

# EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily  
Reflect Or Represent The Views Of  
The Portland Observer

**T**oday Reverend Jackson and his delegation are in Indonesia, calling attention to the sweatshops that manufacture our sneakers and our apparel.

In last week's JaxFax, we highlighted the pitiful wage rates paid by Nike shoes to the women in Indonesia who make the sneakers that America wears. Nike, of course, is not alone.

According to the AFL-CIO, Reebok pays Indonesian workers 16-20 cents an hour for 6-day-a-week, 10-hour shifts. Reebok has 20.5% of the U.S. market for athletic shoes, second to Nike.

Gap T-shirts are made by teenage girls in El Salvador forced to work 18 hours a day in sweatshops, for about 16 cents a shirt. Some Neiman-Marcus designer fashions are made by immigrant Thai women imprisoned behind barbed wire in forced-labor conditions.

Children in Pakistan, ages 5-14, work 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, making soccer balls and other athletic gear.

The Washington Post this week put sweatshops and child labor in the "Style" section, interspersed among commentary about Kathie Lee Gifford's "pink and white suit with an above-the-knee skirt," "white patent slingbacks that had a sensible heel," and her "Chanel purse on a dainty shoulder chain." Since Ms. Gifford was on Capitol Hill discussing illegal sweatshops and child labor, after "human rights activists... revealed that part of her signature line of clothes, sold exclusively at Wal-Mart, was being manufactured

## NATIONAL RAINBOW COALITION Child Abuse

under illegal and substandard conditions in Honduras and New York," the Post finally did manage to find a little space to note that "experts put the number of children working illegally around the world at 100 million to 200 million."

Ms. Gifford's news conference was with Rep. Christopher Smith (R-N.J.), who "unveiled the proposed International Child Labor Elimination Act. Highlights of the act include banning the import of products made by child labor, prohibiting any aid--other than humanitarian--to countries that don't enforce child labor laws, and providing \$50 million in funds to the International Labor Organization, which advocates fair and humane working conditions." At the risk of embarrassing the conservative Smith, JaxFax has to say it sounds like a good idea. Smith's bill raises the obvious question--shouldn't opposition to child labor be Democratic turf?

The International Labor Organization reported last month that at least 73 million children ages 10 through 14--13% of children that age around the world--are trapped in child labor. 45 million children of that age in Asia are working, and another 24

million kids in Africa.

The U.S. Department of Labor, in its 1994 report, "Sweat & Toil," points out that;

2.2 million children between the ages of 10 and 14, about 3% of the total labor force, are economically active in Indonesia, mostly in rural areas. (This figure does not include child workers below 10 years of age and children involved in domestic work.)

The forced labor of children occurs in the fishing industries of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, India, and Pakistan.

There are many paths by which children may end up as prostitutes. Frequently, they are tricked or kidnapped, and then sold into prostitution; estimates are that 10,000 Burmese women and girls are trafficked into Thailand each year. The price paid by the brothel owners--\$400 to \$800--must be paid off by the young women themselves.

Bonded children working in the carpet industries of India, Pakistan, and Nepal may work up to 20 hours per day, 7 days a week. They often sleep, eat, and work in the same small, damp room, and are sometimes locked in at night.

In the jungle of south-eastern Peru, children recruited by contractors to work for 9 months in gold mines find they must continue to work well beyond that period to pay off the difference between their wages and the larger amount they owe the contractors for transportation to the mines, food, and medication. In 1991, common graves of child workers were uncovered. The corpses revealed that the youths had died of disease, work accidents such as falls, and contusions.

Most of the world's working children live in Asia, and the majority of these children work in the agricultural sector.

A 1995 report by the Indian Commission on Labor Standards states that, "even on a conservative estimate, India has the largest number of urban and rural child workers in the world." The report acknowledges at last 18.6 million working children in 1990, but notes that private organizations have placed the figure at between 44 million to over 100 million.

All JaxFax can say is thank you to our forefathers and foremothers in the labor movement, who made it possible for our sons and daughters to be able to go to school rather than work in the fields. We're glad Mother Jones raised "less corn and more hell," and helped union activists get rid of child labor in this country. It's time to do the same worldwide, and goods imported to America are part of the problem--which means we are all potentially part of the solution. In the 21st century, a child should be neither an employee nor a field hand. That is not what Jesus had in mind when he said, "suffer the little children to come unto me."

## perspectives Watch Your Tongue

**I** must confess, I didn't realize how many of the readers were interested in "language". I mean, really interested--to the extent that they wished to exchange citations and reading lists with me.

I have appended some of my "basic basics" as I call them, and most are available at the public library; if not at the



By  
PROFESSOR  
MCKINLEY  
BURT

branches, then downtown, of course. And, most importantly, use this new perspective and your enhanced powers of communication every day and every way; especially in that "nurturing" process we've been discussing here. Some of us are going to be awfully surprised when we discover just how much those preschoolers (and older) really understand when we "break the code" for them.

During the week I had a wonderful talk with a grandparent who is the sole provider for youngsters age 3, 5 and 7. This is not an unusual case at all; in fact she belongs to a 'grandparents support group.' After a spirited discussion on "Norma Loquendi" and our "lingua franca" in general, we got down to cases and found ourselves in total agreement about use of the narrative, 'building block words'; and using the 'theatre-play theme'.

I actually cleaned up my 'floor files', and had the lady and her friend bring over a total of five little ones so that we could more clearly demonstrate our techniques. I was especially interested in demonstrating a 'theatre-narrative model' which, with modifications, can be quite effective for all groups--not just little folks. In fact, The Dalles, Oregon Junior High School Mathematics-Communication Demonstration, which won a National Science Foundation Award, was an effort that drew on all my years of experience and commitment to this approach.

"The World is a theatre and the play is the thing", I emphasized; We were all in absolute agreement about the need for introduction of more of this in the curriculum. "People competent in the Mime, Puppetry and Instructive narrative is what we are lacking" said one lady--quite vehemently. And almost in unison we insisted, "...and with the proper cultural structure. It is rather difficult to find both the ethnic and cognitive (math, science) combined in contemporary curriculum.

I did show the ladies the original

dolls I used in The Dalles demonstration of communication relationships on the "stage of commerce"--and to make clear the binary, permutation math of the computers (exactly like actors appearing on a stage, one at a time). I couldn't 'do my full thing' or else my copyright and patent attorneys would have a fit. It will all be out there on the market by spring, including CD-ROM.

By the same token, I wish I could have shown much more at the Mathematics/computer demonstration I did this spring for Mr. Michael Grice at his "Saturday Academy Program". That is the very excellent program sponsored by Jefferson High School/Portland School District for gifted and talented students.

There were many other topics of interest explored during our all afternoon session. Everyone was concerned about the use of Ritalin to control and suppress "hyper" or "disruptive" children as they are termed under that stifling mantra, "Attention Deficit Disorder" (ADD). I have written here about this growing attack on the children of minorities and poor whites. All of were aware of the current congressional investigations. The president of the National Association of School Psychologists was put on the hot seat, where he squirmed and stuttered.

I showed the grandmothers "The War Against Children" by Peter R. Breggin, M.D. A very excellent book that goes in depth to reveal the machinations of some pharmaceutical companies, doctors, psychologists and school administrators. Every parent should get it--and not just depend on Town Hall, Channel 2.

Some excellent books for those really interested in language

- The Language Instinct, Steven Pinker, 1994, William Morrow;
- The Tyranny of Words, Stuart Chase, 1966, Harcourt Brace;
- The Alphabet Effect, Robert K. Logan, 1986, William Morrow;
- The Quest For Mind, Howard Gardner, 1972, Alfred Knopf;
- Language, Thought And Reality, ed. John B Carroll, 1956 MIT Press.

For deep stuff on "signs, meaning and signifying" see the following: A Theory Of Semiotics, Umberto Eco, 1979, Indiana U. Press; and Semiotics And Thematics in Hermeneutics, T.K. Seung 1982, Columbia V. Press

## Civil Rights Journal: Where Is The Justice?

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

**A**s our nation seems to be rushing backwards to the future, it is noted with a great deal of irony that those who have victimized now claim to be victims.

Thus, those who kept African American students out of Texas universities until 20 years ago have now persuaded the nation's highest court that 100 years of oppression have been remedied in one-fifth the time and that they are now the victims of reverse discrimination.

Thus, Kathie Lee Gifford, whose clothes line has reaped millions of dollars of profits for her and for Wal-Mart, has cried that she is the victim of the media when the real victims are the thousands of children who work in U.S. sweatshops in Honduras and El Salvador and other poor countries the world. The real victims are children like Wendy Diaz.

Wendy, a 15 year-old Honduran orphan, was recently brought to the U.S. to testify in Washington and to meet with Kathie Lee Gifford, whose

clothes line Wendy had worked on for 31 cents per hour. Wendy told a story of the horrors of working 13 hours per day, of being subjected to threats; of physical, verbal and sexual abuse and harassment and of often being forced to work all night. For \$21.86 per week, Wendy received no health care, no sick pay of vacation time. She told of how pregnant women were assigned to work in the pressing department, where they worked 12 or 13 hours a day on their feet in tremendous heat to force them to quit so the company would not have to pay maternity benefits.

Despite claims by Kathie Lee Gifford and Wal-Mart that they have resolved the problem, the fact is that U.S. companies are still using maquiladora sweatshop labor and still oppressing the world's poorest children. The fact is that just because Kathie Lee Gifford and Wal-Mart moved their business to another factory does not mean that they have resolved Wendy Diaz' problem and those of the hundreds of other workers who are still working at the Glo-

bal Fashion factory, which also produces J. Crew and Eddie Bauer clothes.

This is not the first time that Americans, including celebrities who endorse or design clothing and the companies who sell them, have learned of sweatshop conditions of the women and children who produce the clothes which earn them millions. So the claim of ignorance of working conditions is no longer valid or believable. The claim of ignorance can no longer absolve them and it can no longer absolve us.

Using child labor is exploitation and we, the consumers, must show that it is neither morally right or fiscally sound. We must let Kathie Lee Gifford and Wal-Mart and Eddie Bauer and J.Crew know that we do not condone the use of sweatshop labor.

We must let them know that it is not enough to move from one factory to another when the bad press hits the headlines.

We must let them know that they must return to those factories and

make certain they pay a living wage in decent work conditions, monitored by an independent human rights monitoring group. We must write them letters and we must write to our congresspersons urging them to support the efforts of Congressman George Miller of California to hold retailers, manufacturers and celebrities more accountable for labor practices behind the clothing they produce and market.

And if all else fails, we must refuse to buy the clothing produced by poor women and children inhuman conditions for pennies a day. We do live in a global village. Exploiting these workers allows corporations to leave our nation and put U.S. workers out of work. It's an economic issue. It's a justice issue.

(Note: Write to Kathie Lee Gifford at ABC, 7 Lincoln Square, New York, NY 10023. And if you'd like to contribute to the scholarship fund for Wendy Diaz, send your check to Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 South Oxford St., Brooklyn, NY 11217.)

# NO IN OUR TOWN WEEK

Because of the recent church burnings across the nation, and because of last month's crossburning in Gresham, the "Not In Our Town!" Committee in Portland, Oregon and the Mayor Vera Katz declared the week of July 21 - July 28, Not In Our Town! Week.

During Not In Our Town! Week the fair minded citizens of Oregon will display the "Not In Our Town!" Poster in the windows of their cars, homes, and places of business.

The mass display of these posters will give notice that together we will not tolerate hatred and bigotry in our town.

The current Oregon "Not In Our Town!" Campaign was started by 2 moms who were disgusted by local hate crimes.

This campaign is based on a similar successful campaign in Billings, Montana. The citizens of Billings united to oppose white supremacists who had terrorized a

Jewish family by throwing a brick through a window displaying a Menorah. The town's people all displayed Menorahs in their windows demonstrating their solidarity against bigotry.

"Not In Our Town" states that

These hate crimes are mostly acts by individuals who are not affiliated with any organization. These individuals are then encouraged to imitate these acts in their own communities because they get press and because there is no great public outcry.

The "Not In Our Town" Committee wishes to give everyone the opportunity to express their rejection of this type of crime. Further hateful acts would be discouraged if the majority of citizens show disapproval of these destructive actions.

In Billings, Montana, there have been no reported hate crimes since the campaign there.

Hatred and bigotry of many forms does exist in our community; silence will not make it go away.

We need to work together, speak together, listen to each other and learn together.

Together we can make Our Town a place where hatred and bigotry will not be tolerated!

For more information call Jane Biehl at 289-7071 or May Wallace or Peter Parks at 735-3802 Fax 735-9413 Or visit the Not In Our Town! web site: <http://www.teleport.com/~maydan/niot/>

## The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)

Established in 1970

Publisher--Charles Washington

The PORTLAND OBSERVER is located at

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

Portland, Oregon 97211

503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday, 12:00 pm

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

Second Class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and can not be used in other publications or personal usage, without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

Subscriptions: \$30.00 per year.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural 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.

### SUBSCRIBE TO The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer Can Be Sent Directly To Your Home For Only \$30.00 Per Year. Please Fill Out, Enclose Check Or Money Order. And Mail To:

SUBSCRIPTIONS

THE PORTLAND OBSERVER; PO Box 3137

PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Zip-Code: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

## Letter To The Editor

Send your letters to the Editor to:  
Editor, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

