

# EDITORIAL / OPINION

EDITORIAL

## Let's Stop Senseless Crime

At the beginning of 1987, most Portland citizens expressed hope and faith in the city's ability to curb the rising crime rate. A few months later, it was announced that Portland was losing the battle, especially in the areas of drug use and abuse and homicides. Months later, citizens were informed that Portland's homicide rate had exceeded previous records, and that an estimated 1,000 drug houses were in operation throughout the Portland Metropolitan area.

Jarred by these realities, many citizens, churches, social organizations and law-enforcement agencies are desperately trying to get a grip on the magnitude of the problem. But, their efforts are being hampered by a realization that was identified at the Joe Holcomb Memorial by David Hupp. Mr. Hupp proclaimed that "Our city is under seige from a variety of sociopaths and psychopaths, some of them our own sons and daughters."

Mr. Hupp has hit the nail on the head, especially in the Black community. In the Black community, a large population of our sons and daughters are committing the very crimes we want to erase from our neighborhoods. It is a reality we must face and address immediately.

It is no longer sufficient for Black parents, community leaders, Black churches, and Black organizations to sit back and wait for someone else to address the problem. The NAACP, the Urban League of Portland, the Black United Front, Black churches, and other able organizations in the community must now commit themselves to immediate public action. Capable Black organizations must now step into the spotlight with program designs, research information, recommendations, proposals and a willingness to get their hands dirty. And, they must remain in the trenches until some evidence of progress is forthcoming.

In more ways than one, the Portland Observer commends the work Black organizations have done to keep the community enriched, enlightened, inspired, educated and on top of its problems.

But, times are changing fast. Our children are settling many of their disputes through the use of violence. Many have developed a contempt for our Black elderly. Many of our young Black males are committing rape and sodomy as a means of empowerment. Many of our Black females are falling victim to prostitution, drugs and death. The problem has reached crisis proportions.

The Black community must take charge of its destiny now.

In the tradition of our African ancestors, we must teach our children honor. We must teach them how to regard the lives of others with honor. We must teach them the value of respect — for themselves, for their neighbors and for their community.

But, before that can take place, we must strive to regain their trust, their confidence, their honor and their respect. If there is dishonor in our own house, then we can expect our children to carry that dishonor into the streets and into the lives of persons who don't deserve such madness. No one deserves the madness of crime.

It is fast approaching the point where non-involved Black organizations should be mandated to do all they can to help solve this serious problem. Involved Black organizations should be called upon to do more. No Black organization should be allowed to remain untouched. Black leadership, especially Black elected officials, should gather at the conference table and hammer out specific recommendations and proposals that reflect the social and cultural diversity of the community. These recommendations and proposals should call for immediate action by local governments and by state legislatures.

The Portland Observer is not advocating a separation of the issues. The Portland Observer is advocating a focus on specific issues that are of immediate importance to Black communities across the State of Oregon.

Anything less is to invite suicide.

## Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

### The Living Legacy of Harold Washington

You may recall that back in February of this year we took over 100 "Freedom Riders" to Chicago from 12 southern states to help get out the vote in the mayoral primary election. Harold Washington won a major victory in that election. Then in April we witnessed another impressive victory when Washington was re-elected to his second term as Mayor of the City of Chicago.

We knew then, as we know now, that the political and racial progress that Chicago made under the dynamic and outstanding leadership of Harold Washington continues to have national and international implications.

Washington's untimely death on November 25, 1987, sent shock waves of grief across Chicago and the nation. Over a million citizens filed by the Mayor's casket at City Hall as an expression of their love and respect. They also came to show their devotion to continue the ideals and principles of the movement and coalition that Washington had successfully led. Tens of thousands of people lined the streets to salute him as the funeral procession passed by. Many in the crowd shouted out: "We won't forget you, Harold," "Thank You, Harold, for showing us the way," and "Don't worry, Harold, we aren't going to let anybody turn us around now!"

As I sat inside Christ Universal Temple during Mayor Washington's funeral service, it became clear that Washington's legacy lives on in the hearts and lives of millions of people in Chicago and throughout the world. What is Washington's legacy? It is the legacy of progressive struggle for the political and economic empowerment of all people. It is the legacy of fighting for freedom.

Mr. Ramon Price, Mayor Washington's brother and the curator of the DeSable Museum of African-American History in Chicago, stressed in his tribute: "[Harold Washington] shall live on as men, women and children step forward to claim the promise which God intends for all of us: for all of us to be free and seek justice; to share in the task of liberating others." Rev. B. Herbert Martin, pastor of Progressive Community Church, who delivered the eulogy, affirmed, "Harold Washington is the compendium of all our historical struggle as Black people in America. He is the epi-

some of all of our present achievements and a symbol of all of our future aspirations and yearnings and promise."

In his prayer, the Rev. Dr. W. Sterling Cary, Chairperson of the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, emphasized that, "We must continue Harold's redemptive work." That redemptive work was the building of a multi-racial coalition that sought to empower all the people of the city and to transform the municipal government into a structure accountable "to the people, for the people, and by the people." On the issues of neighborhood renewal, full employment, the national priority of the urban agenda, education, homelessness, fiscal stability, youth development, and governmental ethics, Mayor Washington's leadership was unparalleled.

Another important component of the living legacy of Mayor Washington is the question of unity. Unfortunately, in the wake of Washington's death, the evil forces of racism and disunity are gathering in Chicago to challenge everything that Harold lived and worked for. Chicago activist Lu Palmer warned, "Even as we grieve, the wolves are at the door." The Rev. Jesse Jackson astutely cautioned, "We who live must keep the team together. Harold's latest slate is the monument to his vision of the city and urban America." Jackson was referring to the coalition of 26 city aldermen who were a part of Washington's team of reform. It was clear that the unity or disunity of these aldermen would determine the future of the city.

A painful lesson has once again emerged out of the depth of the freedom movement. Washington's great contribution to the movement will never be forgotten. However, African American leaders, in particular, must give more serious attention to the issue of who will succeed them after they are gone. Too many of our leaders have died without adequately preparing for leadership succession. The enemies of freedom have often capitalized on this predicament.

Yet, the living legacy of Harold Washington demands struggle. We join with Jesse Jackson and with the people of Chicago in their farewell expression to Washington: "We will not let you down, we will not let you down." The struggle will continue.

### James Baldwin:

Teacher, Friend, Freedom Fighter

At the funeral services in New York City for noted author James Baldwin — a service which was truly a celebration of his life — novelist Toni Morrison spoke to Baldwin as if he were still alive. She commented on "the astonishing gift of your art and your friendship . . . a tenderness so delicate I thought it could not last, but last it did and envelop me it did . . . The season was always Christmas with you there."

Playwright and poet Amiri Baraka, in his eulogy, recalled Baldwin as "my friend, my older brother," and added, "He was close, as man, as human relative; we could make it some cold seasons merely warmed by his handshake, smile or eyes." Author Maya Angelou also spoke of the warmth of his support, saying, "He is my brother."

Though the recollections of this great friend and teacher were intensely personal, they were also intensely political. Baraka called Baldwin "this glorious, elegant griot of our oppressed African American nation . . ." who, he said, "made us feel, for one thing, that we could defend ourselves or define ourselves, that we were in the world, not merely as animate slaves, but as terrifyingly sensitive measures of what is good or evil, beautiful or ugly . . ."

Baraka also noted, "Jimmy was a 'civil rights leader,' too . . . at the hot peak of the movement Jimmy was one of its truest voices." And so he was. From the earliest days of the Civil Rights Movement, James Baldwin was there to give active and visible support to the struggle, even though it made him unpopular in some circles.

I personally remember, while in prison in North Carolina as a member of the Wilmington 10, that Baldwin's powerful, life-affirming writing helped us continue the struggle, even from behind prison bars. Then

in January of 1977, Baldwin wrote a lengthy public letter to President Carter, decrying the continued persecution of political prisoners. The letter, written from Paris, appeared in the New York Times and was instrumental in galvanizing the international public pressure which would eventually help lead to the Wilmington 10 case being overturned in Federal Court.

After being freed from prison, Baldwin and I had long conversations — conversations in which we sifted through the politics and events of the day and strategized about the on-going liberation of African American people. He always understood and validated the strength of our people, constantly prodding us to take the risks necessary to struggle for freedom. Or, as Baraka noted, "He always made us know we were dangerously intelligent and as courageous as the will to be free."

At the same time Baldwin also understood and championed the plight of all oppressed peoples. As he noted in his letter to President Carter, the situation of U.S. political prisoners was "but a very small indication of the situation of the wretched in this country: the non-white, the Indian, the Puerto Rican, the Mexican, the Oriental."

We have seen three great African Americans leave us in recent days: John Oliver Killens, Harold Washington and, now, James Baldwin. Yet, their legacy lives on.

Maya Angelou asked, "Where are the Black writers who will confront this racist nation?" This is the legacy for us all — writer and non-writer alike. As Baldwin, himself, said: "For while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard."

## Freedom & Social Justice

by Alexander R. Jones

### Peace on Earth Starts With You

How many times have you been told "Never trust anybody" as if the extending of confidence to another human being was guaranteed suicide? But what would have Mahatma Gandhi achieved without trust? What if the late Martin Luther King, Jr. held no confidence in his fellow man?

Each had to depend on their lieutenants and followers in life-threatening situations. Further they had to have tremendous trust in the inner humanity and compassion of even their oppressors. Without this bond with others, they would have achieved little.

Trust becomes even more important during the Christmas season as it is a time when we traditionally contemplate and pray for world peace. But as nations drive themselves into bankruptcy stockpiling arms and military hardware to protect themselves from each other, it becomes clear that trust is a quality sorely missing from international affairs. But without trust, it is clear we will never have peace.

So what can you do about this?

Unless one can have confidence in the reliability of those about one, he himself, is at risk. When those he counts upon let him down, his own life can become disordered and even his own survival can be put at risk.

Mutual trust is the firmest building block in human relationships. Without it, the whole structure comes down. Trustworthiness is a highly esteemed commodity. When one has it, one is considered valuable. When one has lost it, one may be considered worthless.

One should get others around one to demonstrate it and earn it. They will become much more valuable to themselves and others thereby.

So peace on earth starts with you. It begins by first ensuring you yourself are worthy of trust, and then by demanding that others be trustworthy as well.

If you think that you can have no effect on the world, believe me, that is not true. If you help one small child become trustworthy you have done something for the world.

**EDITORIAL CORRECTION:** In last week's editorial concerning "The Case of Robert Parker," it was stated that former Senate Presidents Jason Boe and John Burns had alleged that Robert Parker (1) used a credit car 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 last sentence of paragraph two of the editorial should have read: "The foregoing allegations were made by Senator Jim Hill (D-Salem) in his complaint to the Ethics Commission."

We are making a public correction because the misprint gives the impression that Boe and Burns made the allegations.

We are also making the public correction because the Observer believes in the doctrine of fairness and equal treatment before the media and the law.

### Opinions on Crime Problems Varied

by Nyewusi Askari

According to a recent Portland Police Bureau statistical report, the Inner Northeast community ranks as the most crime infested area of the city. The report, for 1987 through October of this year, states that a total of 10,168 crimes were committed in the Inner Northeast community.

#### The Bureau's breakdown of Inner Northeast crimes:

- Murder, 12
- Molestation, 54
- Aggravated assault, 1,062
- Non-residential burglary, 647
- Theft, excluding auto, 1,638
- Other larceny, 1,885
- Rape and sodomy, 117
- Robbery, 874
- Residential burglary, 1,927
- Arson, 109
- Bike theft, 205
- Auto theft, 607
- Vandalism, 1031

The statistics indicate that the types of crimes committed, on an overall scale, varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. For example, the Outer S.E. community outranked Inner Northeast Portland in vandalism (1,105), auto theft (827), bike theft (310) and residential burglary (666).

Of the total reported crimes, Inner Northeast ranked at the top with 10,168; North, 6,516; Outer Northeast, 5,638; Inner S.E., 7,892; Outer S.E., 9,860; S.W., 3,634; N.W., 2,986; and downtown Portland, 6,860.

According to recent FBI Uniform Crime Reports, Portland experienced a 78 percent rise in serious crime from 1977 to 1986. Portland's Police Chief Dick Walker estimates that 80 to 90 percent of the reported crimes are linked to drugs. There are an estimated 1,000 drug houses in operation in the Portland Metropolitan area. Chief Walker also pointed to the continuing lack of jail space as another major contributor. However, according to a recent poll conducted by the Oregonian newspaper, thirty-eight percent of the participants said that drugs were the main cause for the rise in crime, while 22 percent said the lack of jail space was to blame.

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