

# Racism: America's Continuing Dilemma

America's greatest challenge in the twenty-first century is the division of race--whether whites, African-Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities can live together on the basis of fairness and equality. Despite the victories of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and legislative reforms, racial discrimination and socioeconomic inequality continues to compromise and undermine efforts for African-American empowerment.

Why does the racial impasse still exist in America? Part of the answer requires an examination of white American attitudes and opinions

about black people.

In a democracy, political power theoretically is based on the principles of popular participation, majority rule and respect for minority rights. By this standard, African-Americans were denied democratic rights throughout most of their history in this country. Historically, white mainstream America has not attempted to achieve a reconciliation between the reality of human diversity-based in divergent racial and ethnic identities, languages, cultures, religions and other factors--and the basic principles of political democracy.

For a brief but powerful moment in US history, the meaning of "racism" was generally understood by the majority of all Americans, black and white. During the Civil Rights Movement, racial inequality was sharply represented by the harsh reality of Jim Crow segregation in the South and ghettoization in the North. It was this general recognition that American society was essentially unfair and undemocratic to black people that a range of civil rights legislation and democratic reforms was passed in the 1960s.

By the 1980s and 1990s, white public attitudes and opinions about

blacks had greatly changed. The redefinition of race was the consequence of many divergent economic, social and political forces; the growing income stratification and the polarization of social classes, with millions of white middle income families experiencing a decline in their standard of living; the massive deindustrialization and loss of jobs in major cities with large minority populations, and the rise of suburbs and "planned communities" the ideological and political victories of conservatism, from the Reagan Revolution of the 1980s to the "Contract With America" in the 1990s; and the political reaction against af-

firmative action, majority-minority legislative district minority economic set-asides, and other liberal reforms. All of these factors, as well as others, helped to create a general public belief among millions of whites that any debt they may have felt for the enslavement, segregation or oppression of black Americans, had been fully paid. Many whites became convinced that civil rights and affirmative action were attempts by blacks and other racial minorities to win "special privileges." "Whiteness" once again began to define the limitation of American democracy.

Transcending the racial divide will

require an honest and critical dialogue, between blacks and whites. The issue is not one of "good intentions," but rather the reallocation of resources, access to institutional support and investment capital, and the expansion of the social safety net to promote individual and group productivity and initiative. Racism won't end by itself until blacks and other people of color have expanded access to the power and resources of the larger society. If whites can learn to listen to that reality, we might finally begin to take the necessary steps to uproot racial discrimination and class inequality, once and for all.

## Washington DC Local Organizing Committee To Publish New Magazine

A contingent of the Local Organizing Committee has collaborated to launch "Black Unity" Magazine, the official publication of the Million Man March Washington, DC Local Organizing Committee. In February 1996, only 3,000 copies of the magazine were produced for a limited edition premiere issue. Editors of this bi-monthly magazine will now increase copy production to at least 6,000 for the coming May edition which will be available to the public in early June.

"Response to the publication has been tremendous. This magazine al-

lows the DC/LOC to provide an important community wide service, as well as a National Communication Network for the more than 350 plus LOC's across the country. "Black Unity" works as a tool to assist LOCs across the country in a process of progressive action and resolution based on our first hand knowledge, special focus, and consistent reporting of issues and events from the DC/LOC's unique national grassroots perspective. In addition, we are finding that the wholesale/distribution relationships being established with the LOCs for the publication is of

mutual benefit not only to the LOC network but also potentially for anyone attempting to communicate with us," stated Raye Muhammed DC LOC Co-Chair and Editor for "Black Unity."

The DC Local Organizing Committee (LOC) is the bedrock LOC among all other established across the country in order to advance grassroots mobilization for the historic October 16, 1995 Million Man March: National Holy Day of Atonement, Reconciliation, and Responsibility. The stated mission of the DC/LOC is to achieve, individually and

collectively, moral and spiritual renewal while significantly improving and empowering the African-American community and other communities of color... To foster economic, political and social growth; health, education and environmental improvement; freedom, justice, and equality, youth and community empowerment, and international unity utilizing the seven principles of Nguzo Saba. For additional information call Public Relations Consultant and "Black Unity" Magazine Associate Editor, Angela Maria Muhammad at (202) 726-5111.

## Andre C. Willis Illuminates African-American Fathers

There is no greater influence in a son's life that his relationship with his father, nor is there a greater joy than being a parent. Unfortunately, too often in popular consciousness negative stereotypes about African-American fathers persist as conventional wisdom; the complexity of the father-son bond is glossed over or ignored - or more point, too many people assume that black men are

incapable of responsibly raising children. Faith of our Fathers: African-American Men Reflect on Fatherhood, by Andre C. Willis, eloquently dismantles these powerful stereotypes, by bringing together twelve prominent African-American writers and thinkers, fathers and sons, to discuss various issues that surround this critical relationship, including: John Edgar Wideman, Anthony E.

Cook, Cornel West, Martin Kilson, Michael G. Hanchard, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Playthell Benjamin, Robert G. O'Meally, Robin D. G. Kelley, Delfeayo Mrsalis, Charles To Ogletree, Jr., Thaddeus Goodavage.

Andre C. Willis, a research associate at the W.E.B. Dubois Institute for African-American Research at Harvard and a frequent lecturer at colleges and

universities, celebrates the African-American male experience in Faith of Our Fathers which will be published by Dutton Books in time for Father's Day. A son and father himself Willis has discovered the most important key to fathering "is how the faith of our fathers - faith in themselves, faith in the world - has inspired how we want to live and want to love."

## Volunteers Needed to Play

Volunteers to help 452 school-age children play this summer are the subject of a countywide search by Mainstream's Drug Prevention Program. The focus of Mainstream's Prevention Program is to offer a safe, skill-building environment for children as summer passes. Adults and high school students are being sought to share their skills in Chess, Drama, Athletics, Computer Games, Gardening, Reading, Basketball and Bird watching. Mainstream's Drug Prevention Team is gearing up to provide a rich variety of needs activities and resources for these kids in need of a safe place to play.

Expanding Prevention activities for summer months requires neighbors, friends, high school students, and community members to come

together. Mainstream has a number of safe locations from which to offer art activities, music, drama, games, reading and sharing experiences for one large segment of the 452 children involved in this summer's prevention program.

Adults who can offer reading-out loud opportunities, coaching skills, computer literacy, or lessons in ecology to Portland's youngsters are encouraged to call Mainstream at 234-3400, Monday through Friday. Volunteers will be welcomed at either one of the 2 Saturday Orientation Sessions, the first will be held at the Mainstream main office at 45th and Belmont on Saturday, June 15 9am to 12n. The second, to be held at the same hours, will be held on June 29th. Please call 234-3400 to register for either of the orientation times.

## Diversity Community

Call (503) 288-0033 To Advertise In

## The Portland Observer

## Observing Vancouver Summer Youth Leagues Start Up

Gather friends and join a summer sports league. The Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department offers children these summer leagues.

Girls and boys ages 4 to 7 interested in T-ball can register through June 28. The seven week season begins Tuesday, July 9, at Memory Field, east of Fort Vancouver Regional Library. Games are Tuesday or Thursday at 6 p.m. or Saturdays at 9 a.m. cost is \$22 or \$19 for city residents.

Girls and boys ages 6 to 14 interested in roller hockey can register through June 24.

The eight-week season Sunday, June 30, at 11:30 a.m. at Marshall Center, 1009 E. McLoughlin Blvd. Must have own equipment. Cost is \$49 or \$45 for City residents.

Students grades 9 to 12, starting September 1996 school year, can register for teen basketball June 10 to July 2. The seven-week season begins Saturday

## Parks & Recreation Commission Vacancy

The city of Vancouver is seeking applicants to fill two vacancies on the Parks & Recreation Commission. The terms are three years in duration. Members may serve a maximum of three terms.

The Parks & Recreation Commission is a ten-member citizens group. They are appointed by city council to advise staff and city council on needs, plans

and programs necessary for an adequate system of parks, open space, playgrounds, facilities and recreation services for the citizens of Vancouver.

For applications or further information contact Marie Day in the Mayor's office at City Hall, 210 E 13th., PO Box 1995, Vancouver, WA 98668 or call 696-8211 ( FAX 696-8049) Applications must be submitted by Monday July 15.

## Play or Coach Wheelchair Tennis

A wheelchair tennis clinic is set Saturday June 22, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Vancouver Tennis Center, 5530 E 18th St.

The city-sponsored clinic will feature a wheelchair tennis exhibition. Coordinations will help get Vancouver teams organized for wheelchair sports. Debbie Brochers, president of

Portland's "Kids on the Move," will conduct the clinic.

The clinic is sponsored by the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department, N.W. Wheelchair Athletic Association, "Kids on the Move" and Oregon Spokes and Strokes.

For more information call Connie Irwin at 696-8218.

## City parks program tapped

The city's Kids First! program won a \$5000 grant to fund their after-school snack program. An additional \$500 will fund the storyteller program with Maureen Pedone.

Both grants are from Soroptimist International of Vancouver Women's Club. Kids First! program is part of the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Department.

You are cordially invited to our  
**Open House**  
your hosts:  
**Donna Red Wing, Thom Kincheloe & Kim Felipe**  
of  
**The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD)**  
*We would love to meet you, and tell you all about GLAAD.*  
*Please join us for refreshments!*  
date: **Thursday, July 25**  
time: **4 - 6 p.m.**  
place **Bank of California Tower**  
**707 SW Washington Street**  
**4th Floor, Oregon Room**

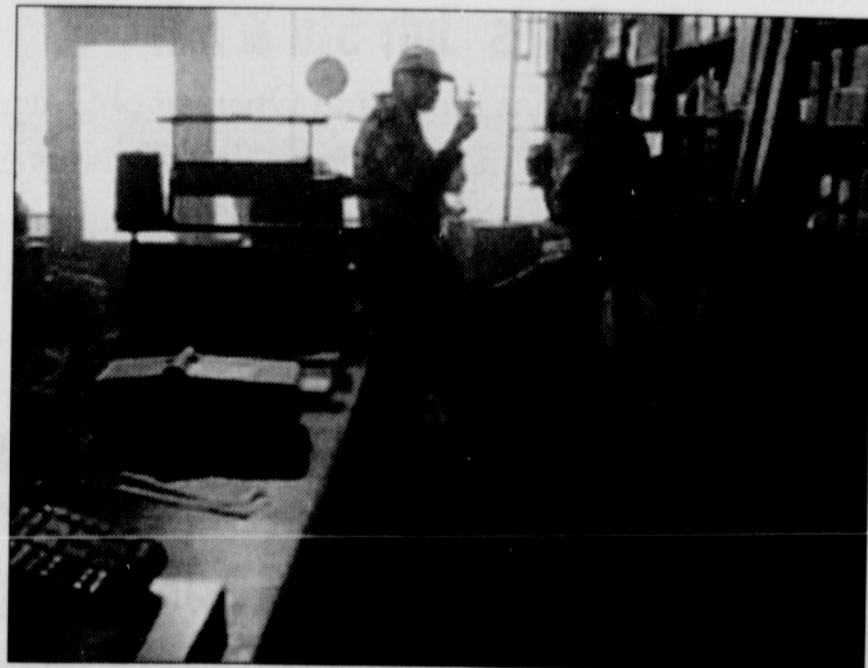
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*Famous U.S. Women's Alpine Ski Team Diet*  
During the non-snow off season the U.S. Women's Alpine Ski Team members used the "Ski Team" diet to lose 20 pounds in two weeks. That's right - 20 pounds in 14 days! The basis of the diet is chemical food action and was devised by a famous Colorado physician especially for the U.S. Ski Team. Normal energy is maintained (very important!) while reducing. You keep "full" - no starvation - because the diet is designed that way. It's a diet that is easy to follow whether you work, travel or stay at home. (For men, too!)  
This is, honestly, a fantastically successful diet. If it weren't, the U.S. Women's Alpine Ski Team wouldn't be permitted to use it! Right? So, give yourself the same break the U.S. Ski Team gets. Lose weight the scientific, proven way. Even if you've tried all the other diets, you owe it to yourself to try the U.S. Women's Alpine Ski Team Diet. That is, if you really do want to lose 20 pounds in two weeks. Order today! Tear this out as a reminder.  
Send only \$8.95 (\$9.60 in Calif.)-add .50 cents RUSH service to: American Institute, 7343 El Camino Real, Suite 206, Atascadero, CA 93422. Don't order unless you expect to lose 20 pounds in two weeks! Because that's what the Ski Team Diet will do. ©1995

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