 1st

To the Editor,

Africa, Africa. This seems to be the main focus of our Black organizations and leadership. Whether it is Ethiopia or South Africa the facts remain, more is being done for those two countries than for Black Americans by our leaders. It has been a long time since I have seen so many of our leaders go to jail for a cause; too bad it isn't the Black Americans they are fighting for. If our leaders would take a good look around, they would see that their work is cut out for them to get the Black Americans back on the road of progress. While I am not insensitive to the plight of those African nations, I am more concerned with the status of the Black man in America. While food famine is a serious problem and one that should be addressed by the world, it is a problem that can be turned around in a short period of time. Each country has had to fight for independence in their history.

The mind is a terrible thing to lose and when a large group of people begin to lose their minds, their goals of equality and their spirit to fight for themselves, then we have a very serious problem. I am tired of Africa and I am ready for some serious work on Black America, the poor, the hungry, homeless, unemployed and those people unsure of what truly lies ahead for them. Black is beautiful, but it has taken an unidentifiable turn in shade and that is scary.

RANSOM EDDINGS



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.



283-2486

MEMBER
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
ASSOCIATION - FOUNDED 1885

Alfred L. Henderson, Editor/Publisher
Al Williams, General Manager

National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
New York

PORTLAND OBSERVER \$15 for one year
\$25 for two years

Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

Mr. Mrs. Miss

Street Apt

CITY STATE ZIP

CLIP IT TO START THE PORTLAND OBSERVER COMING EVERY WEEK