

Lawyer against racism . . .

by Jerry Garner

Kathleen Herron is a member of the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) and has served as Portland Chapter Board Member and Regional Vice President. She is presently employed at the Lewis and Clark Legal Clinic where she also teaches law.

Herron was recently honored by the NLG for her work in fighting racism. Ms. Herron also co-founded the Community Law Project, a feminist neighborhood law clinic, where she represented battered women and juveniles. Herron also developed the NLG anti-racism workshop and helped direct the Portland Black United Front Legal Clinics. Recently, she organized the successful defense of anti-Apartheid protesters in Portland.

Kathleen Herron was interviewed by Jerry Garner for the *Portland Observer*.

Garner: After you finished law school, why did you decide to not work as a defense attorney?

Herron: During law school, I worked in the public defender's office. I was shocked at the things I witnessed in the criminal justice system. The system was racist and sexist. It seemed as though the only people who were sentenced to prison were Blacks, natives, the poor, young whites and women. I said to myself, "These aren't the only ones who are committing crimes in society." Another reason why I chose not to work as a defense attorney is I didn't like to see anyone go to jail.

Garner: Is the criminal justice system racist?

Herron: The system discriminates against certain groups of people. There is racism throughout the criminal justice system. It starts in the legislature, where lawmakers decide what should be a crime and how will they enforce the law. The justice system spends millions of dollars prosecuting crimes that are committed by the poor, while little effort is made to catch white-collar criminals. While white collar criminals are sent to nice prisons in California, poor criminals are sent to places like Attica or Rocky Butte. I once visited Rocky Butte where they had solitary confinement cells. Inmates were placed in those cells for petty infractions such as complaining about the food. Those cells reminded me of concentration camps.

Garner: Why do you think society tolerates this bias in the criminal justice system?

Herron: The answer is complex. Racism and economics play a major role. Racism is taught in society and is something that is put into our heads from the beginning. Many whites are taught to be suspicious of Blacks. I was even taught to be suspicious of Blacks. While growing up in Montana, I never saw any successful Blacks. I didn't know about Martin Luther King because Blacks weren't covered by the media back then. People in Montana were not concerned about Black civil rights.

Economics plays a big part. The justice system is based on economics. Lawyers know that money can buy the



It seemed as though the only people who were sentenced to prison were Blacks, natives, the poor, young whites and women. "These aren't the only ones who are committing crimes in society." (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

defendant a better trial. Money can buy an attorney and investigators.

Garner: What do you mean by a better trial?

Herron: By this, I mean one can have better access to investigation. With money, you have access to professional help to explain to the judge and jury what is going on. If you do not have the wealth, you have limited time and resources. You are on your own.

Garner: What was the purpose of the Community Law Project you started in 1976?

Herron: Myself and three other women attorneys formed the Community Law Project. Our goal was to

fight against poverty, racism and sexism. However, we learned you cannot make money working for poor people. Still we worked hard, we represented protesters at the Trojan plant, Arab students who were arrested at PSU and tenant groups. We also did work for various women's groups and individual women. We charged between \$30 and \$35 an hour to our clients. At the same time, attorneys downtown were charging \$75 an hour. Today the rate is \$100 an hour for an attorney to work a felony case in court.

Garner: What was the goal of your anti-racism workshop you started in Portland?

Herron: The National Lawyers Guild formed the first workshop in Seattle. At that time, I organized the Portland Chapter. The purpose of the workshop is to teach whites about their racist attitude and to help unlearn these attitudes. I also teach the same class at PSU in the women studies program.

Garner: You provided legal advice for the Black United Front Legal Clinics. How did you become involved in this?

Herron: Lawyers from the Portland Lawyers Guild wanted to target racism since we thought it was evil. During this period, the police dumped dead opossums in front of the Burger Barn Restaurant and the Black community was having acts of racism occurring in their neighborhoods. So we met with Ron Herndon and Jean Vessup from the Black United Front. During the meeting, we said we would like to help and asked them what they needed. We were told by Herndon that the community needed legal services. This surprised us because we were ready to take on some big cases. Herndon said that if the Black United Front could provide legal service to the community, it would help. We agreed and started the legal clinics in St. Andrews Church on Saturdays. Myself and Jean Vessup were the directors. We had a committee to run the clinics.

We could not figure why the attendance was so low at the clinics. So now we are trying to get the community to take advantage of this legal service by working with Black lawyers.

Garner: What was the nature of the majority of cases the NLG handled for people who were referred to the organization by the Front?

Herron: Many cases involved welfare questions. Such as not receiving benefits or being cut-off from welfare. Other cases involved family law and lots of tenant problems. I call this the bread and butter stuff.

Garner: Do you think the number of Black lawyers will increase in the future?

Herron: No, I don't see an increase. The reason I say this is because Reagan is attacking affirmative action like crazy. The gains made during the sixties and seventies are now being stopped. Reagan has told 50 cities to stop their affirmative action programs or his Justice Department will take them to court.



Left to right: Carol Page, student and local activist; Damar Wakhungu, a Kenyan who teaches Black Studies at PSU; and Dorinda Welle, a Lewis and Clark philosophy graduate who worked and studied in Kenya at "The View from Nairobi," an international women's conference held last

Friday at the Friend's Meetinghouse. Sponsored by the Red Rose School Forum, the program provided an inside glimpse of the "Decade of Women" and "Forum '85" held in Nairobi this summer. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Tri-Met imposes additional gas tax

Tri-Met's Board of Directors adopted a revised version of ordinance No. 127, the petroleum importers business license tax designed to provide an estimated \$10 million annually to subsidize regional transit services.

The revenue measure, which is being enacted through Tri-Met's authority to impose a business license tax, levies a 1 percent tax on the gross receipts of importers of petroleum products. Businesses importing petroleum into the Tri-Met district come under the new tax.

After six months of review and two public hearings, the Tri-Met's staff recommended all grades of petroleum imported for distribution within Tri-Met's boundaries be included in the tax. The broad-based tax directly affects importers of oil, diesel, gasoline and other grades of petroleum.

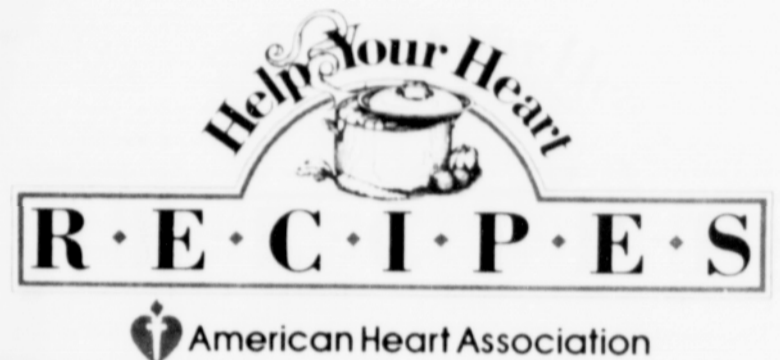
"Those distributors may or may not

decide to pass on the cost of the tax to their customers depending upon market conditions," says Tri-Met General Manager James E. Cowen. "We are aware, however, that the trend is for the price of these fuels to go down because of a petroleum surplus in the marketplace."

The proposed ordinance was revised to restrict the tax on petroleum sales within the Tri-Met district. It doesn't affect sales outside of the Portland area, Cowen said.

"We've carefully listened to public testimony on this issue. We've crafted a broad-based measure which we think will raise the required revenue while having a minimal impact on those businesses falling under the new tax," Cowen said.

The new tax goes into effect on January 1, 1986.



Cranberries have a bittersweet taste that is well-suited for holiday meals. This Cranberry Bread Recipe can be served at a traditional dinner table or with leftover turkey and fixins.

Cranberry Bread

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2 Cups Whole Wheat Flour | Zest of 1 Grated Orange |
| 1/2 Cup Wheat Germ | 1/2 Cup of Orange Juice |
| 1/2 Cup Brown Sugar | 1/2 Cup Oil |
| 2 Teaspoons Baking Powder | 1/4 Cup Warm Water |
| 1/2 Teaspoon Baking Soda | 2 Cups Cranberries, Chopped |

In a large bowl, mix the first 5 ingredients. Set aside. In a separate bowl beat together orange zest, orange juice, oil and water. Stir into dry ingredients. Add cranberries and mix well. Pour batter into a 9 x 5 x 3-inch loaf pan sprayed with vegetable cooking spray. Bake at 350 degrees F for 50-60 minutes. Remove bread from pan and place on wire rack to cool. Bread slices better the second day.

Yield: 16 Slices
Approx. Cal Serv: 115

Recipe Tip: To add nutrients to our other recipes, substitute 1 cup of whole wheat pastry flour for 1 cup all-purpose flour or 1 cup of whole wheat flour for 2/3 cup all-purpose flour.

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POUND

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