

EDITORIAL

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

Help for the nation's capital

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON
Last winter, it took the city weeks to clear some streets after the big snow storm. Last month it was the announcement that the water was unsafe for the aged, the ill and for infants to drink.

Last week it was the announcement that three elementary schools and my old high school would not open on time because of fire safety code violations. Washington, D.C., my hometown and our Nation's Capital, is in financial trouble.

Last year an emergency financial control board was put into place to control the spending and establish a viable budget. But years of deferring capital improvements are now taking their toll. The city which houses the President of the United States, the city which symbolizes the most powerful country in the world is in big budget trouble.

And Washington, with the federal government as its largest tenant, has found itself in an impossible predicament when it comes to that budget.

In Detroit, the automobile industry pays taxes to the city. In New York, Wall Street and the publishing, broadcasting and entertainment industries pay taxes. In Los Angeles, the movie industry pays taxes to the city. But the federal government pays no taxes to the city of Washington. It does make some payments to offset that fact, but the bottom lines just don't match.

Meanwhile, the city of Washington finds itself in the same place as the states, which have the responsibility of paying for prisons, for medical treatment for the poor and other necessary services. Infant mortality in Washington is equivalent to that in some of the poorest countries, Washington has high incidences of HIV/AIDS and many households that fall below poverty guidelines.

All of this means that the city of Washington is bankrupt. Some of the fault of this lies in city administrations which hired too many workers and made unwise budget decisions over a period of years. But some of the fault lies in the fact that Washing-

ton has no taxation authority to tax commuters who use their services free and true costs of running the city were not taken into account when the federal government turned over some of that administration years ago.

Over the years, poor city management and declining dollars have meant that the black middle class, a long mainstay for Washington, has fled to the suburbs for better services. Washington is increasingly a city of the poor, who have few tax dollars to contribute. A downward spiral has quickly ensued.

The only positive and creative idea of how to deal with Washington's budget crisis has come from Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington's non-voting delegate. She has suggested that Washington be designated as a special federal tax zone, with a flat 15% federal tax for Washington residents. She believes that such a tax break is the only way to get middle class tax payers to move back into the city. Clearly, without tax payers, Washington cannot survive.

The most curious thing about this

Democratic city which he is so anxious to continue to be his home. His chief of staff, Leon Panetta, recently questioned Ms. Norton's tax proposal, by asking how to justify such a tax plan for Washington and not for other major cities.

But other cities are not Washington. Other cities have other tax bases and corporations to help in their rebuilding. That's what happened in Cleveland, where I now live and which is undergoing an incredible re-birth. Other cities do not find themselves having to provide the same services as their states. Other cities are not the Nation's Capital.

Ms. Norton's proposal deserves a more serious examination by the White House. In this election year, the President must take a more responsible position to help save his hometown and make it one we all are proud of.

To express your views to President Clinton about Washington D.C., write to the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20500.

Your life, your choice

BY JUNIO RICARDO STANTON
Things turn out the best for people who make the best of the way things turn out. Life offers its share of disappointments, setbacks, heartaches and pain.

No one escapes the vicissitudes of life; success and loss are intrinsically woven into the tapestry of living. Given this, it behooves us to approach life wisely and not get too excited when things are going well or too depressed when things are not going as we expected or planned.

Life has a way of throwing a curve. Just when you thought you could see your way out of financial difficulties, the kids move back in, the hot water heater goes or the car needs major repairs. People let you down, friends come up short and you don't always get your way.

The secret to life is being flexible and resilient. Being resilient means being able to bounce back from adversity, getting up after you've been knocked down, holding on until your legs strengthen, your head clears or the bell rings. Resilience means being able to regroup under pressure and coming back stronger and more determined than ever.

I met a young man who was in a motorcycle crash which left him paralyzed from the neck down.

When he was in high school, he took up art. While in recovery, one of his brothers suggested he learn to draw using his mouth.

At first the young man resisted. His brother persisted so finally he relented.

That was 13 years ago. Today the young man is an accomplished portrait artist. He draws using pencils

and colored ink pens. If you saw his work, you would never in a million years think it was done by a man who is paralyzed, who draws with his mouth.

That young man can't change the fact that he's in a wheelchair or that he is paralyzed from the neck down.

However, he is making the most of what he has--his talents, his energy--and he is making the world lovelier with his portraits, and his "can do" spirit.

I know it's small comfort to know others are going through pain and suffering; that doesn't ease your agony or angst.

However, it may help you to stop focusing on your problems and thinking that you're the only one on earth going through trials and tribulation.

Life is a school, a giant classroom constantly presenting us lessons to

fail, re-experience and master. There is always a message in every mess, a lesson in every loss and an opportunity in every ordeal.

The question is this: What will you learn from the experience and how will you choose to respond to the situation?

The choice is up to you. You can choose to wallow in self-pity, don a countenance of doom and gloom or you can choose to find and make something good come out of it.

If you choose the latter, more than likely, when all said and done, something good and redemptive will come out of it.

Focus on what you have left rather than what you have lost. Like I said in the beginning: Things turn out for the best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out.

Public Forum Or National Inquirer?

NO one will ever know who controls the media in this country until some of the most crucial cases comes before it to put it to the test.

It is time to open a dialogue with a media that has been blinded in every issue concerning Arab-Americans rights, even issues that deal with human rights which is worth noting. Who controls the media and what stories to write about and what stories to suppress for the benefit of either the newspaper or its lucrative returns, and elusive way to ignore public interests and concerns.

The question becomes who is manipulating the media and its journalists of what to publish and what to relay matters of significance as matters of no significance at all. So clearly there are well-organized groups

who would tell the media what the news of the day is, yet the news is lacking public interest. Take O.J. Simpson, for instance, the news about him was covered on a large scale and on a daily basis more than covering stories about global issues and political matters combined. There is one explanation to this: the story is lucrative to the media while it is poor in character to public opinion that if it counts in the eyes of the media.

This is my first attempt to open a dialogue with the media in this country and find it compelling to ask these questions. What freedom of the press means to you? What is the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and what is your interpretation to it? Do we have Bill of Rights that are applied in theological order as far as the media is concerned: Why the

media is trying very hard to focus on Arabs and Muslims as the enemies of the United States? The answers to these questions perhaps are basked in favor of the media which tell us nothing.

If politically-oriented media exists in this country, no one would be denied the freedom of expression should he or she decide to voice their concerns in a public forum.

Unfortunately, the media decides, all the time, what the news of the day will be.

Of all people who were deprived of their rights to speak out and address significant issues of concern, even solutions to our problems, how many opinions the media suppressed and how many valuable ideas were discarded by a media that does not discern of what is good and what is

bad?

I am not writing this letter to lecture anyone or to preach my ideas, I am writing to open a dialogue with the news media as one who reads and listen to the news everyday. Millions of other people are doing the same.

We need the media to open its doors to the public and listen to all sides before it reports a story of its choice.

Without having the public and everyone of us involved in the news forum, I believe the media remains blind and out of focus.

This country belongs to the people. This country has its unique audience--that has the ability to listen, take notes, and give standing ovation to a news media in transition towards impartiality and reform.

Written By Samir Taha

Scapegoating The Innocent

Dear Portland Observer,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you personally and to inform the U.S. government and the Congress of the backlash Arab-Americans are experiencing due to a biased and irrational reports by the media and some officials concerning any tragic incident that happens to this country.

We Arabs find it appalling and inflammatory, since the public opinion will turn negative against us and subject each one of us to discrimination and racism.

No one in this country has suffered from discrimination more than me personally and of course many Arab-Americans as well. There is something going on against Arab-Americans living in this country and I am sure you are unaware of it. This letter, however, will serve as a walk-up call to all of you in the U.S. government and the Congress to ask

yourselves this question: Are we dividing this country into racial zones and find some of the minority groups guilty by association? What role this government and the media should play to protect this country from politically motivated racism? Before looking for answers, you have to know about my case.

I lost my private business more than four months ago. Because this was a racially motivated action and it deprived me of my ability to earn a living for me and my family, I filed a legal action in U.S. Federal Court in Portland, Oregon. My case No. is CV-96-419-HA. To date, the court did nothing to me other than siding with defendants and denying me due process rights as well as equal protection rights. There is also evidence that obstruction of justice is taking place in this case.

I must confess that I am being treated politically especially when I go to court to seek justice and protec-

tion and find that the court is acting in callous indifference to my federally protected rights. I am a citizen of this country and I am entitled to the equal protection of law.

I call upon you and urge you to interfere in this very serious matter and do your level best to assure the victims of discrimination that freedom and justice apply to all of us and that the courts protect our rights and lives.

In sum, I have a case pending before the U.S. Federal Court in Portland, Oregon. I am very concerned about begin denied my legal rights by the court itself. All the proceed-

ings in this case show deep-seated antagonism towards me and towards my race. It will be impossible to make a living in this country should the court dismiss the case without affording me due process rights and protecting my property and liberty interest which have been seriously violated.

It is time to act and investigate matters like this one. Because it is very critical I decided to write you. And because this country stands up for freedom and justice for all I turned to you to live up to these principles. God bless America and all of you.

Sincerely, Samir Taha

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

perspectives Funny you should ask

Yes, I do have the July 18, 1996 issue of "Nature", the preeminent science magazine (vol 382).

The reason being that I am advising a little early-teen science club like the ones we kids had in our corner of the innercity many years ago.

The articles of interest for this month-long focus were "Rotation Of The Inner Core" (of the

earth-fascinating cover illustration) and "Nicotine Addiction: The Smoking Gun". However, 'my' prime interest has been on a book review of "The Culture Of Education", by Jerome Bruner. A comment on his idea of a "spiral curriculum" coincides exactly with our reader's query about the "good old days" in the elementary or "grade schools".

Dr. Bruner was best known in educational circles (1960s and 1970) for his recommendation that children should be taught at different ages about the same topic but at different levels of sophistication; "under this scheme they would be introduced to a topic in physics, for example, in a basic way reasonably early on in school, and then reintroduced to it in a more formal and abstract manner later."

I completely agree with the gentleman, but am constrained to inquire, "what took you so long?", you pedantic gurus of education". After all our reader asks, "what were they doing so right back there from 1900 up to World War II, that many men whose education had ended at the eighth grade were founding America's basic industries and patenting sophisticated inventions (white and black)."

These early 'masters of technology' had early on received the prerequisite fundamentals of language, reading skills, computation and self-discipline, such that they could pursue and education par excellence at the libraries, through correspondence schools, or as on-the-job apprentices. I maintain that the "spiral approach" which was the essence of the teaching art in earlier times has a lot to do with the superior product of those early 'grammar school's'.

I invited our very interested Portland Observer reader over to inspect some materials I have from those "good old days" (The lady has three children in elementary school I explained that when my mother and aunt attended Stowes Teacher's College in St. Louis Missouri, they were given a spiral educational schema which contemplated repeated intersections with the same disciplines along a

lengthy pedagogic time line. Taking this into account, their curriculum enabled them to understand the many steps and goals to be achieved in the various disciplines along the time line; that is, exactly what foundation was required for the student to take the next step in a competent and confident manner. Consequently, the future elementary school teachers not only had the vaunted "methodologies"; but had good grounding in the sciences and humanities.

They could guide and reinforce a student in a more than adequate fashion anywhere along the time-line from K-1 to K-8--and I would put these sisters up against 90% of today's high school teachers. After all it was asked, "how could you guide and prepare someone for a goal, if you, yourself, didn't understand that target."

How useless is an 'architect' who cannot design a foundation adequate to support those obvious superstructures that will be added by the education objectives. And a sound structure must be soundly implemented. Well, so much for the tautologies and rhetoric, but that's the way it was--and should be again. I ended up showing the lady a copy of a note I wrote in the third grade.

"Dear teacher, I wish to acknowledge to you that I did not participate in the disturbance of your room yesterday. You have misinformed my mother...ect." My mother, being a sharp cook, knew better than my precocious fib--but was kind of proud of my "talent" (?)

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Letter To The Editor

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