

HIS OPINION

How Do You Spell Relief: Portland

BY ULLYSSES TUCKER, JR.

Washington, D.C. is my place of birth, D.C. General Hospital to be exact. The same hospital that has the highest infant mortality rate in the city, the most welfare recipients seeking medical or emergency services and some of the horror stories are phenomenal. For examples, patients having the wrong limb removed by accident or dying from blood clots as a result of an ankle injury are common. Not to mention doctors or young interns administering the wrong medicine to patients or stories of covert sterilization of black women, poor black women. Most DOA's (Dead On Arrival) also end up at D.C. general because most of the individuals dying in the streets do not have health insurance. People like drug dealers, gang members, drug addicts, or other disinfranchised residents falling victim to random violence or senseless killings. If you're a black male in Washington, D.C. between the age of 16-24, you have a one in five chances of being killed on the streets, or incarcerated, or identified at the city morgue housed near the hospital. Funeral homes do big business in Washington, D.C. too.

There are many elements that I love and enjoy about Washington, D.C. The rich history, museums, Georgetown, grandma Bolton's fried chicken/macaroni and cheese, grandma Tucker's pound cakes/sweet potato pies (ask Ray Leary about them), hanging out with Uncle Dave, and other friends like "Eddie Boy" from Roosevelt High or Wes when he flies up from Miami for a haircut. I love the monuments, Fredrick Douglass Home, the Museum of

African Art, fish sandwiches from Key's on 8th & H Street, N.E., and walking along the Potomac River while watching the plane land or take off from National Airport. Mostly, I love Quincy Street and the oldtimers on my block like the Fenwicks, Brinkley's, Carter's, Burris's, other Tucker's, Sutter's, who unfortunately feel trapped in their homes, sometimes, simply because of the rampant crime and potential for stray bullets. Kissing their cheeks and shaking their hands remind them of what the neighborhood use to be like. People are terrified now.

The other Washington is far different than the one I grew up in. It's as different as black and white. Politicians, lawyers, big time CEO's, businessmen, defense contractors, and association heads live large in Washington, D.C. Business is booming in downtown, tourism is on the upswing, the subway is expanding, and big businesses are relocating to the nation's capital. D.C. might have the reputation as the "Murder Capital" around the U.S.A., but the money and jobs are still flowing in white-corporate community. Unfortunately, the only thing flowing in my neighborhood is drugs and violence. Washington, D.C. is a harsh reminder of how I do not have to love and a painful humility pill that let's me know how far I've come in the last fifteen years. It's even more painful to have four younger brothers who are homeless by choice, lost in the "Twilight Zone" because of a bad trip on PCP, locked up for cocaine distribution, or lastly, one losing a battle with his liver and with alcoholism. Then, there are my two sisters who are

caught up in the cycle of welfare dependency, poverty, and both consistently struggle to make ends meet. Each of us, like everyone in D.C., are the sum total of the choices we've made. No one can help anyone who does not want to help himself. Boarding the plane back to Portland brought me great inner-peace and solitude. Could I live back in D.C. and be happy?

Whether people, especially black people, realize it or not—Oregonians have a great deal to be thankful for and a wonderful town to live in. A progressive bottle bill that prevents broken bottles and cans from ending up on the streets, and excellent recycling mentality, fine city services, beautiful parks fresh air, mountains, low unemployment, No Pot Holes, affordable housing, and a much lower crime rate. At last the homicide count in Washington, D.C. stood at 348 (as of this writing) and 17 died during my brief stay there, including a mother of three, driving her three children home. She was caught in a cross fire between rival gang members. It was a sad situation indeed. Last I heard, Portland's homicide count stood at 36 for the year. Washington's Police Chief Fulwood would love such a low homicide count. Portland, though not perfect in every regard, is still a good place to be and the quality of life is outstanding. It's amazing to hear how people complain about Oregon or at least until they travel to someplace else. Mount Hood never looked so good!

Yeah, Washington, D.C. is my birthplace, but Portland, Oregon is my home. It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at...



Perspectives

By Professor McKinley Burt

In The Beginning Was The Word, Part III

PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

We continue on with more golden literary gems, chiseled in stone and recorded on papyri in a distant African past—an indelible documentation antedating the Greeks and the Hebrews, and even still echoing in African American style and manner from sermon to rhetoric.

Let us begin with "The Soul's Declaration of Innocence," often called "The Negative Form of the Ten Commandments" by Biblical historians who have dated their origin to 2000 B.C.

This declaration was to be made by the soul in the Judgment Hall of Osiris in the presence of the council of forty-two gods. The heart being weighed against the symbol of truth and found correct was then restored to the deceased who entered upon the life of the blessed.

O ye Lords of Truth! I have brought you truth.

I have not privily done evil against mankind.

I have not afflicted the miserable.

I have not told falsehoods.

I have had no acquaintance with sin.

I have not made the laboring man do more than his daily task.

I have not been idle.

I have not been intoxicated.

I have not been immoral.

I have not calumniated a slave to his master.

I have not caused hunger.

I have not made to weep.

I have not murdered.

I have not defrauded.

I have not eaten the sacred bread in the temples.

I have not cheated in the weight of the balance.

I have not withheld milk from

the mouths of sucklings.

I have not slandered any one.

I have not netted sacred birds.

I have not caught the fish which typify them.

I have not stopped running water.

I have not robbed the gods of their offered haunches.

I have not stopped a god from his manifestation.

I have made to the gods the offerings that were their due.

I have given food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked.

I am pure! I am pure!

(The Delphian Text, p. 71)

But, also, in a lighter vein we have from the same period the poetic literature of love and romance. Note in the second paragraph below that with very little modification we have a modern African American "blues": "MY BABY DONE LEFT ME AND AIN'T NO DOCTOR CAN HELP."

'Sweet in love, Mut-ir-dis, priest-ess of Hathor,

Sweet in love, says King N,

Sweet in love, say the men,

Sweet in love, say the women.

The daughter of the king, sweet in love, is the most beautiful of women.

A young girl whose equal has never been seen

Her hair is blacker than the night,

Blacker than grapes, than the fruit of the fig-tree,

Her teeth are more neatly set than grains of corn.

Her breasts are firmly planted on her chest.

'I have not seen my beloved for seven days,

I am prey to listlessness,

My heart has become heavy.

I am forgetful even of my own

life.

When the physicians come to me,

Their remedies do not satisfy me,

The magicians are helpless.

My sickness cannot be discovered.

But if they say to me, "Look, there she is," then I am restored to life.'

Believe it or not, those translations are from the pages of a book by the very flabbergasted historian who claimed that the Africans "had no flow of inspiration, the narrative is always perfunctory and the style bare." Truly, prejudice has blinded the best of European historians. The "blues" poems are found on p. 215 of Montet's, *Eternal Egypt*.

It is no wonder then that as we examine the further development of the world's literature and drama we find the following statement on page 131, Vol I, of the 1958 *Encyclopedia Britannica* (How many of your teachers will tell you that these soulful and inspirational African literatures and ceremonies were the seminal base of all the subsequent culture?)

"It was not until the gods of Egypt were accepted by the Greeks that there appears any ceremony which can truly be called dramatic. The greek drama arose through the worship of the gods of vegetation, and later developed into the form of the plays of the great dramatists." (Aeschylus, Aristophanes, etc.)

Is it any wonder then that the famed historian of ancient medicine, D.T. Atkinson, was forced to the conclusion, *THE GREEKS WERE NOTORIOUS THIEVES*" (Magic, Myth and Medicine, 1958. Fawcett World Library). More next week.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



African-American Genocide

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter with great concern for my African-American Brothers and Sisters as well as myself, who are in the Northwest corner of the United States of America. We are truly faced with the real life problem of genocide. Whereas the State of Washington has a population of 12% African-American, yet the State of Washington has a 44% prison population of African-American people. Again, the State of Oregon has less than 2% of its population that is African-American, but the State of Oregon has a population of at least 17.5% within its prison system that are African-American. I wonder why?

On June 30, 1991, Ms. Tess Walton, hosted a program on KBOO Radio (Proverbial Perspective) concerning the racial injustice that is extracting most of the African-American men and women from the community and plac-

ing them in correctional facilities throughout the state, to help maintain White-American communities economically. However, this is only one problem we are faced with. There is the case of abuse in the juvenile system that is heaped upon our African-American youth; there is the case of "Mis education" of our youth and the ever present denial of our true culture and history being taught in the public school system; there is the case of the overwhelming amount of drugs that flow through our community, yet we don't have the means to bring it into the country; there is the case of young gang members being imported into the Northwest corner to reek havoc in certain areas of the African-American communities, which in turn brings down property value, to make room for out of state investors to come in and buy up cheap property. These are some of the very ingredients that are used to take

over a community. Look at Seattle, Washington, if you will. The city layed down a twenty year plan that moved all small African-American businesses out and moved in the Vietnamese. The same plan is being used in Portland, Oregon. All the property that African-American people own in the area between the Jantzen Beach shopping mall, the airport, and the Convention Center must be owned by White-America just like Emmanuel Hospital ran all the African-American people away from that area.

So it is really no wonder why it is. No matter how high up we get individually, they still use us up as we are really nothing as a whole. Maybe one day we can get the sellout-type people off the front lines so we can really come together as one people and put a stop to what those people do to us and start doing for ourselves for real.

John Dudley Leftridge III

Urban League Supports Police Precinct Move To Northeast Portland

At the June 26 meeting of the Urban League of Portland's Board of Directors, a motion was passed to support the relocation of the North Portland main Precinct to the vacant Fred Meyer site in Northeast Portland if three conditions were met: 1) that the community policing concept would be promoted in the area, 2) that partnerships between the police and the community would be encouraged, and 3) that there would continue to be a strong police presence in North Portland which may include a satellite office. According to Darryl Tukufu, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Urban League, "the board's vote to support the move indicates their acknowledgement and concern for community policing, raising the quality of life for residents of both North and Northeast Portland, and the importance of better police/community relationships in the City of Portland."



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Reinvestments in the Community

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN HOME REPAIR TRAINING PROGRAM COMPLETE PROJECT UNDER PDC'S URBAN HOMESTEAD PROGRAM

Forty Portland high school students have spent the last year completely rebuilding an abandoned home in Northeast Portland purchased through the Portland Development Commission's Urban Homestead Program.

On Tuesday, October 16, the students celebrated completion of the project by holding an open house and driving a ceremonial "final" nail of simulated gold into the rehabilitated house. They were joined by the new owner of the house, PDC Urban Homestead Program staff and the instructors who guided them.

The home was purchased under PDC's Urban Homestead Program, which provides low-cost home ownership opportunities to qualifying city residents. The homesteader is required to repair all major housing code violations and live in the house for at least three years.

This is the fifth home completed by the Portland Public School's Home Repair Training Program (HRTTP) since it began in 1985 under a cooperative agreement with PDC's Homestead Program. Students enrolled in the program come from a variety of Portland high schools.

Students who have participated in HRTTP not only have helped reclaim some of the city's stock of low-income housing but, in some cases, have found rewarding careers through the program. Some students have gone on to open their own building and remodeling businesses.

HRTTP students, who fill the role of

general contractor, began work on the project in October 1989. Their work included a new front porch, vinyl siding, exterior and interior painting, repair of windows, new roof, new kitchen and bathroom, new floor coverings, and extensive sheet rock and wall repair. Electrical and plumbing work is typically sub-contracted.

The students work in two shifts, one group in the morning, another in the afternoon, leaving half the day for their regular classes. "The program really gives those participating a leg-up on others entering the building and remodeling trade," noted HRTTP Coordinator John Harris. "Our kids have some real skills to offer an employer."

PDC Urban Homestead manager Jennifer Gardner praised the remodeling work done by the students. "Our housing specialists constantly monitor work done by all our contractors and subcontractors. The rehab work done by the HRTTP program a-ways meets, and often exceeds, our guidelines. A high degree of workmanship is accomplished."

In addition to the Urban Homestead Program, HRTTP students also perform a variety of home repairs under PDC's Single Family Housing program. Under both programs the homeowner only pays for the materials used by the students and the cost of the subcontractors.

Fall finds the HRTTP students already working on their next Urban Homestead home rehabilitation project.

Northeast School Earns National Recognition

Northeast Portland's Alameda Elementary on April 27 earned a national award from the federal Drug-Free School Recognition Program.

Alameda, 2732 N.E. Fremont St., was one of 51 schools nationwide to win the award sponsored by the U.S. Dept. of Education.

Alameda and the other Oregon winner, Oceanlake Elementary in Lincoln City, were among four Oregon schools nominated and among 123 schools selected nationwide for site evaluations last February.

Only four winners were selected from Oregon, Washington and Idaho in Region X of the federal department. The other two are junior high schools in Cheney, Wash. and Pocatello, Idaho.

School representatives from Alameda and Oceanlake will join other national winners in awards ceremonies in late May or early June in Washington, D.C.

Charles Nakvasil, principal at Alameda, said the school has been in the forefront of drug and alcohol education since 1980 and has "tried to crack the barriers of misinformation by encouraging self-esteem in students." He went on to say Alameda accomplishes that by teaching decision-making skills to help youths take early steps toward drug-free lives.

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