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perspectives

Storm Clouds Over Oregon State **University Campus**

We knew it was coming; a resurgence of that old "Newest Immigrant Prejudice" that has bedeviled this nation from colonial times. As you have learned from earlier articles here, successive waves of European immigrants have adopted "holier-than-thou" stances over their predecessors. What we did not expect was that this type of overt racism would still be alive and wellon the OSU campus in 1992.

We say it was expected because of the growing onslaught of right-wing tirades and polemics launched against anyone in sight (even each other) by the desperate politicos involved in current campaigns. It is in times like these, of economic downturn and of hate messages by the David Dukes, that we find the economically insecure and the socially threatened looking for scapegoats-someone to blame.

One February 3, The Daily Barometer, OSU's campus newspaper, featured a rather shocking article by editorial page editor, Ken Hile; "hundreds of illegal aliens from Mexico scurry across the border like ants...if they can't find jobs they turn to welfare or to thievery to support themselves and their families." But this Senior in the school of Journalism is not through yet -- Does the following frighten you? "Pretty soon this country will be so wrought in crime, drugs, poverty, unemployment and so on that

AMERICANS who have been citizens ary 17, carried an interesting commenin this land for generations will be fleeing to more prosperous nations to search for a competent government that allows for opportunity." (Original Native Americans might have once had the same thought.)

Like where? Japan, Russia, Singapore, Taiwan? I'm just being facetious of course; it is rather scary when we consider the level of thinking that would generate the title for the column: "Immigration Policy Will Kill Our Already Floudering Economy." Mr. Hile then proceeded to chastise the government for failing to crack down on Mexicans and Haitians before unemployment became unbearable. He sees the Hispanics as "picking plants and remaining seemingly happy."

We deplore the fact that the young man is no better acquainted with numbers than economics, and we ask, "How could a top rated school of journalism produce a senior who apparently has not read any of the vast data bank on current immigration policy and legislation? Doesn't he read NewsWeek, Time, U.S. News & World Report, The Washington Post, The New York Times -- How isolated is Corvallis? It is more likely that the case is as we first put it, the Right Wingers are getting their racist message across.

The Oregonian for Monday, Febru-

tary on the scene, "Column brings racism issue at OSU to surface" (by George Rede, Staff). Comments solicited from people like Robin Dellinger, student advocate for the Associated Students of OSU and Narcie Rodriguez-Smith a counselor for the Educational Opportunities Program indicated to me that nothing favorable in terms of race relations has happened at this university in the last two decades.

I began visiting OSU at the request of demeaned black students as far back as 1971, the same year I began teaching at Portland State University. It has been a constant saga of trials and tribulation over issues and faculty conduct you would not find in Alabama or Mississippi. In Portland, the home of many of the harassed students, I have spent time with both parents and attorneys seeking solutions to ploys clearly designed to deprive African Americans of higher educational opportunities.

One was told something by the boldness and the hostility of these "educators" in their confrontations with black students or parent. Their racist language left little to wonder about in terms of their attitudes or culture--not all of course, but few protested, very few. The Oregonian article hints at changes to come, but at this far north citadel of the Confederacy it will have to be seen to be believed.

BY JAMES POSEY

This article is about economic conflict and how we must take the battle to our adversaries. Some may be offended by that characterization but in truth there can be no real peace and harmony until there is some degree of economic parity between the races. While the battle is not fought with guns and bullets, there are causalities nonetheless. The various programs affecting business and work opportunities in construction is a battle field. And because a winning mental attitude is often the difference between victory and defeat, I think it is important to discuss the prevalent psychology of dependency in the African-American community.

In January like many communities across the nation we in Portland celebrated the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King and his dream of equality for all. More than 25 years after his death I think today Dr. Martin Luther King would be disturbed to know that his dream in real terms today is beginning to turn into a nightmare. The scary fact is his dream which included equal access and opportunity, to some extent has been overtaken by a cycle of dependency in the African-American community that has reached catastrophic proportions.

As a community we are reported to be addicted to everything from too much television to the chronic use of crack cocaine. But maybe the most harmful and devastating addiction is what appears to be an all consuming dependence on social service oriented programs and the corresponding blaming

Construction Opportunities: Is It An Avenue To **Realizing King's Dream**

BUSINESS EMPLOYMENT LINE

by James Posey

this mind set shows up in our everyday

such subjects as the African American

male becoming an endangered species.

Are we becoming increasingly fatalis-

tic about our future, giving away power

to change our own circumstance? No

more positive self-determining plat-

form. Meanwhile there is no fear that

we will lose sight of the fact that racism

is a continuing source of torment to the

African-American community. The

point is, while these negative forces are

formidable, we must claim our respon-

siblity and reassert our power to determine our destiny. Likewise we need to do more to show appreciation to our majority culture friends and supporters who have stood by us and proven to be invested in the high ideals of justice and equality. Many of them work tirelessly on our behalf because they also share the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King of a world living in peace and harmony. On the other hand, we must be more leery of those wide eyed liberals and conservatives from all racial persuations who come to save us from ourselves. We need to see through those media event grabbing politicians and the save the world "do gooders" who speak with forked tongues and listen with deaf ears. Many of these fold are chief architects and promoters of these failed programs supposedly instituted to help

of white folks for our foes. Evidence of beneficiaries of programs, we need to keep in mind that there is an inherent danger of becoming too dependent on discussions when we talk routinely about them. These programs should be used only to give individuals who have been. previously denied opportunities a springboard to self-sustaining enterprises. Many of the programs to be discussed will have significance not only doubt we need to examine our own to the construction industry, but bridge heads and hopefully shift our focus to a other business and career opportunity

arenas. While we eventually plan to discuss each of these programs in some detail, for now let's just list them and talk about some immediate observations particulartly in one of the major programs:

Construction impacted programs (not an all inclusive list) ODOT Oregon Department of Transportation Supportive Services City of Portland First Source Hiring Program PIC Private Industry Council Employment Security Placement Services Urban League Employment Placement-Programs **Oregon Youth Outreach** Northeast Skills and Work Force Center Northeast Economic Development Corportation Portland Development Commission Portland Public School Home Repair Program BFit at Portland Community College OAME Oregon Association of Minor-; ity Entrepreneurs

More next week ...

"Roots" - An Ode to Alex Haley

BY BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS JR.

African American History Month 1992 witnessed the passing of a great writer and historian. Alex Haley's contributions to African and American history were remarkable and the impact of his writings and research will have a long lasting imprint on the history of the United States.

Haley was born in Ithaca, New York, in 1921 and was reared in the southern town of Henning, Tennessee. As the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "Roots: The Sage Of An American Family," Alex Haley won the admiEuropean slave trade.

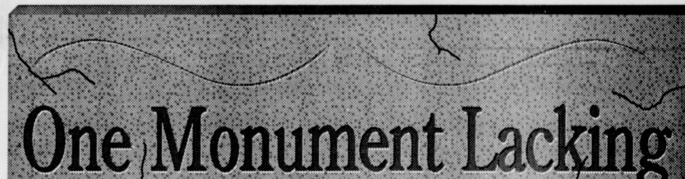
Although there were some who argued that "Roots" romanticized the awful pain and misery of slavery in the United States, we believe that Alex Haley should be given credit, praise and respect for getting as much of the salve reality as he did on prime time television for the entire nation to see. It has been reported that more than 130 million viewers tuned in to watch the ABC television broadcast of "Roots" back in 1977.

Even before the publication of "Roots," Haley had made history with

and watched "Roots," a better national consciousness emerged concerning the urgency of doing more in the present to challenge the lingering vestiges of slavery, segregation and all forms of racial injustice.

Just about a month before Haley's death, national cable television networks re-broadcasted "Roots" to millions of other viewers. One way to pay tribute to the legacy of Alex Haley is to continue his work of researching the "truth" of the magnitude and details of the trade and slavery of African people.

As the nation observes the 500th



So with that, we hope the point is

made that while it is certainly okay to be

minorities and women.

ration of millions of persons throughout the world. This bold African American writer with the stroke of his pen was able to shatter the false stereotypic view about the so-called impossibility of tracing African American genealogies back to Africa.

In fact, "Roots" was so successful that the book and television dramatization helped to inspire the establishment of thousands of community genealogical societies and family reunion clubs among African Americans. "Roots" also made a significant contribution to reminding all persons about the hideous and brutal nature of the American and

the publication of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," which also became a best seller. With the renewed interest in the life and struggle of Malcolm X, we are thankful that Haley was able to help document the evolution of Malcolm into an international leader.

Dr. Dorothy Height described Alex Haley as "a modern prophet." We agree. A prophet does more than foretell the future. Haley, in the prophetic tradition of the African American liberation movement spoke and wrote about history by stressing its importance for the present. When millions of persons read

anniversary of Columbus discovering "that he was lost," it would be a fitting ode to Alex Haley for a national inquiry into the truth of 500 years of exploitation of the peoples of Africa, North and South America, and of the Caribbean.

Alex Haley was 70 years old and died from a heart attack while preparing to lecture in Seattle, Washington. Haley enjoyed his work and took serious his labor of historical research. We thank God for the life and gifts of Alex Haley. We will understand better, due to the labor of Haley, the common roots of all humanity.

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BY LILLIAN SPEARS

Throughout the ages, slavery, in one form or another, has been a part of, or impacted on, or otherwise affected every culture in the history of civilization. It has many forms and manifestations; but the most basic characteristic of slavery is the coercive subjugation of a person to another person, or to the strictures of a political, religious, or socioeconomic system, or a combination of all of these. However unctuously stated, the motivation is greed, and the aim and objective is exploitative gain or power. The result for the subjugated is the suppression, distortion, or even destruction of the sacred potential for spontaneous, creative freedom inherent in every human psyche.

Always, from childhood, slavery has haunted me. I am a white woman who grew up in Alabama, and I have lived in other parts of the deep South, thus spending my childhood in the backwash of the Civil War. Even as a growing child, something about this subject began to trouble me; I kept running head-on into strange social and ethical paradoxes. For example--and this is only one typical example--early on, I heard that we, the white people, had really been great benefactors of the slaves; for we had "civilized" them and introduced them to Christianity. Then, on the other hand, the Sunday school teacher told a story from the Old Bible involving slavery. It was about the gross and brutal injustice of Joseph's brothers, who sold him into slavery.

As I grew older, I became absorbed in studying more about this whole puzzling relationship. Obviously, most of the available information centered around the particular form of slavery that developed in the United States; and I learned that it was a comparatively vicious form of the age-old institution. Also, ours, too, had been based on the bottom line of greed and exploitation: the desire to get something for nothing by exploiting the labor and capabilities of one class to enhance the power and status of another. Gradually, as the raw and brutal nature of slavery became

increasingly exposed, I went into a slow burn, having caught a glimpse of the vineyard where the grapes of wrath are stored.

Then, something else happened. Maybe it was all too much for me. Maybe I just had to believe the Bard of Avon, who found that, "Sweet are the uses of adversity; Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous, Wears yet a precious jewel in its head." Anyway, it dawned upon me that an important element of this long tragic history is either systematically overlooked, or at best noted perfunctorily. This neglected element is like a phoenix bird rising from its own ashes; for it is the incredible survival of the human spirit, in the face of impossible odds. The slaves demonstrated the indestructibility of the human essence. In this country alone, they contributed 250 years of free labor, including some of the hardest labor known to humankind, often under the threat of whip and lash.

In the midst of all this mental and physical anguish and bludgeoning, the slaves created their own folklore and music, rising way up in the sky, with a song as big as the soul, leaving to us all the heritage of one of our purest American art forms: the African American spirituals. Indeed, beyond the spirituals, much of our modern music still throbs with the distinctive beats of their native folk music--distant echoes of ancient roois.

We cannot bring these victims of our power and greed back and undo what was done to them; nor can we even pay them a minimum wage. There is, however, something we can, and should, do for them and their heirs, as well as for us: we can recognize and face up to what they did, and what we did.

On Veterans Day, we place a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, a tribute to the unsung, unknown soldiers who fell on many battlefields. The wreath and the ceremony say that a grateful nation remembers.

Incredibly, so far as I know, there has never been a tangible lasting tribute, monument, or memorial created in rec-

ognition of the slaves' sacrifices, legacy and contribution to our culture. I believe that there should be such a monument, and I think it is long overdue. This is the greatest wish of my life, and has been that for over twenty years.

Therefore, lest we forget, I propose that a Monument to the Unknown Slave be designed, created, and installed prominently in a public place, preferably on government grounds in the Nation's capital. I further propose that an appropriate inscription on this monument express gratitude for, and recognition of, the cultural legacy of the slaves, as well as the worth and dignity of each individual slave. Moreover, I propose that the inscription express our hope that slavery, in whatever form, shall perish from the earth.

Finally, as I said, realization of this proposal has long been the greatest desire of my life. Along the way, over the years, several organizations, scholars, leaders, and celebrities have expressed approval and support of the concept and proposal. The greatest advance, however, came in 1990 when the African Americans for Humanism (AAH), under the able leadership of Mr. Norm Allen, actually formed the National Commission for the Establishment of a Monument to the Unknown Slave, supported by a large group of distinguished scholars, writers, educators, politicians (including state and national legislators), journalists, musicians, actresses and actors, as well as other celebrities.

I have scarcely been the same person since the spring of 1990, when I learned that this great effort was being organized; and I am really elated that the march toward full implementation continues today, extending to active promotion of appropriate measures in the National Congress to authorize and enable the project to go forward. This has been coupled with a well planned public relations program. I am profoundly grateful to Mr. Allen, to the AAH, and to the National Commission for their powerful efforts toward filling the vacancy of one monument lacking: the MONU-MENT TO THE UNKNOWN SLAVE.

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