

# Burning Puts Portland On Racist Map

Continued from front

league who has been in the front of bringing the city together.

In a statement after the fire, the Portland league decried racial animosity that has permeated the state.

The recent burning of a cross in the front yard of a disabled African-American man's house in Gresham states clearly that racial harmony still is an unfinished agenda in Oregon.

The Free Methodist Church burnings raised a plethora of questions about whether the issue of race relations has been adequately addressed. Majority of black Oregonians say no way.

"We are saddened, we are dismayed, but we are not surprised given the current national climate on racial issues such as affirmative Action," says the Urban League, which seems to sum up the frustrations of many blacks.

Community leaders are leery of

attributing the Portland church arson to racism, many especially government and non-government agencies officials saying that the fire incident left indelible racial stigma in the face of Portland.

"I felt such pain in my gut about the fact that it's here too," said Portland Mayor Vera Katz.

"It's an expression of hatred and violence in building that ought to be filled with love and peace and community. We cannot accept acts of violence or hatred in this community."

Human Rights advocate, Helen Cheek says the arson that has engulfed predominantly black churches nation-wide, and now in Portland, reflects a new tide in racist attitudes. "When a group burns a church in one part of the country, that gives others the courage to go and do this here," laments Cheek. "It feeds into the racist feelings that are already there."

Pundits, who once defended the

state as progressive and liberal, are shrinking in the face of protruding racial disharmony.

Skeptics are pointing to the notorious hate crime in 1988 that saw the death of 27 year old Mulegeta Seraw, the Ethiopian immigrant, who was beaten to death by three skin heads outside his South East apartment.

"Over the past 15 years a good bit of racism has migrated to our part of the country," observes Steven Gardner of the Coalition for Human Dignity, a Portland based Civil Rights Group. "There has to be a political pressure brought to bear, to say that these incidents have to be pursued and prosecuted."

Historians say the state's past is filled with racial acrimony. Blacks, for example were barred from living in Oregon in the early '20s and '30s. It was only in 1959 that the legislature made a constitutional amendment which allowed Blacks to stay here.

Thousands of African-Americans who lived in the state at the turn of the Century, according to historian Dick Pintach, were subject to Jim Crow, or de facto segregation, and restricted to menial jobs. And in 1919 the state legislature defeated a bill to give blacks equal access to hotels, restaurants and other public places.

"It was dangerous for blacks to go places," recalls Portland historian E. Kimbark MacColl.

Pockets of racial-driven militia exist in Grants Pass and other parts of the state. This recent fire may well have further dented the state's progressive image.

Except that Police investigations, rule out racial animosity in the burning of Immanuel Free Methodist church, area residents fear an uprising of future incidences.

A wild wind of arson blazed the church in North Portland during the wee hours last Thursday morning.

The fire smeared the plastic chairs

in the charred Sanctuary of the 40-year old wooden church whose congregation is about 70% black.

Police are still investigating the cause of the arson.

According to Bill Law of the Portland Police Arson Unit, people are beginning to volunteer information.

The tragic incident seems to have united the Portland religious Community. How far this will go, only a matter of time will tell.

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## Are Minorities Soft on Crime?

There is an old myth that blacks are softer on crime than whites. A recent survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank, tells a different story.

The center found that an overwhelming majority of blacks favor stiffer laws and sentences for drug use and violent crime. More than seventy percent of blacks support three-strikes laws and nearly fifty percent backed the death penalty.

But old myths die hard. The Joint Center survey probably won't be enough to convince many whites that blacks don't allow racial sympathies to blur their judgment and objectivity when it comes to dealing with black criminals.

During the O.J. Simpson trial, many media commentators and legal analysts were certain that the predominantly African-American jury would acquit Simpson. In a poll of trial attorneys taken immediately after the jury was impeached, seventy percent predicted that the jury would deadlock or vote to acquit Simpson based solely on race.

Some experts openly said that an acquittal would be payback for the failure of a jury with no blacks to convict the four LAPD officers that beat Rodney King. Others assured that a Simpson acquittal would be revenge for centuries of racial mistreatment of blacks. The jurors protested that they acquitted Simpson because of the lack of evidence not his color.

Even if race was a factor, which it almost certainly was, there is no hard evidence that blacks reflexively vote to acquit black defendants. Black jurors, in fact, regularly vote to send black defendants to prison.

A defense attorney found this out the hard way. He said he would do anything to get as many blacks on

the jury in a murder case involving his black client. He reasoned that they were more likely to vote for acquittal. He partly got his wish when a predominantly black jury was seated. The jury, however, convicted his client and recommended the death penalty.

Some blacks use the same false logic as this attorney when they call on black jurors to "nullify" evidence and acquit black drug users to protest "racially biased" drug prosecutions. The chances of this happening are slim.

Blacks are acutely aware that once in the jury box they are under great public scrutiny to make sure they don't tilt toward black defendants. Black jurors often put more emphasis on the evidence presented by prosecutors and are particularly sensitive to the testimony of the defendants.

This shouldn't be a surprise. The victims of black crime are almost always other blacks, and that includes many who serve on juries. According to the Joint Center, twenty-six percent of blacks had a friend or a relative victimized by violent

crime, nearly double the percentage for whites. Fifty percent of blacks considered their neighborhoods unsafe, nearly double that of whites.

The high incidence of murder, gang activity, and drug dealing in some black neighborhoods contribute to the heightened fear of violent crimes by blacks. They are tired of weeping at funerals and gravesides for loved ones lost to violent crime.

The hardened attitudes of blacks toward the death penalty, drug laws, and three strikes laws reflect this fear. Despite evidence that blacks are more likely to be arrested, prosecuted, receive harsher sentences, and the death penalty than whites, many blacks still support these measures.

Blacks have also adopted a harder-line attitude toward crime not only because they fear for their personal safety, but because they feel they have more to lose. Since the 1970s there has been a fifty-two percent increase in the number of black managers, technicians, professionals, and government officials. Nearly one-third of blacks have incomes in ex-

cess of thirty-five thousand dollars annually and more than ten percent of blacks earn more than fifty thousand yearly. Thirty-two percent attend college and sixty-four percent of blacks own their own homes. In 1995, the top 100 black businesses had gross sales of nearly \$12 billion.

Crime and punishment are no longer issues that only black conservatives talk about. Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, Kweisi Mfume, and many black liberal Democrat politicians pay almost as much attention to the fight against crime as the fight for civil rights, affirmative action, and social programs. They call for moral crusades against violence, more personal and family responsibility by blacks, more police, more gang sweeps, more drug arrests, and evictions of lawbreakers from public housing.

Eddie Williams, president of the Joint Center, predicts that crime is a permanent issue that will force black leaders "to listen more closely to their constituents." Let's hope that more whites listen closely to blacks who also say enough is enough on crime.

## CRIME STOPPERS Murder/Kidnap

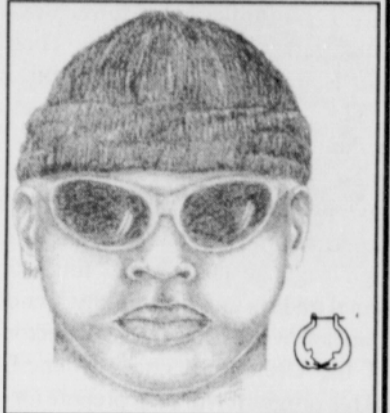
Portland Police Bureau Homicide Investigators, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, are asking for your help in solving a murder.

On Wednesday, December 20, 1995, at 7:30 in the morning, on the 9300 Block of SE Ramona Street, two black males armed with guns forced a 25-year-old black female to stop her car as she exited her apartment complex.

One of the suspects entered the women's car and drove her around for approximately 30 minutes. Meanwhile, the second suspect, who was joined by a third suspect, entered the woman's apartment and killed her boyfriend, Darrin Ezell, who was 24-years-old.

The number one suspect is described as a black male, 20 to 25 years of age, 5'6" to 5'7" tall, with a medium build, and a dark complexion.

The suspect has a "dirty" face, with "ashy" looking lips, and a



Suspect for Murder/Kidnaping with earring illustration.

flat nose with a pointed end. In his right ear, the suspect wore three large gold hoop earrings that were in the shape of two dolphins (see enlargement).

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, that leads to an arrest in this case, or any unsolved felony crime.

If you have any information, call Crime Stoppers at (503) 823-HELP, you need not give your name.

## MSCO Seeking Help

On February 14, 1996, five and one-half large trees were cut down, along with larger branches to standing trees, on private property.

The trees cut down have an approximate base of 26-30 inches and are from 50 feet to 70 feet in length. Prior to the cutting, the trees obscured the view of Mount Hood

from residences located nearby. The trees are located on the owner's property at the following address:

2035 S.E. Troutdale Road, Troutdale, Oregon 97060. Anyone having information on the person responsible for cutting the trees are urged to contact Deputy McLellan at 255-3600.

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## Growing the Right Kind of Energy

PORTLAND, OREGON GREEN CORPS PROJECT

Look for butterflies in gardens this summer near Boise-Eliot school in North Portland thanks in part to new shrubs and flowers recently planted on school grounds.

The *Butterflies Aren't Free* project is another example of the diversity of Pacific Power's Green Corps program started four years ago as an environmental partnership between the company and the community.

Children at Boise-Eliot School joined with the National Wildlife Federation, Dannon Yogurt and Pacific Power to design and create a butterfly garden at the school. It will be an outdoor laboratory incorporated into a schoolyard wildlife habitat. About 40 sixth and seventh grade students worked with a landscape architect on the project along with 15 Pacific Power volunteers.

The butterfly garden won Pacific Power's *Green Glove* award, created this year to honor the Green Corps project demonstrating the most creativity and best coordination with community groups.

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Pictured above: Boise-Eliot students along with Pacific Power and National Wildlife Federation volunteers team up to complete the "Butterflies Aren't Free" project at the school. Pacific Power project volunteers: Lisa Armstrong, Tim Berg, Doug Campbell, Leo Anne Doolittle, Della Frazier, Dan Hitchcock, Mel Howell, Judy Hughes, Rod Hughes, Mike Pittman, Donald Shaw, Patty Simons, Bruce Spiedel, Arnie Winkler and Dennis Zerba.