

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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## Letter To The Editor

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## Taking action against prison growth

**I have been reading, hearing, and seeing quite a bit about where to put prisons, and where not to. From what I understand, there must have been quite a few citizens who voted for prisons, who also don't want prisons in their communities.**

This presents a dilemma. How do we get all those so-called "evil" prisoners out of sight and out of mind? If we can do this we can "protect" our communities and also not have to worry about these people who have become sidetracked by our society and other forces.

But suppose that if every person who voted for prisons, but who don't want prisons in their community, would volunteer two or three hours a week to help some of the socially challenged children and youth, the need for these extra prisons might be eliminated and maybe we could get rid of some of the ones we now have. In this way we could help some of these people get into the mainstream of society and find usefulness as a person.

If we would spend more effort on dealing with the causes rather than the symptoms, we could eventually save money and pour those funds into education or other demanding needs of our society.

The Kiwanis Club to which I belong, has several members that go into classrooms and help so-

cially and educationally challenged students. By the way, this happened before President Clinton started emphasizing volunteerism. At the suggestion of one of our members, our club also purchased books for some of these students. In a case or two, this may have been the first time that a student owned a book with a positive potential. Reports coming from our members indicate that the personal attention these students receive has done wonders in self-esteem and self-evaluation and success.

The member who was the motivating person behind this program has said something to the effect that by investing in these young lives now, we can have an influence on them and a chance of preventing the development of a criminal.

Are we too interested in our own pleasures, clubs, organizational churches, sports, work, etc., to give of ourselves to help those who need our help? Continually voting tax monies to put these people "out of sight" and "out of mind" has not been successful. We need to become personally involved in the lives of those who seem different to us and supposedly not motivated with the highest standards.

Perhaps our society is where the problem lies and not with those we want to get rid of.

Will we do anything about it?

--Allan W. Miller, Sr.

## perspectives

### More science - the right kind II

**I** promised last week to explore more deeply into this seemingly unmanageable beast we have chosen to call "science." But before we do, let me refer you to some citations in my second article that appeared last week (6/18/97), "Minority Business: Where Are Our Buffalo?"

At the end of the article I appended a list of 12 African-American scientists and managers of important centers of the nation's technology. This was done in my usual mode of providing relevant motivational structure that will be useful whatever the venue.

I believe that these carefully chosen citations can serve the same purpose here, so please retain this issue of the Portland Observer (If you did not, call me at 284-7080).

Now, let us 'begin at the beginnings' as has been cited by some as a suitable approach to matters which may prove to be somewhat difficult to understand. For our purposes here, that is 'beginning' with the experi-

ences and indicated needs of community's students, parents and teachers.

If you are a parent or teacher (or older student) who has 'examined the literature', and perceived a common approach by those who would take away the mystery conjured up by the word "science", you may very well have been impressed and enlightened by the approach taken by the late and renowned Isaac Asimov: Chapter I of his 'Asimov's New Guide to Science' was about as basic as one could get, "what is Science?"

And, indeed, the "common approach" is to cite the wonderful progress and general enlightenment that has been achieved by mankind, all or most of which can be attributed to "Science".

And, again, there is a common mode of introducing a familiar pantheon of brilliant Greeks whose intellects and paradigms are said

to have laid the foundations of our scientific knowledge and technology: Aristotle, Plato, Thales, Democritus - Deduction, Abstraction, Axioms, Syllogisms, Etc. (what happened to the other contributors?)

However, we referred earlier to "beginning with the experiences and indicated needs of our community's students, parents and teachers." This is the only source for instructive as-



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

essments and valid solutions - an imperative task given the current turmoil uncertainty in the Portland School District.

First off, it must be emphasized that "science" as we know and practice it is about 'discipline' about 'order', about 'controlling' one's urges and appetites - and it is not about the serendipity, disorganized collecting of interesting facts, hedge hopping from one unrelated percep-

tion to another, but never building a cohesive structure or foundation upon which new and 'valid' knowledge can be placed (Scientific Method).

Very early on, our students must be made to understand (in terms of reliable models) that their health, their food supply, the air that they breathe, the educational structures within which they are taught, the clothes they wear are all controlled, produced or modified by the parameters of science and technology.

And they must understand as well that mathematics and language are the key imperatives if one is to have a meaningful place in today's world.

In past (and recent) years I've found such pleasure in working with those teachers who thoroughly understand the needs and successfully work toward solutions (for instance Mr. Michael Grace at Jefferson High School's "Saturday Academy").

Next week we will cite sources for key literature, science kits, and other materials that will enhance the learning environment in 'real time'.

## Civil Rights Journal: A Prayer For Sister Betty

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

**S**he epitomized the old saying "behind every good man..." She epitomized the new saying "beside every good man..." Then, she epitomized what is too often a reality, showing the world that strong and proud black women are sometimes forced to continue on when their men are gone. Now she teaches us about trust in the Creator, about the power deeply resident inside herself and about life itself.

Betty Shabazz has never been a run-of-the-mill ordinary kind of person. If she had been, she would never have married Malcolm X and he would never have married her. She would never have been able to go through all of the negative outcomes of having a highly-public "radical" husband -- the

firebombings, the threats on her family, the dangers of the power structure which saw him as a threat against the status quo. She would never have been able to go through all the positive outcomes of having a husband who was one of the most brilliant and outspoken leaders in the history of black America -- the constant public attention, the public adoration and the unrelenting respect of many in the black community. Betty Shabazz has never been ordinary.

Betty Shabazz has understood for decades the symbol she has become. She understood that as the wife of Malcolm X. She understood that in the midst of her husband's assassination and its aftermath. She understood that as a community leader and educator and powerful public speaker.

But Betty Shabazz has always been more than a public figure, more

than the wife and then the widow of Malcolm X. She has been the mother of six daughters -- children who, like herself, had seen their father murdered before their eyes. Children who needed not only nurturing and love and attention and direction, but also needed to work through their father's murder.

It was Betty Shabazz, the mother, who stood with her daughter months ago when this child, who had never been able to put her father's assassination behind her, was accused of trying to have Louis Farrakhan, whom she believed to have ordered her father's death, murdered. It was Betty Shabazz, the mother and grandmother, who then brought her grandson, the child of the troubled mother, to live with her.

Betty Shabazz has also been a quiet, but powerful keeper of the legacy of Malcolm X through the

decades since his death. African American New Yorkers knew they could count on her to support community efforts, to participate in programs for young people, to be present in economic and political empowerment programs for her husband and Martin Luther King, Jr., she has also been a supporter of women's empowerment and a friend to many -- the politically powerful and just ordinary people. So, it was no wonder that hundreds stood in line to donate blood to Betty Shabazz after the horrible fire which threatens her life.

It is no wonder that millions of people throughout the world -- of all races, all faiths, all ages and classes -- have joined in prayer for this remarkable woman. She has touched so many of us in the past and she touches so many of us now.

## The Vanport Flood of 1948 No Accident

BY CLEO FRANKLIN

**V**anport was a wartime housing project of 18,000 people, Vanport was the second largest city in Oregon, completed in September of 1943.

The Kaiser Foundation started this project and it was taken over by The Portland Housing Authority. Vanport had a significant number of black citizens assigned to a specific area of town although the city had residents of all races. The churches, stores and other facilities were available to all regardless of race. Vanport was not an easy place to live its residents had to battle racial differences, little family life, poorly built homes, very little material values and long hard working hours at the shipyards.

Memorial Day, May 30, 1948 at about 4:00 p.m. a railroad fill which served as part of the "dike" system failed in the shanty town. According to eye witnesses most people fled on foot because several hundred stalled automobiles jammed traffic at the exit of Vanport. Denver Street was the primary entrance and exit to the community and there were reports of at least one hundred fifty cars, trucks and buses submerged under water. Also, there were many reports of children being swept away and dozens of people overtaken and thrown down by a six foot wave of water, yet the local newspaper reported about two dozen people were perished. Again, eye witnesses reported 100's of bodies were taken to the old swift meat packing facility which was setup as a temporary morgue. Most residents were not able to salvage even household items and rescue workers had to lift many people from the rooftops of floating apartment buildings. The flood caused total loss of public and private property. The prearranged si-

ren signal for the residents was sounded within minutes as a six foot wall of water swept into the city, hundreds heard the warning but ignored the danger because the Portland Housing Authority had placed a mimeographed sheet on residents doors advising them that they would have plenty of warning if the "dike" was threatened. The U.S. Army Engineers issued a statement the night before that no north Portland "dikes" were in danger. As it turns out the U.S. Army Engineers were wrong and failed to properly notify the people of Vanport of the real danger.

To better understand what happened in Vanport it is necessary to understand the unique Columbia River Basin, which is the fourth largest river in North America. The Columbia Originates in British Columbia and flows 1,214 miles to the Pacific Ocean near Astoria, Oregon. Physically, the Basin consists of the Rocky Mountains to the east and north, the Cascade Range on the west, and the Great Basin to the south. The Columbia River begins its flow through this basin from Canada's Rocky Mountain Range and eventually becomes the border between Washington and Oregon. Along the way, the Columbia is fed by a number of major tributaries, the three largest include the Kootenai, the Clark Fork-Pend Oreille and the Snake Rivers. Other include the Payette, the Sultan, the Cowlitz, the Santiam and the Willamette. While each of these tributaries has its own unique characteristics, the Columbia River and the Basin represent the larger whole to which they are

all connected. The Columbia is referred to as a multiple-use river system. Also, the Columbia River Basin is an essential reason for the Northwest being a dynamic and highly prosperous region within the nation and the world. Hydropower flood control, irrigation, navigation and recreation are specific benefits that the uniqueness of the Basin and its river system provides. As the water flows to the Pacific, the Columbia River is second only to the Missouri-Mississippi River System in term of annual run-off. But because of the regions topography and its gradients water flows through the

**The U.S. Army Engineers issued a statement the night before that no north Portland "dikes" were in danger.**

Columbia River system like no other river system in the United States. This unique combination and the hydrologic cycle is the reason that almost half of all hydroelectric generation in this nation comes from the Northwest. Historically, the two priorities for coordinated management of the Columbia River system have been electric generation and flood control.

The Boundary Waters Treaty (Treaty Between the United States and Great Britain Relating to Boundary waters between the United States and Canada) and the evolution of sophisticated planning and inter-agency cooperation have resulted in up to 39.7 million acre-feet of storage being available for flood control. By manipulating the amount of water in reservoirs throughout the Basin System operators are able to create a "balance" between releasing water to produce hydropower when it is most needed and reducing the potential for flooding. In 1948,

the importance of flood control became a priority following the Vanport flood. The Army Corps of Engineers responded by developing a multiple-use reservoir storage plan for the Columbia River Basin. Irrigation is another benefit that stems directly from the unique nature of the Columbia River Basin, in fact about six percent of the Columbia Basin Project that turned the high desert area of central Washington into another bread basket for America is the Grand Coulee Dam, which was built primarily as an irrigation project by the Bureau of Reclamation.

Because of the Treaty between the United States and Canada waters from the Grand Coulee Dam had to be released to control flooding and it was the release of water from the Grand Coulee Dam that caused Vanport to flood. The waters took approximately four days to reach Vanport and the Army Corps and other Officials had more than enough time to get Vanport residents out of harms way. Vanport residents who had insurance even received letters from there insurance company suggesting that there could have been more of a warning that water was coming but no warning was issued.

The Vanport flood should have never resulted in loss of life and property without notice. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Officials of the Bureau of Reclamation had knowledge of the danger, and only after the Vanport Flood did the Corps of Engineers develop a multiple-use reservoir storage plan for the Columbia River Basin. Many 100's of Women, and Children did not have to die in The Vanport Flood of 1948 and hopefully this will never ever happen again.

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