

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970 by Alfred L. Henderson

Joyce Washington
Publisher

The PORTLAND OBSERVER is located at
4747 NE MLK, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033
Fax 503-288-0015

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm
Ads: Monday Noon

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes to:
Portland Observer,
P.O. Box 3137, Portland,
OR 97208.

Second Class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

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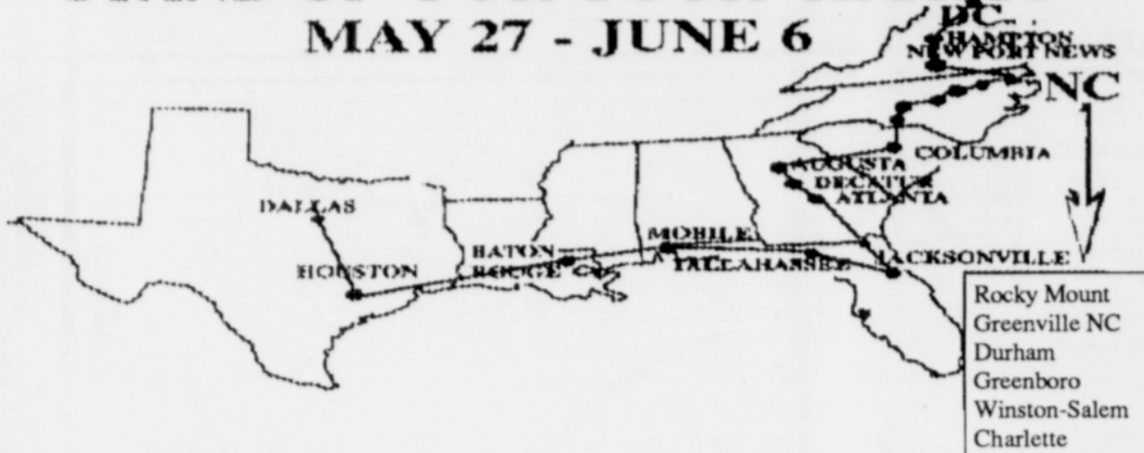
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Subscriptions: \$30.00 per year.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest African-American Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION

THE VOTING TOUR 'STAND UP FOR YOUR RIGHTS' MAY 27 - JUNE 6



The Rainbow/CBC Voter Registration & Voting Rights Bus Crusade will go to 17 cities in 7 states in 10 days. In addition to highlighting Shaw V. Reno, part of the focus of the crusade is passage and implementation, at the state level, of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), which was passed and signed into law in 1993. Twenty-one states have yet to comply fully with the law, with a deadline of January 1, 1995 for all but Virginia, which has a deadline of 1996 because of necessary state constitutional changes. The chart below summarizes seven southern states with regard to key voting procedures.

VOTER REGISTRATION PROCEDURES	STATES						
	TX	LA	FL	GA	SC	NC	VA
In Full Compliance With The NVRA	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
No Bill Introduced Yet	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
Bill Pending	X	-	-	-	-	X	X
Passed (State House & Senate)	-	-	X	X	Sen	-	-
Implementing	-	-	X	X	-	-	-
Mail-In Registration	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N
Centralized Voting File	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Early Voting (Prior To Election Day)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Purging Procedures:	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Failure To Vote (Years)	2	N	2	3	2	2	4
Felony Conviction	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Mental Incompetence Moved	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Agency Based Registration	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N
Deputy Registrars	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
VR Deadline, General Election (Oct.)	8	24	10	10	8	-	-
17	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
Days Before Election	30	24	30	30	30	21	31

Notes On Voting Rights & The NVRA: In LA, Senator Bagneris and the Black Caucus are the state's biggest advocates for the NVRA; in SC, Governor Campbell may veto the NVRA legislation, and a federal judge is expected to approve nine majority black state legislative districts in June; and in NC, Mickey Micheaux is leading the efforts in Raleigh to pass the NVRA legislation.

Civil Rights Journal

Justice Demands River Clean Up

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

The Imperial Valley is a lush agricultural center about an hour and a half east of San Diego. Running through this valley is the New River. Some say it's a new river because it was created when the Colorado River changed its course, running from the Rocky Mountains into Mexico and then northward where it emptied into the Salton Sea instead of the Gulf of California. Others say the river changed its course when farmers started the massive irrigation farming which makes the land lush and green today. Today the New River is one of the most contaminated rivers in the world.

The river is polluted with chemicals from 200 industrial plants located in Mexico. The firms dump so much discharge from their plants into the water that at times the river has had a foul smelling foam on top of it. Raw sewage and annual excrement is dumped by the city of Mexicali, a town of between 600,000 and one million people, with a sewage system built for no more than 300,000.

As the river winds north through California's Imperial Valley, it goes past parks and new housing divisions inhabited mostly by poor Hispanic Americans with little political clout. Children play near and in the river.

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board has spotted considerable debris in the river, including vegetables, shoes, greasy globules, bottles, animal carcasses and even a dead human body. The state has found invisible pollutants in the river, most notably viruses carrying polio, encephalitis, hepatitis and bacteria such as salmonella and E coli.

But the incredible and deadly pollution is now new. Fifty years ago the state noticed the pollution of the river. Yet, despite many meetings and discussions since then with

both the U.S. and Mexican governments, nothing significant has occurred. The Mexican government pleads lack of funds and the U.S. claims lack of authority. Even comprehensive monitoring data and risk assessments have not been done. The only firm data available is from fish in the New River which contain high levels of PCBs, DDT and Toxaphene, all known to cause cancer.

But two new developments have brought hope to residents who live near the New River. President Clinton has signed a bill and a treaty which might provide some relief. Under the Environmental Justice Act, the government is required to show remedies for sites where environmental racism can be proven. And under the new North American Fair Trade Agreement, the government has committed itself to negotiate with the Mexican government around environmental problems.

Imperial County officials are hoping that the Environmental Protection Agency will agree that it has the authority to take action in Mexico. And that it will then issue subpoenas to the corporate polluters and order the Mexican plan manufacturers to pay for the much-needed study of the New River pollution.

The Commission for Racial Justice has been working on issues of environmental racism for the past 12 years. Our expertise tells us that the U.S.-Mexico border region is one integral eco-system which stretches across man-made political boundaries.

Our commitment to justice tells us that the people who live near the New River deserve to live in a safe, clean environment and that their voices must be heard by their governments on both sides of the border. The New River must be cleaned up. Justice demands no less.

patents

Hide Your Genes; Somebody May Patent Them

I'm serious! A lot of readers have been following my series, "Seeds of Change," where I've described how international corporations are waging fierce battles to gain firm legal control and a proprietary interest in the genes of the plants and livestock that feed us. Have these new concerns diverted our attention for the first line of defense - the body itself?

Just last week, Portland hosted the 25th annual international meeting of the "Environmental Mutagen Society." A mutagen is an agent -- chemical or radiation, deliberate or accidental -- that causes/promotes a change in the chromosomes (genes). More than 400 scientists and government regulators gathered to discuss how to measure the scale of risks from countless environmental hazards. They are working toward developing a "genetic zip sheet" that might warn people of their own special vulnerabilities.

A modern health checkup might see an individual's genetic profile relative to a susceptibility to radiation from x-rays, cigarette smoke, nuclear plant accidents, high voltage transmission lines, suntans, certain pesticides and herbicides, saccharine and other specific food additives, microwaves or any other ionizing radiation, including radon gas in the home or radio/TV towers.

According to Phillip C. Hanawalt, professor of biology at Stanford University, "Although the DNA in each human cell is like a tape (or floppy disk) containing all the information necessary to re-create that individual, the body routinely makes use of only 3 percent -- and is not very good at repairing the other 97 percent if something happens to it."

Aside from the question of why God, in all his infinite wisdom, has not more closely monitored his invention which obviously was intended to be fail safe, we would make further inquiry as to why these humans he created spend so much time stupidly typing to alter the "garden/environment" that matches their genetic structure? Laboratory rats and chimpanzees always seem perfectly happy in their natural environs (and healthy) until we either modify their habitat or cruelly experiment upon them.

It will no doubt occur to some of us that the business of the "Environmental Mutagen Society" could very easily become that of an "Experimental Mutagen Society."

Such a development would surprise none who have been shocked and distressed by the conduct of the medical and scientific communities. And this whether we speak of individuals, professional associations, universities, government agencies, corporations, or other entities. We

have only to cite their performances in respect to syphilis or the AIDS/HIV situation which has rendered their endeavors suspect no matter the depth and commitment of other activities. At the least there could have been adequate monitoring of the more reckless contingent.

There is further shock and distress for those who pick up the June issue of the very widely-read "Scientific American Magazine" -- are you ready for this? There, beginning on page 108, is a how to do it yourself article on GENE MANIPULATION, titled "Genetically Altering Escherichia Coli." You heard me right! That is the little bacteria that closes up the hamburger joints, killing and crippling patrons across the country. "Because E. Coli is already present in your gut there is little to worry about," have fun.

The step by step instructions (which can lead to bigger and better tricks when mastered) begin, accompanied by illustrations and a list of tools any high school student may obtain, "The essential trick to manipulating E. Coli genetically is to get the creature's single cell to think that a foreign gene is one of its own!" Is this how AIDS began? Sleep well.

Exasperated Portland/Oregon drivers may not have seen 'nuthin' yet! The corporate agricultural machine that does business as the "Renewable Fuels Association" has the blessings of the EPA to siphon more gasoline out of your tank and more dollars out of your wallet. DEQ stalls on 1995 clean air requirements, however, for exact proportions of ethanol in gasoline.

Last month, in my "Seeds of Change" series, I described how multinational corporations in the agricultural field are beginning to manipulate the entire economy through the genetic manipulation of food plants -- where natural diversity has been sacrificed for patentable commercial parameters that will insure profitability. On May 3, I barely touched the tip of the iceberg, "Controlling Plants For Your Body Or Automobile."

Today, I am including a very precise compilation of problems vehicle owners may expect from the government enforced use of "oxygenated fuels" from supposedly "renewable resources" -- 30 percent of the alcohol must come from grain-derived "ethanol" rather than the coal or natural

gas-derived methanol. "Carbohydrate" corporations laugh all the way to the bank.

When you read my list of "Common Problems..." and you become angry beyond belief at the revelations, ready to grab the phone to call your favorite politician -- keep in mind that he may already have been reached. That Renewable Fuels Association spent several months lobbying the White House to get the EPA to require that 30 percent of the national ethanol market is controlled by Archer-Daniels-Midland Co., the U.S.-based multinational I described so vividly last month. This friend of the Republican Party has now switched its seven-figure contributions to the Clinton administration. Read the following and weep.

Common Problems of Oxygenated Fuels:

- Oxygenated fuels do not have the same energy content as gasoline, says a report in the AutoWeek issue of Feb. 21. Poor fuel economy is a common complaint.
- AutoWeek also reports fears about corrosion of older engine parts, vapor lock and drivability problems. Many automakers have replaced plastic fuel system parts with metal components since 1980. The metal parts are more resistant to the

corrosive qualities of alcohol.

THE REPORT ALSO SAYS:

- Oxygenated fuels cost seven to 10 cents more per gallon.
- They can hurt cars if improperly blended.
- For older cars: Alcohol attracts moisture. The water that often forms on the top of the fuel in the tank is difficult for the system to process. It can lead to filter and jet plugging.
- Alcohol collects sediment. When the debris enters the fuel system, it can clog a carburetor, injector or filter. (There are claims that some detergents and deposit-control additives can minimize the debris.)
- Alcohol is a solvent. When an auto must use alcohol-blended fuel, it's best to change rubber hoses, plastic caps, gaskets and fuel filters to metal, whenever possible.
- Alcohol fumes may make consumers sick. Motorists in Alaska, who pump their own gas, complained of dizziness and headaches.
- "The best that can be said about ethanol, reports AutoWeek, "is that aside from helping support grain prices, it gives automakers somewhat of a break in that no new emission control equipment would be required as a result of using oxygenated fuel."



By Professor McKinley Burt