



EDITORIAL / OPINION



Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard

by Samuel Pierce

From 1954 to 1970 America experienced one of the most significant and enduring eras of her short history. That era came to be known as the Civil Rights Movement. It was a movement that would remind her for the rest of her life, that she could no longer be partial in the treatment of her members, but she must make room for all of her children.

Looking back over those times, it seems safe to say that no other individual personified the consciousness of that era than Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. King was a man so impassioned with the righteousness of justice, that he risked and finally lost his life in countless attempts to defend it.

No, he was not a perfect man. In fact, no one admitted that fact more readily than Dr. King himself. Nevertheless, in spite of his imperfections, he inspired a nation to love far beyond his own impulsion to hate; to give way beyond its own desire to be selfish, and in doing so, he set an example for even the world to follow: I find it hard to believe that the nonviolent protests in South Africa, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and West Germany, to name a few, are not direct results of the example set by Dr. King.

But Dr. King wasn't only a great spirit, he was also a great mind. We often forget that this man had genius intelligence—graduating from high school at age 12 and from college at age sixteen. Furthermore, he was a most distinguished orator/writer and philosopher. Surely he would have been welcomed in the company of the likes of King Solomon, Aristotle, Socrates, and even the Master himself! At a very difficult time in its history, Dr. King gave America much needed leadership and courage.

Yet, against this most distinguished record of service and achievements, there are those who are still unwilling to honor this man. I speak of those who are attempting to return Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard to Union Avenue. In other words, those who constantly try to take from us the small gains that we have made; to stomp out this small lantern of hope in our community.

Standing on the threshold of the last decade of a millennium that has seen more human violence than any since recorded time, one would think that out of mere human decency, racial harmony would be a priority. In this "Peculiar Paradise" that was the western birth place of the KKK and presently an Arian Nation "hang out," you

think that one would be more careful not to give out messages of racial animosity. Moving even closer to home; one would hope that in the city that represents the first known fatal act of the white supremacist gang, known as Skinheads, we in the city of Portland would welcome the symbol of a man who epitomizes peace, love, justice, and harmony among people.

But, of course, they say the issue isn't racism; that they are concerned about the possible loss of business. And yet, the very statement infers that naming a street after an African-American would hurt business! I find such an argument to be a contradiction. But again, they say surely this isn't racism; but rather an attempt to hold on to a symbol of Oregon's past. And yet, also a symbol of Oregon's past is exclusion laws and sundown laws for Black people. Still louder they say, this isn't racism! But while most of us were preparing to celebrate the contributions of this fallen American hero, these individuals were working frantically in an effort to strike his legacy from our community.

It would be futile to continue arguing the point. For it was Dr. King who warned us that it is not the Governor George Wallace, the Sheriff Bull Connors, or the KKK whom we must fear most. Because these individuals readily admit that they were devout racists; therefore, one could easily see them coming and defend against them. But those who are most dangerous are those who "act like" devout racists, while sincerely believing and insisting that they are not. With these individuals, it is difficult to see their hands moving, but the stones are hitting you right square in the forehead!

Nevertheless, I must make my stand on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. And I invite all of my brothers and sisters—African Americans, White Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Jews, Gentiles, Protestants, and Catholics, and Muslims—to stand with me. We must lift up a standard of righteousness against this insidious act of shame to all of us. Because if the street reversal is allowed to happen, the city of Portland and the state is bound to suffer. And not because of not many, but, as always, because of a few. However, our stand must not be based upon hate or racism; but rather a stand based upon justice, peace, and brotherly/sisterly love. By doing so we will also embody the principles that Dr. King lived and died for.

Let us not be so naive to think that on the hills of Mulugeta Seraw's brutal death

at the hands of Skinheads, in the largest city in the state, with the largest African-American population, in the heart of the African-American community, having been "denied" two other streets in predominantly white areas, having compromised to give businesses five years before the name change takes effect, twenty-one years after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the nation will not be watching the first ever attempt to reverse the naming of a street for this kind man! If this can happen in the year of our Lord, 1990-ten years before the year 2000—then we have catapulted ourselves back in time to the Birmingham Bus Boycott; landed again on Howard Beach; experienced once again the outrage of Forsite County. I have always wondered if the civil rights movement ever reached Oregon—it appears that we will soon find out. If our neighboring states (California, & Seattle) can elect African-American mayors, and we cannot even have a street named for one, then something is distastefully wrong!

To close, I have faith in the good people of Oregon. I believe, as in the case of presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, they will again stand up and be counted. For these good people know, as Dr. King asserted, that "their destiny is tied to our destiny."

To my African-American brothers and sisters, I say, let us not break ranks. We must stand united in this crisis—and it is a crisis! If we cannot have a street named after someone of Dr. King's stature in our own community, then where can we have a street named? If we can be driven back from our own community, then we have little power as a community. We must put aside our differences and, as King taught, band together as a standard of unity for our generation—particularly our youth. Yes, I am aware that some of our brothers and sisters may have already signed the petition. And the opposition will use this as evidence against charges of racism. However, I am not impressed. The first attempt on Dr. King's life was made by someone of his own race; and history has long since confirmed that Judas was not a Roman soldier.

Finally, in the words of James Baldwin, "There is only one thing required for the triumph of evil and that is, that good men [and women] keep silent." I entered to be one of those exceptional "good men." And I call upon the decency of other good men and women to do the same.



Photo: Dudley M. Brooks/Washington Post
Author, teacher and publisher Haki Madhubuti: "I am where I am because of black people."

by Jacqueline Trescott
the Washington Post

WASHINGTON—When Haki Madhubuti teaches black poetry to his students at Chicago State University, he is often asked why the poets of the 1960s were so angry.

"It shows the lack of political involvement of today's students," says Madhubuti, 46, whose own expressions of identity and protest under the name Don L. Lee created some of the '60s most vivid poetry.

Yet now, sitting on a borrowed beige couch at the University of the District of Columbia, with many of those '80s students banging in and out of a nearby door, Madhubuti expresses the reluctant acceptance of an elder. "It is a good question," he says, "because I can explain the context [of the times]."

Social Debates of America
For 20 years, Madhubuti has not only been living and writing about the shifting social debates of America, but providing an important platform. The publishing house he founded in 1967, Third World Press, is seen by some as both a textbook case of a struggling minority business and a weather vane for the treatment of works by black writers in the marketplace.

The survival of Third World—it is now the oldest continually operating black-owned publisher in the country—"means black people are readers and disproves the myth that we do not support our own," Madhubuti says, adding that "80% to 90% of our supporters are black."

The press is planning to publish the work of newer black writers such as Pearl Cleage of Atlanta, Darryl Holmes of New York, Estella Conwill Alexander of Louisville and Ralph Cheo Thurmon of Gary, Ind.

Continuation of Story . . .

News From Neil

"Now is the time to translate the renewal of our economy into the achievement of our vision; now is the time, by decision and deed, to take a stand for our future." With this challenge Governor Neil Goldschmidt today announced, in the first of four speeches on the state of the state, two proposals aimed at helping Oregon's children.

Goldschmidt announced that he would propose to the 1991 Legislature that Oregon become the first state in the nation to fund Head Start for every eligible child. Goldschmidt said he would ask the Legislature to refer to voters a constitutional amendment that would dedicate 30 percent of the state's Lottery revenues to Head Start funding.

Head Start is an early childhood education program for children of low-income families that includes services such as parent training and health care referral. There are approximately 15,000 Oregon children who are eligible for Head Start, but funding, which was doubled by the 1989 Legislature, exists for only about 3,900 children.

Goldschmidt also announced that he would propose to the next Legislature that drug and alcohol rehabilitation resources be made available to every addicted pregnant mother and every child up to age 18 who cannot afford treatment on their own. "For all those who now want to be cured; for all those who now have to wait; we are going to take a stand—and no child in

Oregon is going to have to stand in line for help." Goldschmidt said of the proposal for drug and alcohol treatment.

Cost estimates for the proposal range from \$6 to \$9 million a biennium. Funding for the 1991-93 biennium will come from expected federal and state resources.

As part of the treatment proposal, Goldschmidt announced he will establish a commission on drug addicted-babies to identify ways to ensure that addicted pregnant mothers receive treatment. The commission will be chaired by Betty Roberts, former Justice of the State Supreme Court.

Goldschmidt said fully-funding Head Start would demonstrate Oregon's willingness to take a stand for "the children of the shadows—the ones ill provided and ill-equipped to learn and prosper."

It costs approximately \$3,200 per year for Head Start for one child. If all of the eligible children not now being served enrolled, the proposal would require about \$36 million per year. In addition to Lottery funds, the program would be financed with federal monies the state is expected to receive due to welfare reform.

Goldschmidt called the two proposals the biggest economic development decisions Oregon will ever make. "It will ultimately mean the transfer of thousands of Oregonians from the tax-supported rolls to the taxpayer rolls; from having cells built for them, to building a future for themselves," he said.

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SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE

High school students who are interested in applying for \$1,000 college scholarships should request applications by March 16, 1990 for Educational Communications Scholarship Foundation, 721 N. McKinley Road, Lake Forest, Illinois 60045. To receive an application, students should send a note stating their name, address, city, state and zip code, approximate grade point average and year of graduation. Sixty-five winners will be selected on the basis of academic performance, involvement in extra-curricular activities and need for financial aid.

Perspectives



by Professor McKinley Burt

In concluding this series on health issues in the Black community, I wish to emphasize that, as in the case of Black economic development or political empowerment, whatever is accomplished will seldom be enough. African-Americans will have to be eternally vigilant against what may be described as the new moral recidivism on the part of the powers-that-be. These type of assaults (backlash) are always seen to occur whenever a minority group makes any strides toward solving a social or economic problem.

While it is the case that the poor of this country, irrespective of race are becoming victims of deliberate assaults in the social welfare area—vis a vis the repeal of the "Peace Dividend," and the recent vote in Congress to repeal the Catastrophic Health Coverage Act—there are other more diabolical (even criminal) acts that lurk in the wings. Whenever there is a discovery of a Black social problem of particularly disturbing dimensions, funds may become available to research the issue (if not to address it). While some of the investigations will be ethical, and geared toward solutions, some are always formatted in the context of antebellum ethnic suppositions or within a framework of vicious acts befitting of Nazi Germany.

Let me cite a worst case example (Tony Brown, April 29, 1989):

"For example, for 40 years, from 1932 until 1972, the U.S. Public Health Service, and later the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, conducted the most atrociously unethical and racist experiment in our history. Black people with syphilis in Tuskegee, Ala., were intentionally not treated to test the destructive path of advanced syphilis. Even when penicillin was discovered as a treatment it was withheld. During those years, this experiment was reported in 13 major medical journals, read by over 100,000 doctors and discussed at conferences. It was an open secret."

Another kind of racism is revealed by my own experience with the student job placement bureau at Portland State University in the early 1970s. A female African-American student of mine boasted of her luck in securing a part-time job as an investigator for Emanuel Hospital—interviewing Black (only) families in Northeast. Examining the questionnaire at her request,

To Your Good Health V: Conclusion

I was startled and angered at the scope and intent of the questions contained in this medical document. Far afield from any consideration of health care were scores of demeaning queries about social mores: How many men of what ages visit the home each week—overnight? What is the relationship to the occupants? Are clothes of these visitors found there? The minor children in the family are represented by how many different fathers? What are the ages of the females—at what age first sex-frequency? On and on for five legal size pages went this deplorable invasion of privacy.

Very quickly I got members of the community aroused on this issue, and a confrontation with Emanuel Hospital revealed that they had hardly glanced at this document which was a paid subcontract from the southern research center of a very famous university. These people knew better than to run this caper in their own racially-sensitive area and had farmed out the questionnaires to what they felt were the more naive sections of the country. Many African-Americans had learned that right wing organizations were using the subterfuge of Health Grants to gain information for their attacks on congressional welfare and child care appropriations. Overall, it is germane to realize that health and biomedical research are a business, a huge industry where without constant surveillance the problems of the poor will seldom be the first priority (as with education).

There is one heartening aspect to all of this, and that is the response of Black female medical practitioners to the urgencies of African-American health care. I would mention The Association of Black Women Physicians who held their eighth annual fall benefit in Los Angeles, last October 28th. This organization was founded in 1982 "with a mission to improve the health and welfare of the community and humankind in general, through education, guidance and service." It is a philanthropic organization that provides needed monetary support for individuals and projects related to fundamental health issues impacting the Black community. The organization sponsors an annual Rebecca Lee, M.D. Scholarship Award to deserving, dedicated, African-American women in medical school—something for Portland to think about (I just put aside \$25 out of my social security check). Right on medical ladies!



To Be Equal

by John E. Jacob

African-Americans And The Courts

In a major article published in the National Urban League's recently released annual study, The State of Black America 1990, Julius Chambers, Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, has a relatively optimistic message.

Mr. Chambers, recognized as the dean of civil rights law, analyzes the flood of recent court rulings that circumscribe civil rights gains.

Those are serious setbacks, he writes. But he says—and I agree—that "it would be a mistake for Black Americans to assume that the clock has been turned back permanently in America's courts."

He points out that while past gains have been threatened by key Supreme Court decisions, those rulings are not necessarily the last word. There are numerous legislative and legal strategies now under way that could repair the damage and to help safeguard legal rights.

Some of the cases decided in the Court's last term, for example, involved 19th century civil rights statutes that were overturned because the Court's majority found some language vague. The obvious solution is for Congress to rewrite those laws to meet the Court's objections while strengthening civil rights protections.

One important area demanding action is the Court's ruling that overturned the city of Richmond, Virginia's program of set-asides for minority contractors.

The stringent new standards established by the Court for such programs have already led 17 states or cities to end or suspend their setaside programs, and some 236 programs nationwide are in danger of being gutted or weakened because of the ruling.

Local governments should strengthen their setaside laws to ensure that they are firmly based on remedying historic discrimination and that they meet the Court's standards.

Of particular importance are employment discrimination cases. The Court's

rulings made it more difficult to bring legal action against discriminators and easier for companies to defend against such charges, however legitimate.

The continuing fight against the death penalty is another area requiring action. Despite clear statistical evidence that racial discrimination is a factor in the application of Georgia's death penalty, the Court said statistics don't prove bias. It requires proof of purposeful discrimination by the judge or jury.

That's in line with the Court's tendency to throw statistics out the window, no matter how convincing, and insist on the "smoking gun" test of discriminatory intent—something virtually impossible to prove.

The Congress is now considering a bill that would allow a challenge to the death penalty if statistical evidence shows it is part of a pattern of racially discriminatory sentencing.

Congress needs to pass that bill and other legislation that plugs the loopholes created by the Court.

Swift action is required to prevent the Court's rulings from leading to intensified discriminatory activity.

The Court's excessively narrow definition of what constitutes racial harassment on the job, for example, has already led almost 100 employment discrimination claims to be dismissed in lower courts.

Justice Thurgood Marshall has said that today's Supreme Court is no longer a friend to civil rights, and that while we should not give up on the court and on legal challenges to discriminatory practices, we'll have to turn to other forums.

Important civil rights victories can be won in state courts as well. In October the Texas Supreme Court ruled that the state must equalize disparate funding between poor and wealthy school districts, based on the state constitution.

The Court's abandonment of civil rights simply means the struggle must be carried on in other forums—legislative bodies, state courts and local agencies—as well as in the federal courts.

Letters to the Editor

State Rep Speaks Out On 'Hate Crimes'

To the Editor:
In the early 1920s the Ku Klux Klan mounted a vigorous recruitment campaign in Oregon and particularly in Portland. They claimed a membership of 14,000 statewide, with 9,000 in Portland alone. The general election of November 7, 1922 was called the "Klan election," and Portland became the headquarters for the Klan west of the Rocky Mountains.
The reason for the early success of the Klan in Oregon was because the people of Oregon tolerated the Klan. They did not speak out until after the Klan was established.
The recent threats against Halim Rahtsan and his family are deplorable and must not be dismissed as an isolated incident. Overt acts of racism and "hate crimes" have been on the increase over the last few years. In the last quarter of 1989 there were more than twice as many incidents reported in Oregon than in any other state in the region.

It is not a matter of coincidence that there have been a number of "gay bashing" incidents in Laurelhurst Park and other areas of the city.
The names of the hate groups have increased. In addition to the Klan there are the Skinheads, The Order, and other neo-Nazi groups. Some of the names are new, but their message of hate and bigotry is the same as it has always been and it must not be tolerated.
If we are to stop these hate groups we must send them a clear and unequivocal message that they are not to be tolerated. We must demand apprehension and prosecution of the criminals. When they are brought to trial we need to be in the courts to see that justice is served. Finally, we must speak out against the hate groups at every opportunity.
Sincerely,
Margaret Carter
State Representative, District 18

PORTLAND OBSERVER
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN-AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970

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Gary Ann Garnett
Business Manager

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Sales/Marketing Director

PORTLAND OBSERVER is published weekly by Exile Publishing Company, Inc.
4747 N.E. M.L.K. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
P.O. Box 3137
Portland, Oregon 97208

(503) 288-0033 (Office)
Deadlines for all submitted materials:
Articles: Monday, 5 p.m.; Ads: Tuesday, 5 p.m.

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Subscriptions: \$20.00 per year in the Tri-County area.

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