

AIDS Education Needed Now More Than Ever

To the Editor:

I am the Director for the Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition. I can't say enough about the pride I feel for what Earvin "Magic" Johnson has done. I am sorry that he has contracted HIV disease but I am grateful for the courage he has shown and the commitment he has made to fight against the spread of the AIDS virus. I just hope that individuals, families, churches, businesses and government will be moved to step up their level of awareness and involvement. Across the country the number of AIDS cases involving women of color is rising faster than any other group. The number of AIDS cases among heterosexuals is steadily rising. In Africa and Asia the overwhelming majority of AIDS transmissions have been through heterosexual contact. There is only one sure way to avoid contracting the virus and that is abstinence. Short of that the best we can do is practice safer sex through the use of latex condoms and avoidance of unsafe behaviors.

So far the statistics for Oregon do not mirror the national trend and that is precisely the reason our efforts to educate ourselves and the young people of our community must intensify. Just like gang activity exploded among young people in Portland, so will AIDS unless we do more. We have already had a rise in the prevalence of syphilis which can only be explained by the continued practice of having unprotected sex. Given some of the depraved behaviors that

pass for gang initiations, particularly those involving gang rapes of young women, it would only take one or two individuals with AIDS to infect a large number of people. Considering the high number of men who return to our community from prison we should be extra concerned about an AIDS explosion. Remember, you can carry and transmit the virus for years before it attacks your system. Let me be clear that AIDS can and will strike anybody. I don't care how wonderful, clean and intelligent someone is; if they have ever had unprotected sex before you, they could be unknowingly carrying the virus and, as far as they are concerned, you could be too. While trust should be a fundamental part of any relationship, nowadays misplaced trust can be fatal. Think about the fact that every unplanned pregnancy represents the possibility that HIV was transmitted.

I cannot emphasize enough the value of testing. As we have found with cancer, early diagnosis can make the difference between months and years of life. As we already know, African-American access to and utilization of medical services is limited. This makes us less likely to know that something is wrong and more likely to be very sick before we seek help.

I personally believe that the prevalence of HIV disease and AIDS in our community is dangerously underestimated. We can no longer gamble with our future. No child in our community

should reach puberty without a thorough understanding of AIDS and how to avoid contracting HIV disease. The same goes for every sexually active adult.

As part of that education, we must include working to help those who have contracted the AIDS virus. We must work to eliminate cruel and idiotic attitudes towards those carrying the virus and start developing strategies for care of those who have reached the advanced stages. We also need to help those who are in the early stages live a lifestyle which will delay the onset of the fatal stages.

We at OMAC have been working for three years to educate and protect our community from a serious outbreak and we are about to embark on a program aimed at assisting individuals and families already affected by the virus. We need your help financially and in volunteer time. We need each and every one of us to show a little of the courage Magic Johnson has shown to stop the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in our community. Please contact us at 274-1305 or 293-5870 to make a contribution or schedule a presentation to your organization. We are also very willing to organize workshops for training people within your organization to do HIV/AIDS education. Thank you.

Yolanda A. Russell-Alexander
Program Director
Oregon Minority AIDS Coalition

Police Need Policing By Citizens

To the Editor:

It is good that Portland Police Chief Tom Potter is supportive of his daughter's right to be an out lesbian, as any good father should be. He is fulfilling his responsibility as a public official by defending the rights of lesbians and gays, despite criticism and harassment. But the gay community should not forget about police abuse of gays simply because one highly visible policeman is supporting gay rights. Blacks and other gays of color are doubly likely targets

for such abuse.

Now should the gay community forget about the government's phoney war on drugs, which is really a war by the police on the Black community. We still need a community-controlled Citizens' Police Review Board with the authority to oversee police behavior and to correct abuses. The highly publicized Community Policing program, in which community leaders support police policy, is no substitute for, and is the opposite of citizen-con-

trol of the police. We need a Citizens' Police Review Board, independent of the Mayor's Office and the police, run by the grass roots community.

The high crime rates for Portland indicate that Portlanders also need less money spent on the police and more money spent on jobs and social services, the only real solution to street crime.

Sincerely,
Adrienne Weller
Portland Radical Women

Measure 5 Was a Hoax

To the Editor:

Measure 5 was a hoax. It moved the tax burden from the utilities to the homeowners. Even without the arrogant and outrageous raising of assessments to force homeowners to pay more, Measure 5 was a cruel trick. It played on people's justified frustrations about high taxes to put more money into the pockets of the big utilities.

Now we have a tax limitation measure put forward by the Oregon Citizens Alliance, and endorsed by Don McIntire, the right winger who initiated measure 5. It also will not lower taxes for most Oregonians, but it is designed to gather support from angry

taxpayers for OCA and its homophobic, racist and sexist policies.

Let's not be fooled again. What is needed is a bill that specifically shifts the tax burden from the individual homeowners and wage earners to the large corporations, to the utilities, to the owners with large property holdings--in short, tax the rich! This is an obvious idea that has never been tried. Let's do it.

Let's also defeat the Oregon Citizens Alliance's numerous petitions to destroy the lesbian and gay community. In Hitler's Germany the population was frightened and angry because the economy was crumbling. The Nazis scape-

goated Jews, Catholics, radicals, gypsies and gays in order to let Krupps and other large industrialists off the hood for being responsible for the deteriorating economy. They blamed Jews and other minority groups instead of the profit system. Hatred, fear and persecution of targeted groups was not the answer then. It is not the answer now. Radical Women believes the answer to inequality and poverty is true, democratic socialism. Perhaps you agree, perhaps you don't. But one thing we can hopefully agree on--it is time to tax the rich!

Sincerely,
Jordana Sardo
Radical Women

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perspectives

by Professor McKinley Burt

I Was Right About Eternal Vigilance

This past September and October I had a regular little invasion of news reporters here at my study and research center on Northeast Alberta Street. Two of them were from the Oregonian, one from a Portland alternative paper and another from Oakland.

Surprisingly, they did not come to interview me about the long years of research I've done in the field of African and African American contributions to the science, technology and infrastructure of the world--not just America. What they were about was the acquisition of data about the position and activities of blacks in this community at the time of PEARL HARBOR. Nationwide, the media are developing in-depth accounts of the World War II naval catastrophe that brought America into the largest and most destructive of international conflicts.

Isay "surprisingly" because when the reporters first called for appointments, I was quite sure they wanted to talk about my aforementioned study area; especially since I have written so much in defense of the Portland School District's "Baseline Essays." That and the fact of my early participation in the development of this material for supplementing the curriculum in respect to the contribution of minorities to the world's culture. Though I may have been somewhat disappointed with the original mission of those visitors from the media, things may work out quite well.

As usual, visitors are startled to find rooms of book-lined shelves with classifications of various areas of history, science, art, mathematics, religion, sociology, navigation, mapping, education, language, semantics, busi-

ness, geography, literature, philosophy, hermeneutics, archeology, environment, politics and so forth. And then there are the innumerable reference volumes: English dictionaries, foreign language dictionaries, thesauruses, encyclopedias, atlases, style manuals, technical writer's guides, medical and engineering handbooks, university-museum and governmental archive sources, local, national and foreign historical societies, foundation data banks, computer and telecommunication protocols and so on ad infinitum (you can't run down to the library every day and get anything done).

And then, of course, if you are a real researcher there are the multimedia tools and hardware from copiers and projectors to fax machine and 800 line. Also, there are a hundred notebooks of my own writings, theories and speculation. Now, you can understand why I wrote here earlier of the appreciated aid from a Beaverton electronics firm in computerizing my data bank until I can afford my own advanced equipment (whenever that will be). Obviously, I have advanced considerably in my abilities to document and verify minority contributions during the 22 years since I wrote "Black Inventors Of America."

I say that because after one reporter had finished looking around incredulously and discovering that all of this material and effort was about the discovery and documentation of black contributions--a chosen life work--he proved confounded because earlier when he and his peers were following up on the nationwide Baseline Essay controversy nobody had mentioned my name; and as it often turns out several of these people were MY BEST FRIENDS!

Unfortunately, this is not an uncommon occurrence among *our group* where there is a prospect of media attention, fees, contract monies or prestige.

Needless to say I did not take the opportunity to indulge in any vituperative condemnation of several people who in the past have demonstrated a degree of envy, jealousy or greed--or who have been reported by *their friends* to have blocked me out of receiving a contract or a grant. Most recently I was described, "DOESN'T HAVE THE DOCUMENTATION OR RESOURCES." Can you believe that? Believe it, for this type of ugly conduct hidden behind benign smiles and inquiries about one's health has been the destruction of many a valuable project or contributor in our community.

No, I would not allow myself to be led into any kind of media circus which can only mean the denigration of the participants and the distraction of the public from the basic issue at hand--in the particular case, the advancement and support of documentation of the Baseline Essays. We have just seen a catastrophic example of what can happen when African Americans allow themselves to be placed in a situation where they publicly attack each other (The Seante hearings on the Supreme Court nomination).

While it's tough to fund all of the thousands of dollars for research each year out of my SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK, losing my temper would serve no purpose. I'd rather my readers and the parents to ask the teachers, principals and other organization to start requesting my services again. Thank you!

To contact me, phone 284-7080, Fax 284-0484

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Elder Abuse is Real

It is estimated that one out of every ten elders lives in a situation that may lead to Elder Abuse.

Why does Elder Abuse Occur?

Elder Abuse can begin with seemingly normal conflicts and negative interactions that can gradually build up to abusive situations. Usually, in a situation where abuse occurs, one person is providing for the other in some way, while the other is reliant upon that person for much or all of their care.

Elder Abuse may occur for a variety of reasons, but the most common contributing factors are:

- Stress created by the care needs of the elder.
- Inadequate financial resources
- Isolation and lack of emotional support for elders and their care givers
- Existing family problems and dynamics

It's important to remember that abuse can occur in any situation. The abuser may be a relative, caregiver, spouse, a neighbor, or even a salesperson.

What does the Law say about Elder Abuse?

In the United States, all states except two (North Dakota and Pennsylvania) have laws against elder abuse. In Oregon, there are laws specifically focused on abuse of persons 65 or older, injury, neglect, or failure to care for residents of any age in nursing homes, and protective service to anyone over 18 who

is aged, blind, or disabled.

Who is required by Law to report Elder Abuse?

Oregon Law requires that the following people report elder abuse; employees of:

- Mental Health Programs
- Oregon Human Resources Department
- County Health Department
- Senior Centers
- Nursing Facilities
- Hospitals
- Public Officials Working with Elderly
- Physical and Occupational Therapists
- Information and Referral Workers
- Outreach Workers
- Legal Counselors for Nursing Home Residents
- Nurses
- Social Workers
- Physicians
- Police Officers

In addition, the following private citizens are required to report elder abuse:

- Clergy Members
- Relatives of Nursing Home Residents

What is Elder Abuse?

Elder Abuse may be physical or psychological. Elder abuse may be

committed by a younger caregiver or household member upon an older friend or relation, or may occur between two older people who live together. Elder abuse can occur even when there is genuine love and affection between the people involved. Forms of elder abuse may be physical, emotional, financial or a combination of all three.

Elder abuse may take many forms, including:

- hitting or slapping
- withholding food/medication
- unnecessary use of physical restraints
- yelling or insulting threats of violence
- misuse of funds
- theft
- fraud

It may be difficult to tell whether Elder Abuse is occurring, and even more difficult to get the people in the situation to talk about it. It may be hidden by isolation or disguised by what seems to be a pleasant home setting.

What should I do if I Suspect or Know that Elder Abuse is Occurring?

Call your local Area Agency on Aging, or your local Law Enforcement Agency. In Multnomah County, call the Aging Services Division at 248-3646, TDD #248-3683



"Reinvestments in the Community" is a weekly column appearing in API publications through out the USA