

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Sleeper hold: death hold for Black

An incident of institutional racism resulted in the death of a Black male whose only crime was to be born Black in America and living in Portland, Oregon.

Tragedy, shock and bitterness has embraced Portland's Afro-American community as facts continue to emerge in the sleeper hold death of Mr. Lloyd Stevenson at the hands of a Portland Police Officer, and the tacky manner in which Police Chief Penny Harrington and Mayor Bud Clark have handled the situation.

Rather than answer questions at a Monday afternoon press conference, Harrington insulted the intelligence of those who attended with a classic show of bureaucratic arrogance. She replaced the "No comment" defense with an "I don't know" one. Discarding the history of the misuse of authority by police officers who patrol our community, Harrington refused to see the obvious:

A white officer walks into a situation where a Black male and a white male are involved in a confrontation. The indoctrination of a white officer in Portland is that a Black male is always "dirty," therefore Stevenson was wrong.

The official line promoted by the white media was that somehow Stevenson was at fault, but his sterling reputation and employment as a security guard, who had daily contact with various law enforcement authorities and shoplifters, refutes any credibility this theory might have.

As progressive as Harrington and Clark might seem, they now sit on the throne of an institution which says it's alright to throw oppo-som at a Black restaurant, it's alright to oppose any independent review of police practices, and it's alright to continue to use a procedure which affects Afro-Americans negatively. Harrington was set-up by those in the bureau who sent her unprepared to face public scrutiny.

The sleeper hold is a death hold. There is enough information available to document the lethal nature of this hold. It only takes six seconds to restrain a suspect, so why did the officers apply pressure for 15 seconds? Why is the death hold still being used when it has been blamed or restricted in other states?

Justice demands an end to the sleeper hold utilized by the police bureau. A multi-racial inquest should be called, and the community should monitor the Grand Jury proceeding very carefully.

What happened to Stevenson could have happened to any man in this city, especially to a man of color. A family and a community are in mourning.

The police bureau's follow-up and defense makes us wonder if we are paying the police to "protect and serve" or to "restrain and oppress." Portland again stands embarrassed as its "finest" turns out to be Portland's worst.

In light of the tragedy surrounding the use of the sleeper hold, the Street Beat team asked, "Should Police Chief Penny Harrington issue a permanent ban on the sleeper hold?"

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard J. Brown



M. Sperry
Housewife

"I suppose they should since one person lost his life. They say the odds of that happening is great, but still one person lost his life."



Shirley Browder
Spinner

"It should be banned permanently. The hold is dangerous. How many more people will have to die before it's banned."



Don Farmer
Self-employed

"If I was a cop I wouldn't want it banned, but if I was a citizen I would."



Barbara Waters
Packer

"The police should not use a lethal hold. There should be other ways to bring someone under control."



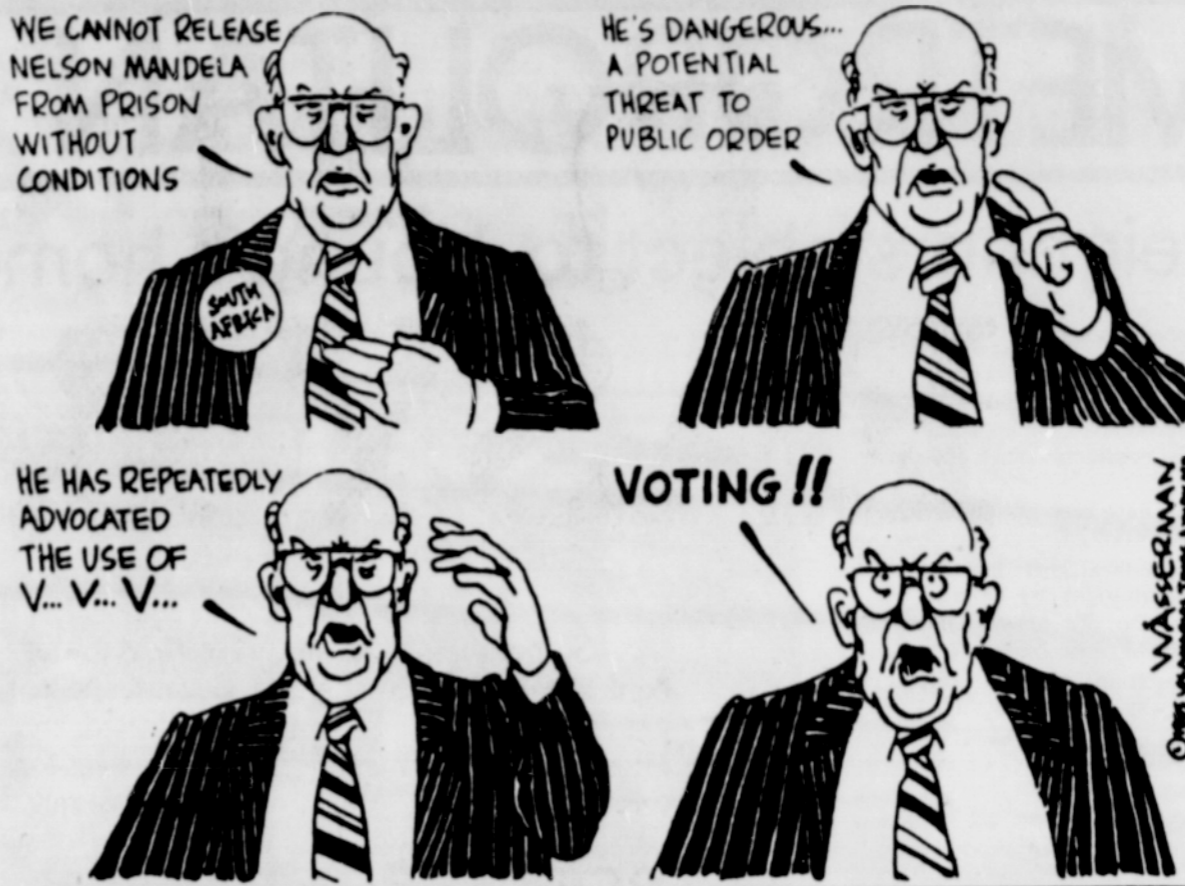
Jeffrey Jones
Security Officer

"Yes, I knew L.D. and I can't imagine that situation happening to him. We lost a great man. They could have used other measures."



Margaret Johnson
Unemployed

"You're damned right they should ban it. I got harassed just because I live in North Portland. They have other ways to stop a person besides killing him."



POSAF ON SOUTH AFRICA

Sullivan Principles easily circumvented

by Penny Samuelsen

In recent months much controversy has been focused on U.S. businesses operating in South Africa. The public outcry for immediate, complete withdrawal of all corporate investment from South Africa following the Soweto massacre of 1976, when an estimated 1,000 Black Africans — many of them young students — were murdered by South African police during what had begun as a peaceful demonstration by Black school children protesting the use of the white Afrikaans language in their schools.

In March of 1977 the Sullivan Principles were introduced by Rev. Leon Sullivan, a Black Philadelphia minister, civil rights activist, and General Motors Board Member, as an alternative to a full corporate pullout from South Africa, and in consultation with the South African government (which heartily endorsed the final version). Sullivan had developed a set of 6 principles or guidelines to be followed by U.S. businesses operating in South Africa.

The principles called for: 1 - desegregation of work facilities; 2 - equal and fair employment practices; 3 - equal pay for equal work; 4 - development of training programs for Black employees; 5 - increases in the number of Black employees in management and supervisory positions; and 6 - improvements in the quality of workers' lives in the areas of housing, transportation, education, recreation, and health facilities.

In the last few months, Sullivan has for the first time publicly admitted the limited effectiveness of the Principles and has added one that requires U.S. companies to publicly work toward abolishing the laws of apartheid. One could say that because this puts those companies in such an awkward position, it is an indirect way of pressuring them to withdraw from South Africa.

Compliance with the code was to be strictly voluntary, with no provision being made for enforcement; yet despite this, only 12 of the some 300 U.S. companies then operating in

South Africa agreed to participate in the original program. Since then many companies have come to recognize the public relations benefits to be derived from complying — at least on paper — with the Sullivan Principles, and today roughly 40 - 50% of all firms operating in South Africa have signed agreements promising adherence to the code. The number of Black employees affected is about 22,000 out of a workforce of 9 million.

Sullivan and his supporters have claimed that the principles could be, in Sullivan's words, "... a tremendous force for change and a vital factor in ending apartheid." But critics are quick to point out that since the principles were deliberately designed to function only within the context of existing apartheid laws, they fail to address the fundamental issues of political, economic and social self-determination for millions of South African Blacks. They, therefore, have little if any value as a tool for dismantling the legally entrenched system of white supremacy in South Africa. And indeed, it would be in acute opposition to their own best interests for U.S. companies to seek anything beyond cosmetic improvements in the working conditions of Black South Africans.

After all, for many American companies doing business there, apartheid provides the cheap labor pool that attracted them to South Africa in the first place.

There is a growing concern among critics that while at best the Sullivan Principles are ineffective, at worst they may be providing some U.S. corporations with a handy mask of "social responsibility" behind which clandestine — even sinister — dealings with the South African government go unobserved.

For example, as part of a long-range plan to decrease its vulnerability to both international trade embargos and internal attacks by Black freedom fighters, the South African government has designated some 600 companies — including American firms — as "National Keypoints." This is the name given to companies in those industries — such as automotive, electronics, and coal-to-oil conversion — identified as vital to the country's security.

Companies designated as "National Keypoints" must report directly to the Minister of Defense. They are strongly encouraged to train and maintain internal reserve all-white commando units to defend their facilities against the possibility of "civil unrest." Further, in the event of "national emergency," they could be required to convert their plants to military production, even to the extent of allowing the armed forces to assume total control of all company operations.

Since Keypoint companies are sworn to secrecy by the South African government, and as a condition of operation are prohibited from divulging any information about Keypoint related activities to their parent bodies in the U.S., it is unknown how many American companies may actually be working to bolster and preserve apartheid. Given the fact that much U.S. investment has gone into the development and production of automotive, energy, and electronic technologies in South Africa, the number may be ominously high.

With Reagan pursuing his arrogantly racist policy of "constructive engagement," it is vital that we do not allow ourselves to be misled when his administration cites the Sullivan Principles as justification for encouraging trade with South Africa. And as for the administration's claim that withdrawal of U.S. investment would hurt Black South Africans more than anyone else, in the words of the late Steve Biko — banned, imprisoned, tortured, and finally murdered hero of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa — "... if Washington is really interested in contributing to the development of a just society in South Africa, it would discourage investment in South Africa. We Blacks are perfectly willing to suffer the consequences! We are quite accustomed to suffering."

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.

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.

Stop prostitution!

To the Editor,

Since the City Club's ridiculous recommendation that prostitution be legalized in Portland, there seem to be more prostitutes now than before. The problem has permeated to an epidemic stage. In fact, it is spreading faster than colon cancer.

It is disgusting for an organization with the influence of the City Club to suggest, or consider, this as an alternative to a problem which has plagued the inner Northeast community for many years. We in Albina

have complained to the Mayor and City Council for years about prostitution, drug dealers standing on our streets to no avail. If they had dealt with the problems, it would not have escalated out of control.

This problem would not be tolerated in any other part of this city or state, as it has been in the Northeast. If this was going on in Lake Oswego or Northwest, the problem would have ceased if they had to call out the National Guard. It would have been considered an emergency.

I can understand the City Club's position because it's membership is mostly men. It wasn't until the "get tough" law with the "johns" that they took a position. They never took a position on anything else that concerned our neighborhood and problem. Maybe they feel, if the net is spread out, some important fish may be caught.

VESIA LOVING DeWELSE

Children ours

To the Editor,

We're truly sorry all the subscribers of the Portland Observer could not have been at a public hearing last week to "observe" a handful of legislators squirm.

Senators McCoy, Hamby, seat belt Monroe and Trow put their names as sponsors on SB 137, which declared our children as the "state's most important resource" and under "stress" the state could assist in the rearing of our children.

After the Oregon Taxpayer's Union came out in their March 1st newsletter "blowing the whistle on SB 137," wheels were put into motion to try to get rid of the hot potato. Our children belong to us. They do not belong to the state and they are not "resources" like timber.

ELIZABETH FREAUF
Salem, Oregon

Portland Observer

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