

EDITORIAL / OPINION

The Case of Robert Parker

The case of Robert Parker, former Committee Administrator for Jim Hill (D-Salem), is unsettling, abstract and confusing.

In one camp, there are allegations that Parker (1) used a credit card belonging to a lobbyist who represented the Oregon Gasoline Dealers; (2) that Parker negotiated favorable treatment of City of Salem-supported legislation in exchange for the City's favorable disposition of his overdue parking tickets; and (3) that Parker offered favorable treatment of legislation in exchange for money from other members of the lobby. The allegations were made by former Oregon State Senate Presidents Jason Boe and John Burns.

In the other camp in Senator Jim Hill, who strongly believes that the charges are unscrupulous and without substance, and Robert Parker, who maintains he is innocent of any wrongdoing.

Standing in the middle of the two camps is the Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

Recently, the Commission said it had reasons to believe that Mr. Parker is guilty of ethics violation and wants him to agree with its decision without admission of guilt.

Contacting the Portland Observer, Mr. Parker has asked the newspaper to conduct its own investigation of the allegations. Saying that he wants to clear his name, Mr. Parker feels that media accounts of the allegations against

him have been one-sided, insensitive, and severe.

Currently, the Portland Observer is considering Mr. Parker's request, but before it makes a decision, the Observer will conduct a preliminary investigation to determine whether Mr. Parker's request merits support. If the findings support Mr. Parker's allegations of innocence, the Observer will proceed with its investigation.

It's the Observer's position that a man or woman is innocent until proven guilty. Neither the Ethics Commission nor Mr. Parker's accusers have come forth with specific proof of his guilt. The Commission has stated that it "believes" Mr. Parker violated specific codes of ethics.

While the Observer is in no position to dispute the Commission's position, it is disturbed by the process the Commission used to reach its final conclusion. If an appointed or elected state official can be hauled before the Commission on hearsay and guilt is established without specific proof of allegations against him or her, the process of fair and equal justice before the law is compromised.

If Mr. Parker is guilty, his accusers should come forth with concrete evidence or put this issue to rest. If the evidence proves Mr. Parker's guilt, he should be treated accordingly. If the issue is put to rest without any concrete evidence of guilt, Mr. Parker's name should be cleared and his dignity restored. Justice demands such.

Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

Where are African American Children's Books

In previous columns we have encouraged the purchase of multi-cultural children's books. The response from many in our audience indicates this may be easier said than done. In most areas of this country, African American — or Hispanic, or Asian American or Native American — children's books are almost non-existent. But this was not always the case.

Back in the late 1960's, following the urban rebellions, the federal government made large sums of money available to schools and libraries, especially earmarked for the purchase of multi-cultural children's books. With this pot of gold gleaming in their eyes, publishers rushed to their presses. Now, many of the books that were issued were poorly written or authored by those who knew nothing about the culture they were dealing with. But a lot of good books were also part of that rush. Some of them, like Sharon Bell Mathis' "Sidewalk Story" or Virginia Hamilton's "Zeely" are still in print and now even in paperback. Most, however, were allowed to go out of print after the federal money dried up.

As one noted African American children's authors, Walter Dean Myers, revealed in an article in the

New York Times Book Review, "In 1974 there were more than 900 children's books in print on the Black experience . . . By 1984 this number was cut in half." He added, "Walking through [last year's] American Library Association meeting in New York City was, for me, a sobering and disheartening experience. were Black writers suddenly incapable of writing well? Of course not, but we were perceived as no longer being able to sell well."

Eloise Greenfield, another famous children's book author, agrees. "The whole country is much more conservative now. This has resulted in losses in many areas. The decrease in African American children's books is just part of that total picture."

Yet the demand — and the need — remain. The experience of Gryphon House, a major national distributor of early childhood materials attests to this. As Leah Curry-Rood, one of Gryphon's founders told us, "There has been some improvement, such as putting more books in paperback and using multi-ethnic illustrations. But this is not enough. We know there's a market because we've been selling for 15 years. Yet really good [racial and ethnic] books are still allowed to go

out of print or out of stock for long periods of time. And don't even talk about Hispanic books; you can't find them. We've had to import them in order to fill our orders."

Jewell Stoddard, one of the owners of Cheshire Cat, a major children's bookstore in Washington, D.C., echoes this sentiment: "There is a much greater market [for Black and other ethnic children's books] than we have books to supply. people even call us from New York City because they can't find the titles up there."

Yet, Ms. Greenfield and others also point to some of the newer African American books on the market as a positive sign: "The Golden Pasture" by Joyce Carol Thomas; "Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World" by Mildred Pitts Walter; "Daydreamers" by Eloise Greenfield and illustrator Tom Feelings.

It's up to all of us. Get your PTA, your church group, or your neighborhood organization to have a children's book fair. Ask your local

bookstore or library for a recommended listing of their racial and ethnic children's books. Let the publishers and the bookstores know you and your organizations appreciate the newer titles but want to see more — and then put your money where your mouth is. Most importantly, support racial and ethnic publishing houses and distributors. They have continued to offer positive, multi-ethnic literature to our children when others no longer seemed to care.

Children's literature is critical if we are to break the damaging stereotypes and affirm all children's identity and worth. As Mr. Myers forewarns, "If we continue to make Black [and, we might add, all racial and ethnic] children nonpersons by excluding them from books and by degrading the Black experience, and if we continue to neglect white children by not exposing them to any aspect of other racial and ethnic experiences in a meaningful way, we will have the next racial crisis."

Freedom & Social Justice

by Alexander R. Jones

Dormitories of Death

Rebecca P. was admitted to Ancora Psychiatric Hospital on November 1, 1986. Four days later she was dead, another victim of the sickening contempt for human life and dignity which pervades the psychiatric industry throughout the United States.

According to the Public Advocate's report on this tragic event, when Rebecca P. was admitted to the hospital, she "was placed in mechanical restraints, a procedure in which her arms and legs were tied to a bed so that she was tethered in a spread-eagle position. During the next 96 hours prior to her death, Mrs. P. spent 84 hours in restraints. On November 5, 1986, at 6 a.m., after Mrs. P. had been removed from restraints to take a shower, she collapsed and died."

The report goes on to explain that fatal blood clots are a "widely acknowledged risk of prolonged use of restraints", and yet in Mrs. P.'s case her restraints were not loosened at regular intervals to ensure she would not develop such blood clots. In fact, the woman died after 34 STRAIGHT HOURS IN RESTRAINTS!

Historically, Mrs. P.'s fate has been one of the real risks people confront once they are placed under the care of a psychiatrist. Take a look at the years 1960 through 1967. During that time period, the number of deaths in U.S. mental hospitals averaged 43,623 deaths per year; more deaths per year than the TOTAL U.S. casualties in Vietnam between January 1, 1961 and November 2, 1968.

Think about it. More people died in ONE YEAR in hospitals where they were supposed to be helped than in SEVEN YEARS of armed guerrilla warfare where people were being shot, burned, and blown-up on purpose! How would you feel about going to a psychiatric hospital where your chances of survival are less than that for a combat troop fighting a jungle war?

And then there is the disturbing question as to how many of these unfortunate sons, daughters, fathers and mothers, were actually "mentally ill". The psychiatric industry has spent millions on propaganda to REDE-FINE normal human behavior as mental illness; things like a child's fidgeting in school, or a woman's grief over the loss of her husband, or other things solved by communication with someone who cares, not with the drugs, electroshock, degradation, and early death psychiatry offers.

Whenever you can, wherever you can, question the tax dollars being spent on psychiatry. The taxes needed to pay the annual multi-billion bill from the psychiatric industry would be much better spent on education or other programs which have demonstrated effectiveness in increasing a person's ability to survive.

means that often an eastbound train has to wait to come off the single track, so delays are not unknown.

Another point to consider: that head-on collisions happen more often on single track than on double. This fact indicates it would likely be a good idea to extend the double track from Ruby Junction to the end of the line in Gresham.

Henry Korman
Longview, WA

Communist Threat Excluded

Your article, "Threats to Freedom (November 25) reported selected excerpts from a speech given by civil rights leader Rev. Ralph David Abernathy during a recent trip to Portland.

As sponsors of Dr. Abernathy's trip, we feel that vital portions of his speech were not covered. Specifically, Dr. Abernathy's speech outlined four areas that present threats to freedom — racism, religious bigotry, communism and immorality. The third point on com-

munist was not covered. Dr. Abernathy feels deeply that the oppression of communism in other nations is a threat to the freedoms of all people. The following quotes are excerpts from his speech:

"All religions share a love of God. However, communism is a threat to religion. The communists are moving like Trojans, like termites eating away at the souls of mankind."

"We must all stand together as one. What affects some of us directly (racism at home and communism abroad), affects all of us indirectly." "It is time to stand up against the forces of evil — and we can do it together. Together we stand, but divided we fall."

Dr. Abernathy has had the wisdom to recognize that the struggle for human rights and liberty does not end at the United States border. Communism is a threat that all people concerned for peace, freedom and civil rights must work to defeat.

Bishop H. B. Daniels
Greater Mt. Calvary Church of
God in Christ
Portland, Oregon

Commissioner Dick Bogle Speaks Out Against Racism

Every school in every city and town in Oregon should be looking at what happened in Roseburg. Administrators, teachers and students should join in discussing the root causes, and ways to make sure the "monster" doesn't rise in their own backyards.

The Oregon School Activities Association should not sidestep the issue. Roseburg High — and, more appropriately, the people responsible for disgracing their school and their town home. It could come in the form of athletic probation, and/or a fine. But it must come. Anything less will add insult to injury.

I am drafting a letter to the OSAA, telling them it is their "clear duty to make an example of Roseburg High." I am sending a second letter to every legislator, and every school board in the state, urging them to raise public consciousness through community forums. I call on everyone to join me in keeping this issue fresh in the public's mind, so that we can get a dialogue going, and turn the deplorable events in Roseburg to a positive end.

We have been handed a golden opportunity by the bigots who crawled out from under the rocks and heaped shame on the decent citizens of Roseburg.

It is an opportunity to stimulate a statewide discussion of racism and bigotry — to bring it out into the light of day, and have young people look at it for what it is.

This is no time for hand-wringing, or letting anger cloud our judgement. Let's give the system a chance to work.



Letters to the Editor

Thank You



I am concluding today my wonderful 36-day-long stay in the U.S. and, by this note, wish to thank you for the brief but fruitful opportunity you offered me in Portland so that we could share some observations that affect mankind.

Our "deal" stands, man, and I reassure you that I won't let you down on the pledge I made about opening a column in the Observer.

Have a nice time and please do

not fail to "remind" me of the great Martin Luther King Day by sending me an article I can push into my paper.

Kind wishes to "Observer" staff, particularly Nyewusi and Richard. Please, when you write next, don't forget to enclose copies of your pictures — the three of you. I did not arm myself with my camera that time.

Till then, goodbye,
Amos Marenya

Light Rail Problem

The light rail line to Gresham has been more successful than expected, especially in attracting additional riders to Tri-Met. It has been so successful that little attention, if any, has been directed its shortcomings.

One weakness is that the double track extends from downtown Portland only to Ruby Junction. This

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