

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Patients' rights, patients' wrong

The Dammasch Bed Reeducation project is a total failure. Not only did it lower the quality of life for the chronically mentally ill but also for the community in which they were discharged.

When the 1981 legislature passed the local Mental Health Service Act, state funding was restricted to the mentally ill who were at immediate risk for hospitalization. Common sense will tell you those at immediate risk should not be out in the community. The Core Service Agencies, such as North/Northeast Mental Health, misrepresented their ability to control, monitor and medicate this severely disabled population. And in the middle of this state, county and private non-profit fragmentation and lack of an infrastructure were Tommy Graves, Mrs. Alberta Tate, the Portland Police and the Northeast community.

Graves was the mentally ill adult whose psychotic episode resulted in his death and the death of an 86-year-old woman whom he regarded as a grandmother. The Graves/Tate deaths illustrate the miscommunication, mismanagement and misjudgment of Core Service Agencies and the police.

It was criminal that the police did not have the foresight to develop a policy dealing with the city's newly discharged mentally ill population, especially considering how often the police brought involuntary commitment proceedings against former clients from Dammasch State Hospital.

It is as equally insane that officials, managers and board members of Core Service Agencies never drafted policies for police to follow.

Nor did they communicate to the community that the clients they now serve are severely mentally ill.

The community, especially the inner city, was the last to know, as we saw, mentally ill adults engaged in a variety of irrational behavior. We experienced the end result of some residential care facilities which took money and food stamps from the mentally ill, thus leaving many to roam the streets, eating out of garbage cans. The failure of the bed reduction project is another example of the "pie in the sky" liberal attitude which turned "patients' rights" into "patient wrongs."

While Core Service Agencies had to terminate clients who could benefit from their services — such as children and those not as severely mentally ill — these private non-profits are forced to serve a population they have very little control over. Once patients are out of the State Hospital, they have the right to refuse their medication. And it's their medication that controls them. Failure to continue taking these drugs is one of the primary reasons for re-hospitalization.

As a private non-profit entity, North/Northeast Mental Health needs to file a Chapter 11 bankruptcy because the center is part of a system which cannot do the job. And if you can't control, medicate or care for this severely mentally ill population, then don't discharge them into the community.

As low-income, inner city residents we have enough to worry about without adding the failures of the Dammasch Bed Reduction project.

## South Africa's Homeland policy

Laws passed in South Africa in 1913, 1927, and 1936 restricted ownership of land to whites, but reserved areas designated as Tribal Homelands for each of the ten tribal/ethnic or linguistic groups that make up South Africa's Black population. The areas chosen for the homelands are for the most part barren lands unwanted and undeveloped by whites and are scattered in many small non-contiguous parcels across the South African landscape. Over 70 percent of South Africa's population is Black, yet all together the homelands constitute only 13 percent of the total land mass, with the remaining 87 percent owned or controlled by whites who represent only 25 percent of the population.

By the terms of the Homelands Policy, only those Black South Africans who are employed in white areas may live outside the homelands. All others, with rare exceptions, must live within their homeland boundaries. However, a substantial number of people, mostly women and children, violate the law and risk imprisonment and even death to live in illegal "squatter camps" in order to be near their working husbands and fathers who live in either Black townships or single-sex hostels located adjacent to cities and industrial centers.

The long-range goals of the Homelands Policy are to: 1) Maintain reservoirs of cheap Black labor to serve the convenience of the white economy; 2) Clear South Africa of "black spots," a term coined by the government to describe areas of land owned by Black South Africans prior to passage of the 1913 law that banned such ownership; 3) Eventually declare each homeland an "independent national state," stripping its citizens of their South African citizenship, forcing upon them involuntary citizenship in an artificially created country, and thereby freeing the South African government of responsibility for the physical, social, and political welfare of its Black population. (that this is the ultimate goal of the policy

was made unapologetically clear when, during a debate of the issue in 1978, C. P. Mulder, then Minister of Plural Relations and Development declared, "... if our policy is taken to its full and logical conclusion as far as Black people are concerned, there will not be one Black man with South African citizenship. I say this sincerely because it is the idea behind it. Why should I try to hide it? This is our policy...")

Since 1960 the government has forcibly — sometimes at gunpoint — uprooted over 3.5 million Black South Africans from their true ancestral homelands of many generations and dumped them onto desolate patches of homeland, often without shelter or even the materials to build shelter. Survival is a constant struggle for the desperate women, children, and sick, injured, or old men who must live there. Serious soil erosion and other environmental problems coupled with inadequate water delivery systems and lack of agricultural equipment make even subsistence farming an exercise in futility; and, since there is little or no local industry in the homelands, employment is extremely scarce. Those without income from relatives in the outside workforce or from old-age pensions are helplessly dependent on the piteously stingy social services provided by the South African government. Due to inadequate food and medical care, people are dying from hunger and untreated disease far more often than from old age; and in some rural areas the infant mortality rate is approaching 50 percent.

The majority of Black South Africans currently live outside the homelands, but only because the wheels of South African agriculture and industry still turn on human labor. With continuing advances in industrial and farming technologies, however, the economy is becoming increasingly labor-intensive, and it is only a matter of time before, as a tool of production, Black South Africans become obsolete, and virtually all Blacks will be forced to become permanent

citizens of the homelands.

While there is no specific timetable for "independence," to date four homelands have been declared independent by the South African government: the Transkei, the Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, and Venda. (Not a single nation besides South Africa recognizes these states as independent.) All four rely heavily on the South African government for economic support, and only Bophuthatswana currently has any potential for a viable independent economy thanks to rich mineral and metal deposits, and to the famous Sun City gambling resort where U.S. and European entertainers perform for huge fees in spite of the United Nations sanctioned cultural and athletic boycott against South Africa.

Gross corruption and political repression are the hallmarks of the South African-appointed administrations of the four "independent" homelands. None have the popular support of the people (the administration of Venda was installed despite the fact that 80 percent of the population voted against it in elections provided for under their new constitution!). The South African Security Forces are poised at the ready should "civil unrest" erupt in any of these "sovereign" states.

Even such a brief overview of the Tribal Homelands Policy as this points up what a diabolically efficient solution the forces of apartheid have devised for what they like to call their "excess population problem." Family life is all but destroyed; the Black population is both geographically and culturally fragmented to prevent revolutionary conspiracy; the threat of starvation in the homelands forces Blacks to labor for wages that are on the average one-sixth of that earned by their white counterparts; and, finally, when there is no longer any need for Black labor, Black South Africans will be sent to slowly die of hunger away in the homelands, out of the sight and conscience of their murderers.



## Black Political Power: Illusion and Reality

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable

Nearly twenty years ago, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Johnson. "I pledge we will not delay or we will not hesitate, or will not turn aside until Americans of every race and color and origin have the same rights as all others to share in the process of democracy," Johnson declared. Federal examiners were sent into the South to protect the voting rights of Black Americans, and within several years the number of Black elected officials began to increase.

What is the balance sheet to date in the pursuit of full democracy for Black Americans? Several weeks ago, researchers at the Joint Center for Political Studies released some important statistics. Between January 1984 and January 1985, the total number of Black officials increased from 5,700 to 6,056, up 6.2 percent. The number of Black mayors increased by 31, up to 286 nationwide. Two key areas show the greatest improvement. First, there are now 1,358 Black women holding public office, an increase of 99 in one year. Black women currently total 22.4 percent of all Afro-American officials. The second sector of growth is in the South. About 85 percent of all the newly elected Blacks in 1984 won offices in the South. Alabama recorded a net increase of 61 Black officials, followed by South Carolina, 47; Georgia, 39; and Louisiana, 37.

There are other indications of Black political power. There are twenty members of the Congressional Black

Caucus, five times the number when the Voting Rights Act went into effect. Blacks now chair five of the 22 standing committees in the House of Representatives. William Gray (D-Penn.) is the head of the House Budget Committee; August Hawkins (D-California) heads the House Education and Labor Committee; Ronald Dellums (D-California) chairs the District of Columbia Committee; Parren Mitchell (D-Maryland) chairs the Small Business Committee; and Louis Stokes (D-Ohio) heads the Standards of Official Conduct Committee. Black mayors currently control most major cities — Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Newark and Detroit. Ernest Morial, mayor of New Orleans, was named president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors this January.

These numbers seemingly incite Black empowerment within the system. But the reality of the situation is more complex than most observers admit. Of the 6,056 Black elected officials, 1,368 (22.6 percent) are only members of local school boards. Another 2,189 (36.1 percent) are members of municipal governments or councils. Blacks comprise only 1.2 percent of the 490,800 elective offices in the nation; they are grossly underrepresented in federal, state, and regional bodies. Only four state administrators, ninety state senators, and eight judges on state courts of last resort are Afro-Americans.

If democracy really functioned in

this country, Blacks should have roughly a proportional share of political power. Afro-Americans account for 12 percent of the population, which translates into 58,900 elective positions — not 6,056 offices which are currently held. Blacks comprise substantial voting blocs in Alabama (23 percent of the voting age population), Arkansas (14 percent), Florida (11 percent), Georgia (24 percent), Louisiana (27 percent), North Carolina (20 percent), and South Carolina (27 percent) — but not one Black person is currently in Congress from these states.

The great illusion of the American political system is that each voting bloc and social class has an "equal opportunity" to express its views at the polls, and to elevate its representatives into public office. After twenty long years, Blacks have begun to exercise our democratic rights, but the barriers to full proportional representation still exist at the federal, state and county levels. The immediate task ahead is to develop strong coalitions of progressive voters who share our goals — full employment, civil rights, affirmative action, universal health care and decent housing — and to build a political movement which will redefine the structures of democracy. This demands a conscious effort to increase the numbers of Black elected officials who have a genuine commitment to the aims and aspirations of the Black community.



## Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey, N.D. and Adam Ladd, N.D.

Two months ago I wrote a short article on the new "life card" developed for Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Maryland. In this article I acknowledged the value of immediately available records on medication, drug sensitivity, blood type, etc., but voiced my concern that this card might allow privileged information such as abortion, sexually transmitted disease and other non-essential information to be disclosed to general staff members who have access to the "line."

To my complete surprise I got a call from Blue Cross of Maryland recently, letting me know that the creator of the card, Mr. Douglas Becker, had read the "healthwatch" article and felt the criticisms were well taken and that he was looking into correcting them. *The Observer* has a much broader audience than I ever imagined.

Thank you, Blue Cross, for your concern in the above matters.

### On Nutra-sweet:

When Senator Moynihan recently revealed that Nutra-sweet was allowed to reach the American marketplace with sub-standard safety testing (not in compliance with F.D.A. standards on food safety), I thought that the food industries would take a giant step backwards and wait for government approval before aggressively substituting it for other sweeteners. Instead, Coca Cola came out with their new cola about two weeks later, and other food industries seem equally anxious to inundate the market with Nutra-sweet products. Well, the evidence is beginning to come in from

the safety studies initiated by the Moynihan committee. Some early studies have shown increased numbers of birth defects in animals fed Nutra-sweet.

How is it that the F.D.A. allows so many drugs and foods on the market without adequate testing? Part of the reason is the tremendous number of new products that must be reviewed. This volume alone provides a monumental task to test for human safety and individual sensitivities. A second factor is the close relationship between the F.D.A. and the food industries and pharmaceutical companies. This imbred nature of our regulatory body is not new, in fact the first head of the F.D.A. (Dr. Wiley) was removed from office amid his criticism that the F.D.A. was serving the interests of the food and drug industries rather than those of the American public (this was in the early teens of this century).

A final problem with the testing of food and drug products is the base of reasoning that believes all humans are identical and that animal studies can be extrapolated as identical to human response. The unique nature of the human individual has shown itself in numerous failures such as the sulfite sensitivity and other drugs that manifest individual reactions such as penicillin, codein, etc. Animal models have shown themselves as inaccurate (benedictine, acutane, D.E.S., etc.), time consuming and inhumane. The Gianelli Labs at the University of Pennsylvania are a prime example of wasteful, and un-

scientific, research that not only remains intact with federal funds, but threatens public safety through inaccurate conclusions.

How do we change the way the system runs, to prevent the D.E.S.s of the future? Write your Senator, Congressman, etc., to break up the self-serving base of our national F.D.A. and Research groups to allow lay persons, victims' rights groups and objective members to set policy for NIH, the F.D.A. and other governing bodies. It is very difficult to criticize research design if it means that you might put yourself out of a job, and that is exactly the dilemma we have placed many of these individuals in.

As a consumer one can stay away from "new products" on the market. The rule "there is no free lunch" should apply to your eating habits. Try less simple sugar rather than trying a sugar substitute. The body evolved with natural sugars as a form of energy, not with saccharin and aspartate as natural sweeteners. Eat whole grains and red labels; even breads labeled as "no preservatives" will often have moisture enhancers, enrichers, etc., that look quite similar to preservatives yet are excluded from the federal requirement of listing as a preservative. All of these chemicals have to exit from your body in some fashion, and while they may not show themselves as dangerous in their safety studies, the accumulative effect of all these chemicals (over 16 pounds per year per person) cannot be accurately investigated.

## 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.

### To the Editor,

My name is Jerry Lawrence and I'd like to present an article in your paper explaining my situation and that of about 100 others whom are Black.

I am 18 years old and I'm presently incarcerated in Multnomah County Detention Center for alleged Robbery III, which I did not commit, but to stop the pressure I was forced to plead guilty. I am also charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle, for which I received one year local time, including the robbery charge.

And now after being sent to the release center in Troutdale, I'm faced with another charge: Escape II. That charge was given me because I was a little late from a pass. However, Blacks are the only ones being charged and sent to prison for Escape II, a charge that no law is formed around. How can I escape when I am

allowed to go home for 12 hours? I simply failed to return at a given time. Surely that is no escape. White inmates here do the same thing all the time, and they rarely get charged with it and when they do, they get, at the most, six months.

I'm saying we Black men and women here are receiving no justice at all, and being Black from the community we need help. We need this and other situations focused on. They are openly using the sleeper hold on us, also.

For instance: there was a young man (Black) here who was attacked by officers, choked and beaten. When the smoke cleared the unconscious man was charged with assault! How absurd... 20 to 1.

Make no bones about it, any counsel will tell you the reason they treat us different is we're Black from a

rising crime area, so the chances are there has been other deviant behavior — we just never got caught before.

Now to top it all off, they (the system, the courts) are ready to sentence me to eight years in prison with a 2½ year minimum, saying that I have a drug problem simply because I told them I smoke weed.

What can people in the community do? They can focus some attention on the injustice inflicted on us. They can stop this system from using such sentencing practices as "I'm sending you to prison because you're a threat to the community." They can get some people to interview Blacks so that they can clearly see and hear the injustice, because tomorrow YOU could be here, the way the system is.

Thank you for listening.

JERRY LAWRENCE



**Portland Observer**  
The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, Inc., 1463 N.E. Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97211, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.



288-0033

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.

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

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York

