

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Black Community Should Support Community Forums

Last Thursday a community forum was held at a local library in Portland. The Forum was entitled: The State of Black America 1986. During the forum a panel of speakers gave a vivid description of the social status of Blacks. Throughout the presentation each speaker emphasized the role the Black community must play if Black America is to lift itself from the bottom of society's social ladder.

The speakers' sentiments regarding the lack of Black efforts to improve their conditions in America could be observed in the number of those who attended the Forum. Less than fifty individuals were in attendance. The lack of community participation in a meeting which focuses on the urgent social problems facing Black America is astounding.

The Forum presented data that showed how the majority of Blacks in America will be relegated to a

permanent underclass unless they address the social conditions which cause many Blacks to live in a cycle of poverty.

Such valuable information is needed by many Blacks who reside in Portland since their environment is detrimental to the future well-being of the Black community. Unemployment, teen pregnancy, crime, prostitution, police violence, poor health, drug and alcohol addiction, drug trafficking and poverty are high among Black Portlanders.

These problems will only be eradicated when every segment of the Black community unite to form a strategy against such social ills. In order for this to occur, Blacks must first attend forums, such as the one held last Thursday at the North Branch Library. Supporting community forums which address the problems afflicting Blacks is the first step in the right direction in solving these social ills.

## Black Americans are at a Crossroad, says Black Journalist

WASHINGTON — Black Americans are "standing at a crossroad, facing dangers more extreme than any of us have ever witnessed in the past," said Dorothy Gilliam, syndicated columnist with the Washington Post.

Gilliam said black Americans have reached a new turning point in their overall development and must begin asking themselves, "Which way will we head?"

In remarks at the opening ceremony observing Black History Month at the U.S. Department of Labor here, Gilliam noted that this is a time when black Americans must work to preserve their identity or "face a kind of unraveling whose proportion we can't really imagine."

She said blacks must "rediscover" what is special about themselves as a people and forge that identity and begin building stronger institutions.

However, before blacks can move

away from the crossroad with a renewed focus for future direction, Gilliam said they must rid themselves of the ignorance and shame of their history, the inhibiting effects brought on by low self-worth and self hatred, and "hangups" about class.

"We're at a different place today than we've ever been before in our history," Gilliam said. "But the family, which has traditionally been our rock, our strength, our hope and our salvation, is in trouble."

"When the immediate black family is in trouble, then the institutional black family is in trouble. And because all of us are linked, if some of us are in danger, all of us are in danger," Gilliam remarked.

She charged her audience to find ways to maintain the extended black family "as an instrument to provide for the mutual benefit of all. We must educate, provide economic and emotional

security, and direction for each other."

Reflecting on many of the conditions that exist today, Gilliam said, "We are standing at the best and worst of times. They are times of tension and polarization between groups. There's a great deal of discord among nations."

"There's a lot of conservatism in the land that's disturbing many people, and there seems to be almost a denial of many of the issues that we think are important. There's a complacency over civil rights and human rights and our nation is in transition from an industrial to an information age with all the upheaval and uncertainty that that change involves," she said.

In spite of those conditions, Gilliam offered a challenge as she concluded her remarks: "If we say today, the light of our future is in danger of being snuffed out, then I challenge you to make the right turn . . ."



## Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey N.D.

As the AIDS virus spreads at an epidemic rate through Central Africa, we have observed how it is truly not just a homosexual disease. While there still remains a 16:1 male to female incidence of AIDS within the U.S. there is currently a 1:1 ratio in Zaire and similar numbers throughout Africa.

A recent article in the New England Journal of Medicine Vol. 314 February 3, 1986 entitled "AIDS Virus Infection in Nairobi Prostitutes: Spread of the Epidemic to East Africa," documents the high incidence of positive antibody tests to AIDS among high risk women in Africa. This group of authors tested for positive HTLV III antibody reactions in 4 groups: low income prostitutes, higher income prostitutes, male clients of a communicable disease clinic and a base group of hospital staff. The testing results showed that 66% of the low income prostitutes, 31% of the high income prostitutes, 8% of the male risk population and 2% of the staff showed positive serology (blood work) to the AIDS virus.

While there was over 50% clinical presentation of generalized lymphadenopathy, there were no cases of opportunistic infections in any of the groups (Kaposi's Sarcoma, pneumocystis etc.) The authors believe the absence of full AIDS cases to be due to the long incubation of AIDS, as blood reserves from 1980 show no AIDS antibodies in Nairobi. Whether

AIDS develops into the same disease in Nairobi as in the U.S. will be seen in the next 1 to 3 years.

Important aspects of this study include the facts that there is a very low incidence of homosexuality in Nairobi, no reported I.V. drug use among the participants of this study, and no individual correlation between number of sexual encounters and frequency of positive serology. While individual statistics don't show a frequency relationship, the low income prostitutes averaged 6 times the yearly number of sexual contacts compared to the higher income (hotel, airport) prostitutes, with an associate rate of positive antibody test of 2 times that of the higher class prostitutes. No incidence of rectal intercourse was noted in any group, which counters many claims that the more traumatic rectal intercourse is an important component to the spread of the virus.

There were no statistical risks that stood out as significant to the development of AIDS, but the assay of the various groups showed nearly universal use of intra muscular injections (probably primarily anti-biotics) immunization and anti-biotic use. Again we find immune system insult as a nearly universal component with the development of positive AIDS antibody response.

While there were no reported contacts between the prostitutes and Americans, there is probably only a few

vectors distance between these African prostitutes and an Euro-American contact. Again, we find suggestive evidence that heterosexual spread of AIDS will grow in the U.S. and other western countries. The authors conclude that now is the time to educate and attempt to lessen the spread of AIDS with condoms, recognition of the danger of shared needles and other public health measures.

We need to recognize that certain homosexuals in America, with a high frequency of partners initiated the American spread of the disease, and that their already insulted immune systems allowed a rapid and often fatal development of the disease, but we are now moving in a new direction. The gay population of San Francisco is showing some signs of tapering off in new cases, and the American ratio of male to female AIDS patients will undoubtedly lower to include a higher percentage of female patients. We must begin to educate ourselves about the changes coming. Now the people who involve themselves with prostitutes, their wives, highly active heterosexual people and those who may have fairly conservative sexual practices, but contact an infected individual may become exposed to the virus. We must diminish the sexual freedom of years gone by, use condoms, avoid insults to the immune system as much as possible and focus on healthier life styles.

## Letters to the Editor

To The Editor:

Until recently, Afro-American people had been denied their history or even worse, had been subjected to history books and sociological and anthropological treatises filled with distortions and lies either by commission or by omission. Since her arrival on these alien shores, the black woman has been subjected to the worst kinds of exploitation and oppression. As a black, she has had to endure all the horrors of slavery and living in a racist society; as a worker, she has been the object of continual exploitation, occupying the lowest place on the wage scale and restricted to the most demeaning and uncreative jobs; as a woman she has seen her physical image defamed and been the object of the so-called Christian caucasoid master's uncontrollable lust and subjected to all the ideals of caucasoid womanhood as a model to which she should aspire; as a mother, she has seen her children torn from her breast and sold into slavery; she has seen them left at home without attention while she attended to the needs of the offspring of the ruling class. Today, the Afro-American woman sees her children afflicted by dope addiction, the lack of a decent education and subjected to attacks by a caucasoid so-called Christian racist society, legal lynchings, cannon fodder for America's imperialist wars of aggression, populating the prisons of this nation, etc. In addition, beside suffering the common fate of all oppressed and exploited people, the Afro-American woman continues to experience the age-old oppression of woman by man. In the home, she becomes the "slave of a slave." By giving men a false feeling of superiority in the home or in relationship with women, certain aspects of capitalist tension are alleviated. Men may be cruelly exploited and subjected to all sorts of dehumanization tactics on the part of the ruling class, but at least they can take out their frustration on someone else — their women.

One of the greatest women, Black or caucasoid, that ever lived was Harriet Tubman. Here was a woman, totally illiterate who not only refused to accommodate herself to the system of slavery, but after she reached "freedom" in the North, risked capture and re-enslavement time and time again as she returned to the South to bring out more and more slaves.

Sojourner Truth, another ex-slave, dedicated her life to traveling up and down the country preaching "the truth." She was one of the first to link the struggle for abolition with the struggle for women's rights. During

Reconstruction, Black women played an important role in the Freedmen's Bureau. Many Black women came South during this period, as their Sisters were to do 100 years later, to offer their services in the schools and other institutions which were being founded to assist the newly freed slaves. One of the most famous women of this period was Frances Ellen Watkins Harper. She began her career as an anti-slavery speaker prior to the Civil War and continued traveling throughout the South after the war. She had a keen insight into the problems of reconstruction. Sister Ida B. Wells Barnett became an international figure denouncing lynching and discrimination against our people. The decade of the 1960's again witnesses the Black Woman in the forefront of the struggle for human dignity in this country. Who can forget the courage of Rosa Parks when she refused to move to the back of the Bus, setting off the Montgomery Bus Boycott and long time activist, Ella Baker, who amongst other achievements, was responsible for the founding of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee). Fannie Lou Hamer and Unita Blackwell are but two of the Mississippi women who braved attack and death in their fight to gain the right to vote. SNCC was the first Civil Rights organization to link up the struggle against racism at home with the war in Vietnam and women played an important role in that organization. They formulated the slogans, "Hell No, We Won't Go" and "No Vietnam Ever Called Me Nigger."

When Malcolm X attempted to tie together the meaning of our public movement in America with the world-wide struggle for self-determination, and with the internal Black struggle for integrity and self-discipline, he was assassinated. Three years later, as Dr. Martin Luther King sought to bring the power of the black movement to bear against America's racist imperialism in Vietnam, and threatened to call for black draft resistance, he was gunned down. Then on the night of King's death, in 1968, the federal and state military forces put more troops and equipment out on the streets (and in the skies) of America than we had ever known since the Civil War, effectively blunting and cordoning off the terrified and painful anger of Black America. These deaths, and the display of raw military power that we saw before and after them, can never be forgotten.

Dr. Jamil Cherovec

To The Editor:

I am writing this in response to a letter printed in your paper on 12/18/85, entitled "No joy from Toy & Joy". I am extremely disappointed that as a responsible publisher, you did not go to the source for verification of the circumstances.

As you probably know, the Portland Fire Bureau Toy & Joy program has been serving the Portland community for a number of years, evolving from a small operation, into a very large complex program. It is important for the community to understand, when a program has become as large as Toy & Joy has in the past 4 years, as much as we would like to, it is impossible for the program to provide a personal touch to all recipients.

I am not writing this letter to slur anyone's character, but I must defend a program that does so much good for our community. Mrs. Johnson, the author of the letter which appeared in your paper has, for the past three years, returned toys for exchange. Toy & Joy has made a practice of exchanging toys that do not coincide with the sex and/or age of the recipient. Race is not taken into consideration with the exception of dolls. About three years ago, Toy & Joy purchased a number of black dolls because there were requests for them and we had not received many from donations. Miss Johnson was well aware of our policy, and had taken advantage of it a number of times in the past without any complaint. This year, the dolls she received were black. Her complaint was that the game and everything else she received were for white children. Toy & Joy would have been more than glad to exchange the dolls, but it would have been impossible to satisfy her other request, because none of the toys donated were selected by race but only by age and sex. This was explained to Mrs. Johnson and she was asked if she wanted the toys she had received, her reply was negative.

I would like to add that I am black and I handled Mrs. Johnson's complaint, I have also handled her complaints in the past. I am aware of the need for blacks to maintain a sense of racial pride, but to demonstrate prejudice and to teach our children racism is a step backward for all mankind. In my opinion, the best way to reinforce a sense of black accomplishment is to show more interest in their exposure to successful black people and less concern for the "color" of their toys.

Wayne Benson  
Toy & Joy



### Portland Observer

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