

EDITORIAL / OPINION

EDITORIAL

Expand Black History Month

The months of January and February will see Black Oregonians participating in the celebration of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Black History Month.

Established by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Black History Month was intended to make all Americans aware of the richness of Black culture, Black heritage, Black history and to commemorate Black heroes and heroines.

Like so many before him, Dr. Woodson understood that Black Americans' contribution to America and the world was neither a new or a frivolous enterprise, and he emphasized that American history itself is incomplete without consideration of Black contributors.

Judging from past Black History celebrations in the City of Portland, it appears that many citizens, Black and white, have yet to grasp the full meaning of Black History Month, thus, making Portland's celebration pale in comparison to other celebrations across the country.

Back in the '20s, when Black History Month was established, not many Americans believed African-Americans had a history and a culture. For many decades the celebration was degraded by social scientists, educators, teachers and the like. But as American society progressed, and as Black Americans began to recognize and embrace their culture and contributions, Black History Month picked up steam and has been slowly winning recognition from Americans across this country.

When Black History Month arrives in Portland, there is a mad dash to employ Black performing artists, speakers, dancers, and other Black contributors. They are bombarded with requests for performances throughout the State of Oregon. However, as soon as Black History Month has ended, they are ignored or put on hold until the next celebration. Unfortunately, Portland's Black community seems to follow suit.

We must quickly change this attitude.

Black History Month is a celebration intended to be celebrated and shared throughout the entire year. When Dr. King and other Black contributors carved their mark on the face of America, it was not done in one hour, one week, one month, or one year. It was a commitment that lasted a lifetime. And when we give honor to their work, we must not fall into the morbid habit of shortening the honor to a 30-minute presentation, an hour presentation, or a three-day celebration. It must last throughout the year.

The City of Portland, the Black community and the State of Oregon must take the lead in making sure citizens throughout the State are provided an opportunity to commemorate, participate in and celebrate Black history and culture. Such an effort should be coordinated through Oregon's Black contributors and performing artists.

The **Portland Observer** also calls on Portland Public Schools to do more to bring Black history and Black culture into the schools; not just for Black History Month, but throughout the year.

It is through efforts of this sort that Black History Month will be appreciated, understood and commemorated on a year-round basis. Such an effort will ensure a greater cultural, political and social understanding across racial and cultural lines.

Then, and only then, will we come to understand what Dr. Woodson understood: "to celebrate Black history and Black culture is to increase our own humanity a thousand-fold."

Let it be.

Freedom & Social Justice

by Alexander R. Jones

Parents Demand Millions For Wrongful Drugging of Children

Parents of children in California, Minnesota, and Maryland recently filed three separate malpractice suits totaling over \$13 million against psychiatrists who prescribed the controversial drug, Ritalin, for their children. The suits charge that the three children suffered serious complications due to the drug, ranging from nausea and blurred vision to muscle spasms and irreversible nerve damage.

The most chilling claim, however, came from Cheverly, Maryland's Sue Gardner, who asserted her seven-year-old son attempted suicide while on Ritalin by laying in the middle of the street in the hopes a car would run over him! Based on government figures on Ritalin production and informal surveys done in major cities, her son is just one of thousands of Black children who have been placed on this drug in recent years.

Long promoted by the psychiatric industry as a harmless and mild drug designed to treat "hyperactivity" in children, the real-life dangers of Ritalin are rapidly being exposed. The three suits files are an indication of the growing realization by parents that they have been misled by psychiatrists regarding the harmful effects of the drug.

Central to the issue is the trust parents have traditionally placed in physicians regarding the care of

their children. When you take your child to the doctor, you expect him to recommend what is best for your child. Yet, the trend has been for psychiatrists to casually prescribe Ritalin without even informing parents of the drug's long list of serious side effects.

Adelia Lorenzo, the California plaintiff, charged in her suit that she "specifically requested a listing of potential side effects caused by the drug, in order that she could give knowledgeable consent", but was told by the attending psychiatrist "that there are no side effects whatsoever..." However, the manufacturer of the drug lists several dangerous side effects ranging from permanent and irreversible nervous disorders to suicidal depression.

Dennis Clarke, national spokesman for the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a group which has launched a campaign to expose the dangers of the drug, explained, "Ritalin is categorized in the highest category a drug can be in by the Drug Enforcement Administration and still be legally prescribed. It is one of the most highly addictive substances known to man, and is in the same drug classification as cocaine, methadone, morphine, codeine, preludein and others."

Alexander R. Jones is the Director of Minority and Third World Affairs for the Church of Scientology (R) International.

Civil Rights Journal

Benjamin F. Chavis Jr.

The Year 1988

The new year of 1988 will provide peoples throughout the world with the continuing opportunity to improve the quality of human life. Yet, the handwriting is already on the wall in the United States. 1988 will be the year when a new U.S. president will be elected. The next president will be determined largely by how seriously all voters take this election. If those who believe in justice and freedom do not act upon their belief, through the voting booth, then 1988 will become the year of another right-wing step-backwards for the nation.

This year we do have an alternative. The Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition offer the country another opportunity and another direction. It is the opportunity to be more inclusive at the height of political decision-making and it is the chance to move away from a military build-up to solving some of the pressing domestic problems.

For example, the situation of the homeless continues to deteriorate. Tens of thousands of citizens are literally lying in the streets in cities across this nation. A large number of the homeless population are now children. The scourge of acts of racially motivated violence against African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans and others continues to escalate.

The drug crisis has reached pandemic proportions. Health care, due to rising costs, is now out of the reach of millions of person who need medical attention. The unemployment rate continues to increase, particularly within the African American community.

In spite of all these ills, we have always maintained that the future is determined by how well we learn from the past and how well we use the present to prepare and adequately plan for the future. The meaning of the New Year should go beyond the affirmation of various resolutions or announcements. Thus, let us commit ourselves to study hard our history and to take the time to give ample reflection to those things that are dear to us.

One pressing need that should be

fulfilled is the economic development of the African American community. This is not a new need or a new idea. We spend over \$200 billion a year, we do not receive respect commensurate with our tremendous buying power.

Several years ago the National Black Leadership Roundtable released "The National Black Leadership Family Plan." A key section of this plan was devoted to joint economic development. Again, the issue of unity is the necessary context in which effective economic development can be nurtured. Quite simply, African Americans have had a bad spending policy. We spend more than we save and we have had a history of spending with the very forces that are sometimes inextricably linked with our oppression. We all should recommit ourselves to spending and saving our financial resources, not just for the personal acquisition of material wealth. But more importantly, we should commit ourselves to a spending and economic development strategy that allows the broadest possible participation by our community at large.

Another pressing need is to challenge current attempts to psychologically re-enslave African Americans. We spend too much of our time and money trying to change our God-given gifts of beauty and wholeness. The negative stereotypes and racist images that the established news media often portray need to be confronted forthrightly. In 1988, in other words, we need to be more proactive than reactive. In fact, what we need is a long-range goal that the majority of our people can agree upon. This goal should not change from year to year, but should be worked toward by each generation.

Lastly, there is no single greater issue than the struggle against racist apartheid in southern Africa. It is my hope and prayer that African Americans, in particular, and all others who love freedom will more concretely assist the African National Congress and SWAPO. The liberation movements aimed at South Africa and Namibia deserve our immediate and long-term support. In 1988 freedom will not be free.

Portland Observer Welcomes New Editor

Richard J. Brown, long-time staff photographer for **The Portland Observer**, has been elevated to the position of Editor.

For more than ten years, Mr. Brown has served as staff photographer, advisor to the Editor, and has fulfilled a variety of roles that have contributed to the progressive evolution of the paper.

Mr. Brown's appointment is a tribute to his dedication and an acknowledgement of his respectability by citizens throughout the State of

Oregon. The appointment is also an acknowledgement of **The Portland Observer's** belief in Mr. Brown's ability to effectively guide Oregon's oldest African-American newspaper into the 21st Century.

The staff at **The Portland Observer** commends the paper's management for having the wisdom to make the appointment.

And to Richard J. Brown, we say, "Congratulations!" It couldn't have happened to a nicer human being.

Trust Fund Established

A trust fund has been set up at the main branch of Far West Federal Bank, 444 S.W. 5th, Portland, OR 97204 (Attn: Adrienne Ings), for Andria Jones & family whose house was destroyed in a Monday morning fire resulting in the death of her 2½-year-old son, Maurice Wyingale McClendon, and serious injuries to Andria's 18-month-old Jelani McClendon and 7-month-old DeNorris McClendon. Andria Jones turned 27 Tuesday.

In her attempt to get all of her children out of the burning house, Andria was severely burned and suffered a severe cut to her right arm which has required surgery and will require long-

term rehabilitation. Andria and Jelani, who suffered severe burns to 25% of his body, are listed in serious condition at Emanuel Hospital's Burn Center. DeNorris suffered from smoke inhalation and is also listed in serious condition at Emanuel Hospital.

Andria's uncle, James Turner, and neighbor, Catherine O'Hara, both made heroic efforts to save Andria and the children.

The entire contents of the house were destroyed in the fire, the cause of which is still under investigation.

Letters to the Editor

Editor:

After reading "The Other Story", I thought it would be good to clear up some misunderstandings. Cathy, the girl involved in the Joe Holcomb killing, was not our employee. She had worked for a number of months for a landscaping firm that contracted with us to maintain our properties. I had seen her work a few times in the flower beds during the fall. I had never met her.

The detectives who were working on the case instructed her to move out of the neighborhood because they thought there was some possibility that she would be at risk. They have been following her whereabouts. They brought her to Joe's funeral.

I know next to nothing about Cathy. She very well may have had a troubled past. However, Joe did not just look out the window

and make a decision about what was happening. Cathy had come into our warehouse a few minutes earlier, complaining about being harassed by two men. The strangers had left, so Joe assured her that they would watch out for her if she wanted to go back to work. Joe went out to help her when they came back the second time. Obviously, Joe had a pretty good idea what was going on.

I did know Joe very well. He was a friendly, even-tempered guy with a body like a teddy bear. He could be protective, but I never saw him get mad. In the six years I knew him he never once physically threatened or touched a soul.

I was there, Joe did not physically threaten or touch either man. He chased them into the laundromat, one of them turned around, pulled the gun, and shot Joe, point blank,

in the heart. It all happened instantly, Joe never had a chance to say or do a thing.

I would hope that all the facts will come out in the trial. I wish that I had been asked for this information before the article was written.

I don't believe this incident was racial. I think it is a sad statement that some people want to turn it into that. I understand that the Black community is leery of attention brought to these types of situations. Sadly, they can bring out a lot of white racism and can be counter-productive to the Black struggle.

However, Joe was killed and he in no way deserved it. And he was a hero. We must face the causes of his death. Trying to paint the picture differently doesn't do anyone a service. We have big problems in this community; we are all being victimized. We all have to work

together to hold this community together.

As a white businessman on Mississippi, I can guarantee you that, yes, there are people who I want out of this neighborhood. I want the drug dealers, pimps, burglars, rapists, robbers, and murderers out of here, every last one of them. Black, white, brown, every one of them. I want a healthy, happy neighborhood with families, senior citizens, and responsible businesses. I want them to be able to live here, free of fear, peacefully. I have always known Albina as a mix of races and cultures. I am not interested in changing that mix. I can assure you that I'm much more ill at ease in Gresham than I am in Albina.

Jāmes O. Kēilly
President
Rejuvenation House Parts Co.

PORTLAND OBSERVER

OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

Alfred L. Henderson / Publisher Leon L. Harris / Gen. Mgr. / Controller

PORTLAND OBSERVER
is published weekly by Exie Publishing Company, Inc.

5011 N.E. 26th Ave.
Portland, Oregon 97211

P.O. Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208

Phone Number: (503) 288-0033

Richard J. Brown
Editor

Gary Ann Garnett
Business Manager

Nyewusi Askari
Writer

Mattie Ann Callier-Spears
Religion Editor

Kendel Bryan Covington
Entertainment Editor

Joyce Washington
Sales Representative

Arnold Pitre
Sales Representative

Richard J. Brown
Photographer

Leslie V. White
Art Director

Vivian E. Richardson
Sales Representative

Rebecca Robinson
Typesetter / Production

Lonnie Wells
Distribution

Deadlines for all submitted materials:
Articles: Monday, 5 p.m. Ads: Tuesday, 5 p.m.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Subscriptions: \$15.00 per year in the Tri-County area.

The PORTLAND OBSERVER - Oregon's oldest African American Publication - is a member of The National Newspaper Association - Founded in 1885. The Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York.



to start the Portland Observer coming every week

\$15.00 for one year \$25.00 for two years

PORTLAND OBSERVER

Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____