

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Survey indicates racism of Police

by Jerry Garner

The recent survey by the *Oregonian Newspaper* of 220 police officers reveals the degree of racism that is within the Portland Police Bureau. Citizens of Portland (especially Black citizens who are victims of racism) should be concerned about the attitude of many officers in the Department.

Some of the findings are not surprising. For example, 38 percent of the officers thought the firing of two officers who sold the "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em" T-shirts had a negative impact on police morale, 89.4 percent indicated that racial prejudice is not a common attitude among the Department staff, 25.4 percent stated that to increase morale Chief Harrington should be replaced, and 62 percent thought the Department should not offer training to increase the racial sensitivity of officers. Also, 43.1 percent agreed and 42.1 percent strongly agreed that the use of the Carotid Hold was justified in the Stevenson case.

However, some findings from the survey were quite surprising. For example, 74.7 percent of the officers thought the "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em" T-shirt incident was a harmless prank that was blown out of proportion by the media, 90 percent of the officers agreed that Stan Peters' statements about recent events were representative of the feelings of police, 5.5 percent thought it was un-

fair and 5.0 percent thought it was very unfair for the Grand Jury not to indict in the Stevenson case, and 63.6 percent felt it was very unfair for Chief Harrington to fire the two officers who made the T-shirts.

—Overall, the survey indicates that many male officers on the Police Bureau are racist. Over 85 percent of the officers agreed that the Carotid Hold was justified in the Stevenson case. In spite of the fact that testimony during the inquest proved that the force used was excessive and unwarranted. Also, 62 percent of the officers stated the Police Bureau should not offer training to increase the racial sensitivity of officers.

—The killing of Black citizens by the police is not important and should not receive media coverage. Almost 98 percent of the officers stated that Stevenson would not have received as much media attention if he had been white. According to 38 percent, the most negative impact on police moral was the firing of the two officers who made the T-shirts. While only 12.8 percent thought Stevenson's death made a negative impact on morale.

—Citizens do not have the right to question the action of police. Nearly 90 percent of the respondents stated they agreed with Stan Peters, Police Union President, on his statements about recent events. Besides the actions of those officers involved in racist or criminal activities, Peters has done more harm to the public image

of police officers. For 90 percent of the officers to agree with Peters' statements concerning recent events in the City is an indication of the serious internal problem of the Police Bureau's rank-and-file officers. Peters has repeatedly showed his dislike towards Black community leaders, Mayor Clark and Chief Harrington.

—There are few officers on the force who don't agree with the majority rank-and-file officers. For example, 10.5 percent of the officers thought the Grand Jury's decision to not indict in the Stevenson case was unfair or very unfair. Also, 24.4 percent thought the Department should offer training to increase the racial sensitivity of officers. Another 4.1 percent thought the firing of the two officers in the T-shirt incident was in order. While 10.6 percent were surprised that the Grand Jury didn't indict any of the officers involved in the death of Stevenson.

Although the last figures are small in comparison, citizens of Portland should be glad to know there are still a few officers on the Bureau who are professional and concerned about the recent tragic events that have occurred in the City. These officers realize there are serious problems between the police and the community (especially the Black community), and within the Police Bureau itself. However, judging from the police survey, these problems will not disappear soon.

## 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,

On Tuesday, August 13, voters have a chance to pass a three-year serial levy for Portland Community College. The college needs the additional three and a half million to continue operating classes at the same level and to repair buildings.

In addition to more than 80 vocational programs and classes that transfer to other colleges and universities, Portland Community College teaches basic classes for people who didn't finish high school or didn't really learn how to read.

The additional \$3.5 million each year will cost an average homeowner (with a \$60,000 home) \$3.55 a month.

Without the additional dollars the college will need to cut more than 400 classes. Many of these will be evening classes and support for students, such as job placement and child care.

Please go vote "yes" on the Portland Community College levy August 13.

DR. HOWARD CHERRY

To the Editor,

I would like to correct several misleading or incorrect statements made in your July 17 article, "Repression of Falashas in Israel."

Contrary to the article's introduction, the Israeli government began aiding the black Jews of Ethiopia (Falashas) in 1977 (*NY Times*, 1-4-85) — not, as you reported, "only recently." The aid, however, was hampered by the lack of diplomatic relations with Israel forced on African nations by the Arab oil boycott of 1973. It was only in the midst of massive starvation that Sudan agreed to allow Israel planes to land, to aid in the humanitarian evacuation of the remaining Falashas.

The article's initial claim — that Falashas are being discriminated against because they must undergo a symbolic conversion to Judaism — is also wrong. Falashas are full Jews, as recently reaffirmed by both Chief Rabbis of Israel (*NYT* 7-23). No such symbolic conversion is necessary.

The article's assertion that Falashas have been confined to "reabsorption centers" (actually absorption centers), and receive "no type of preparation for entering into Israeli life" is clearly incorrect to anyone who knows anything about Israel or the amount of mobilized support for the Falashas. Absorption centers are not for "confinement"; rather, it is at such centers where new immigrants (*olim*) — both

black and white — are given medical care and where other basic human needs are met. For most of the Falashas, it is the first such care they have ever received. It is where they will learn a trade from classes sponsored by ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), or any of the two dozens of job centers or government classes easing Falashas into Israeli life. Here again, the article's claim is wholly inaccurate.

At least part of the article's problem is that it didn't name a single source. Not one! The article instead bases its "reporting" on "more and more newspaper accounts" — which is not exactly a bedrock of documentation. In addition, the article is a translation from a *Mexican* (!) newspaper which didn't even do its own reporting! This is hearsay and extremely poor journalism.

Despite these difficulties, however, the article raises several issues which are problematic and deserve to be discussed.

The controversy over whether to settle Falashas on the West Bank is clearly of primary importance. Polls indicate that most Israelis oppose such Falasha settlements pending direct negotiations between Israel and Jordanians/Palestinians. Many Israelis in the government similarly support such a moratorium and efforts should be made to bolster that support.

The article also mentions a March 9th incident at the Wailing Wall where Falashas were repelled by "guards." In fact, the Falashas were pushed back by members of Neuterei Karta, an ultra-orthodox group of Jewish zealots. Fortunately, most Israelis reject the Neuterei Karta — as all communities should reject their own religious extremists.

All of this is not to say that integrating Falashas into Israeli life will be easy. However, these problems are considerably different and more complex than the simple image of "repression" promoted in your headline.

The reality exists that both racism and anti-Semitism must be dealt with wherever they occur; at the same time, righteousness and true acts of compassion and charity should also be recognized. Israel has aided those suffering from Ethiopian starvation and oppression in a way that can serve as a moral model for the rest of the world. Factually incorrect and misleading articles such as the one you printed only serve to obscure that vision.

MARC LOWENTHAL

## Healthwatch

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

Last week I began this article on natural childbirth and the Oregon Gentle Birthing Project workshop by Michel Odent, M.D. Today I will concentrate on the philosophy and practice of Dr. Odent.

Dr. Odent, presently on a world speaking tour and sabbatical, has delivered thousands of babies in as natural settings as possible. While he delivers the babies in a state hospital, he has done much to influence this environment to favor a relaxed experience.

There are many differences from the "normal" hospital birth that can be expected at Pithivier hospital. From the initial visit the mothers know that their birth will not include drug unless absolutely necessary (i.e. "C" section). The entire process will emphasize healthy and relaxed attitude both for the expectant mother and throughout the birth team. The colors of the walls are earth brown and cream, the lights in non-surgical rooms are less intense and may dim to complete darkness as per the mother's wants. A hot tub is available to help relaxation and ease discomfort during early labor.

The entire environment embraces Dr. Odent's understanding of a gentle and healthy birth space. Additional stress, stimulation and/or interference by the birth team will, according to Odent, interfere with the hormonal and progesterone secretion which help read the mother's uterus and birth canal for delivery. His practice is one that assumes a healthy birth will occur, until it becomes obvious that intervention is necessary.

Dr. Odent said in his recent Portland workshop: "What they teach in med school is not important," as it changes yearly. He writes in his book, *Birth Reborn*:

*The medical establishment repeatedly cites the "risk factor" — the legitimate concern for the safety of mother and child — to justify the wholesale "medicalization" of the birth process and to discredit all alternatives, whether home births, birthing centers outside the hospital, or in-hospital maternity units such as Pithiviers. But it is not at all clear that this approach — which involves the widespread use of sedatives, artificial hormones to stimulate labor, epidurals and other anesthesia, forceps, and the daily performance of caesareans has lowered the "risk factor," since much of this medical intervention actually introduces new risks. Moreover, this emphasis on high-risk cases poorly serves the interests of the vast majority of women, who have "nor-*

*mal" pregnancies and deliveries. Unfortunately, most doctors are far more interested in sickness than in health. They assume that good health is merely the absence of illness. As a result, doctors and medical students frequently address obstetrics only as it pertains to pathology. They spend most of their time preparing for all the awful things that could go wrong during pregnancy and childbirth. Students learn all about placenta previa and acute toxemia, but by the time they are doctors, they have learned little about the physiology of normal labor and are ignorant of the perfectly common factors which might modify the process without being cause for alarm or intervention. The end result is that birth itself, every birth, is seen as a potential problem.*

While Dr. Odent does perform "C" sections when needed, his hospital's rate of under 7 percent of total births is around one-third the U.S. average. Other areas of medical intervention are even more remarkably diminished: episiotomies are rare (vs. 90+ percent of U.S. deliveries) and forceps have not been used at Pithiviers since 1963. Forceps, which, he writes, "belong in museums" are basic to the practice of having a woman lie supine (on her back) rather than in more natural squatting or supported position.

The final unique aspect of Dr. Odent's practice is his pre-natal program. Unlike current concepts of pre-natal care, Dr. Odent minimally emphasizes lab work, and shows a nearly complete disinterest in nutrition. The primary pre-natal program is the weekly singing session in which expectant mothers and fathers sing and interact with other parents, young children, grandparents, etc., in a session designed to broaden the "nuclear family" and encourage the reality, as shared by his family family, that birth can be a natural, healthy experience.

Next week: A local midwife's viewpoint.

## Urban Violence

Along the Color Line by Dr. Manning Marable



On the night of June 12, 1985, two incidents occurred in New York which represent the terror and tragedy of police and civilian racist violence. At approximately 9:30 p.m., a plain-clothes police officer shot and killed a 17-year-old Black man in Manhattan's Upper West Side. The white officer, Lee Van Houten, claimed that the victim and another companion assaulted him in an attempted robbery. After an investigation, Van Houten was cleared.

But many disturbing questions were left unanswered. The victim, Edmund E. Perry, had graduated only two weeks before the incident from Phillips Exeter Academy. He was employed at a Wall Street brokerage house this summer; this autumn he was to begin college at Stanford University. Perry had no criminal record, had never used drugs, and was "a very sensitive and endearing person," according to his teachers. "Why would a young Black man on his way up attempt to rob anyone?" asked attorney C. Vernon Mason, shortly after Perry's death. "But if he did, why was deadly force used to stop a 17-year-old with no criminal record and no weapon?"

One hour later, four Black youth between the ages of 14 to 18 entered a small Brooklyn grocery store. None were armed, but one teenager was drinking a bottle of soda which he had brought from home. The storeowner, Ali Nagi, demanded to know which of the youths intended to pay for the drink. When none of the teenagers agreed to do so, Nagi pulled a

gun from behind the counter. Two teenagers directly in front of Nagi were shot and killed instantly. The storeowner then leaped from the counter to chase the other teenagers. One youth was killed, and the fourth wounded. Neighbors informed police that the young Black men were not "troublemakers." But now three are dead over a 65 cent soft drink.

What creates police and civilian violence? The Reaganites and law-and-order addicts claim that the police simply require a freer hand to check urban violence against individuals and property. Certainly the Black community, as a whole, is unsympathetic to rapists, vandals, burglars, and other criminals who prey on the poor and working people. But the distinction between fair law enforcement vs. excessive force is frequently blurred, and often totally forgotten.

In New York City last year, about 6,700 complaints against police excessive force were filed, 10 percent more than in 1983. Five officers were forced to resign several weeks ago for beating and assaulting suspect with an electric stun gun.

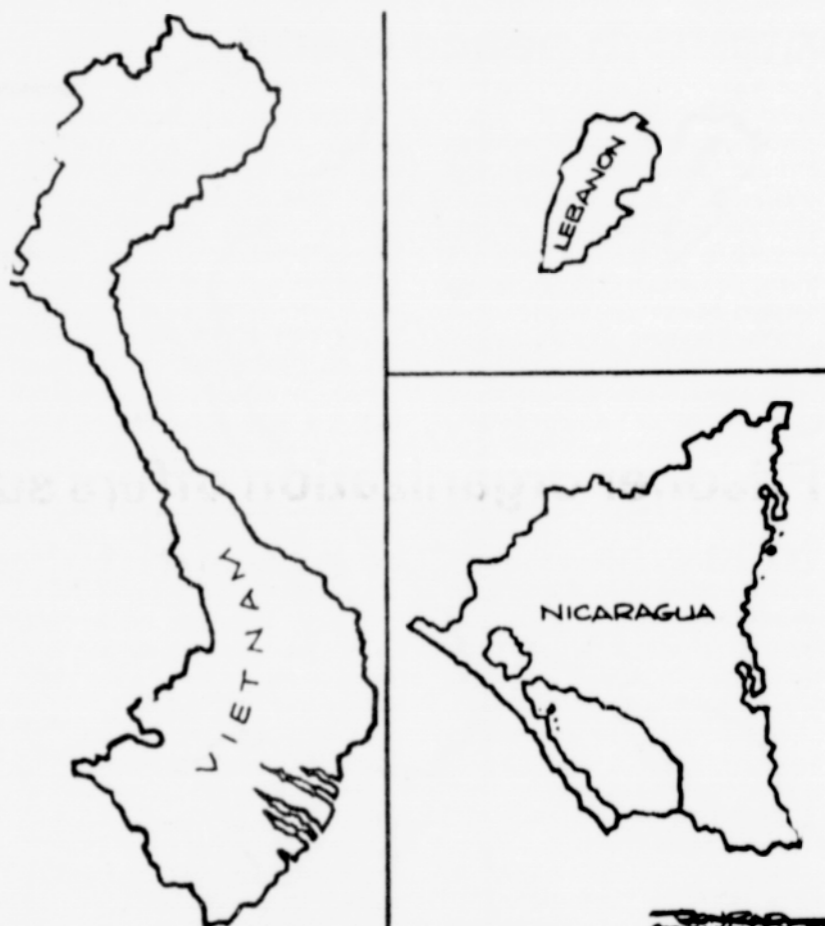
But these problems aren't confined to New York City. In San Francisco last year there were approximately 2,300 civilian complaints against the police. The city pays over \$1 million per year in claims against the police. In one outrageous recent incident, for example, two officers claims that a man on a bus made an obscene finger gesture at them. The police ran onto the bus, dragged the man into the street, and beat him. The two police-

men were finally forced to resign.

In Portland, Oregon, last April, a 31-year-old Black man, Lloyd D. Stevenson, Jr., as killed in a scuffle with two officers. One policeman had applied a "sleeper" hold to Stevenson, and blood to the brain was cut off. When Portland Police Chief Penny E. Harrington banned the "sleeper," two outraged officers prepared and distributed T-shirts with the logo, "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em." Given this kind of police reaction, it is not surprising that storeowners in urban areas may acquire a Bernard Goetz mentality — "smoke 'em," shoot first and ask questions later. A grand jury refused to indict the officers who killed Stevenson, but his family is currently suing the city for \$15 million.

Poverty, unemployment, poor schools, drugs and the breakdown of neighborhood and cultural institutions are the root causes of street crime. If we spent \$30 billion on jobs and schools instead of the M-X missile and other weapons systems, we'd cut urban violence significantly. But we must also support the creation of tough civilian controls over the police; the establishment of residency requirements for police; the introduction of more women and minorities into the ranks and leadership; and the use of citizen's commissions and special prosecutors' offices to check police violence.

Dr. Manning Marable teaches political sociology at Colgate University, Hamilton, N.Y.



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### Jimmy Smith Boycott called off

Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom (POSAF) called off its cultural boycott of jazz organist Jimmy Smith after receiving an eleventh hour communique stating Mr. Smith had been removed from the cultural boycott list, a representative for POSAF said.

The United Nations' Centre Against Apartheid informed POSAF that Mr. Smith's name had been removed from the register but the U.N.

had made a mistake and had not placed his name on the list of those pledged not to perform in South Africa, POSAF said.

Furthermore, POSAF said, "Smith is now involved with Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid in trying to convince others to apologize and not perform there again."

POSAF said the organization was sorry the mistake had occurred.

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