

# EDITORIAL

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

### Attention Readers!

Please take a minute to send us your comments. We're always trying to give you a better paper and we can't do it without your help. Tell us what you like and what needs improvement...any suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. We take criticism well! Get your powerful pens out NOW and address your letters to: Editor, Reader Response, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

p e r s p e c t i v e s

## The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680) Established in 1970

Charles Washington  
Publisher & Editor

Mark Washington  
Distribution Manager

Gary Ann Taylor  
Business Manager

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.  
Director of Operation

Iesha Williams  
Graphic Design

Tony Washington  
Associate Editor

### Contributing Writers:

Professor McKinley Burt,  
Lee Perlman,  
Neil Heilpern,  
Joy Ramos

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,  
Portland, Oregon 97211

503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015

Email: Pdxobserv@aol.com

Deadline for all submitted materials:

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

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

Subscriptions: \$60.00 per year

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 cannot 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.

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, Oregon Federation of Advertising, American Minorities Media, 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 \$60.00 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

## We Need To Heal, Not Hurt, Children In Trouble

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

A harsh Senate bill that would treat children as young as 14 like hardened adult criminals by tossing them in adult jails has a serious chance of becoming national law this year unless our community takes action.

Senate Bill 10 (S.10) threatens to wipe out more than two decades of progress in protecting children from adults in jail. The Children's Defense Fund's (CDF) work in the early 1970s to expose the horrors faced by children locked in adult jails helped lead to passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act which guaranteed that children would be separated from adult prisoners.

Now politicians are poised to remove those safeguards. The House has already passed a companion bill to S.10 and election-year politics could put this misguided, mean-spirited law on a fast track.

Besides subjecting children as young as 14 to adult jails, the bill will treat nonviolent offenders and runaways and truants harshly by allowing them to be locked up for up to 14 days, and held in adult jails up to 24 hours.

Of all youths arrested, only one in 20 youths is arrested for a violent crime, yet the bill allows the juvenile justice system to be undermined based on a minority. S.10 is based on fear, not facts. Most children are arrested for nonviolent offenses like vandalism and shoplifting.

"The current politically driven debate ignores not only the significant recent drops in crime, juvenile crime, and homicides, but ignores the lessons of the past decade on how to reduce crime," says CDF Assistant General Counsel Kim Wade.

There's clear evidence that S.10 poses a serious danger to our young people. Children jailed with adults are eight times more likely to commit

suicide, five times more likely to be sexually assaulted, and twice as likely to be assaulted by prison staff.

This bill will make an already unfair system even tougher on Black children. Even though Black children represent only 15 percent of all children in the United States, they constitute more than half of all children transferred to adult courts. Even when prior records are similar, Black youths are more likely than White youths to be arrested, tried as adults, convicted, and imprisoned. This bill does nothing to address the higher rate of minority youth confinement.

It is particularly disturbing that S.10 also fails to break the deadly link between children and guns, although the availability of cheap guns lies at the root of the problem of youth violence. In 1995, 83 percent of murdered children over age 12 were killed with a gun.

S.10 would not spend a penny on programs that prevent crime. The city of Boston has lost only one child to gun violence since July 1995, a dramatic record made possible by church-led efforts to give children opportunities to be nurtured and grow so they can become productive, law-abiding citizens ready to take their place in the world.

Clearly new strategies are needed to address a violent crime problem that has left too many neighborhoods unsafe and too many young people in prison, injured, or dead. But politicians shouldn't overlook proven preventive measures in favor of politically popular approaches that will surely make youth crime and violence worse.

Join DCF's Black Community Crusade for Children (BCCC) in opposing S.10 and call your Senators today at the U.S. Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 to urge them to vote against S.10.



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

Have you ever heard that familiar legal phraseology delivered in such solemn and serious tones as when Vernon Jordan, the President's good friend, described his own testimony within the grand jury room? Or, as it had been put, "nothing but the facts, ma'am!"

But the White House aside, we wonder how many of our readers may have noticed the passing of noted historian, Henry Steele Commager at age 91. And if the name proves familiar, it is, because I have so often cited his best known work in support of facts that might raise eyebrow. For almost fifty years Steele edited the authoritative, "Documents of American History."

His foreword says it quite well, "Here are the fundamental sources of American history which all students of the subject read about, but for the most part have not read; in this they share embarrassment with many of their teachers, well-read scholars

though they be...and would have quoted fifth-hand testimony with as clear a conscience as documents themselves."

Effective educational use of documents is practically impossible unless their content can be retrieved by means of an information system whose operation and intent is as consistent and trustworthy as the human condition would seem to permit. Lawyers, judges, statesmen and politicians, scholars and students, writers, pundits and knowledgeable citizens have all come to accept Commager's magnum opus as a credible product (But Careful, facts can mislead you).

Ever so often I draw the reader's attention to this type of evidentiary support for use in their efforts to authenticate many of the factual = but nevertheless challenged - accounts of African American history. Now, it is the case, sometimes, that the supporting facts and documentation

are corollary, rather than direct.

For instance, when I was making the case that the opportunity for America to obtain all those tens of millions of acres of land through the "Louisiana Purchase" come about because of the indomitable courage of the revolting Haitian slaves under the leadership of the black generals, Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines - Napoleon Bonaparte realized he could never hold the far-away West Indies against these freedom fighters - I used specific documents from "Commager's" to illuminate the stage.

"Document No. 107. Jefferson On The Importance of New Orleans April 18, 1802." In this letter to the American minister in France, Thomas Jefferson expressed his extreme nervousness and "concern over the occupation of New Orleans and Florida." At the same time Jefferson tells British he would rather "marry their fleet" than see France control the Mississippi."

"Document No. 108, The

Cessation of Louisiana April 30, 1803" Jefferson and his advisors in a "state of consternation" as they learn of a secret agreement by which Catholic Spain ceded all of the territory West of the Mississippi back to France. Almost overnight a frantic U.S. Congress appropriates \$2,000,000 for the purchase of this "Louisiana Territory."

However, in the foreword to this quite 'factual' document, Commager supplies this historic fiction. "For reasons primarily concerned with the critical military situation on the 'continent', Napoleon decided to sell the whole of Louisiana." (What you say!).

What happened to the "slave revolts" that struck terror in the hearts of American cotton growers"? Toussaint Louverture and to Dessalines? See "Before The Mayflower" by Lerone Benne Jr. and see books by J.A. Rogers. Napoleon got more mileage out of these two black generals than the 12 on European staff.

## Still Separate And Unequal

BY THE RAIN BOW PUSH COALITION

Thirty years ago, the Kerner Commission reported that America was in danger of becoming two societies - "one black, one white; separate and unequal." This week the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation's report finds that the Kerner Commission's predictions have been realized. The structural, vertical gaps are widening despite the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in Brown v. Board of Education.

The Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and the Citizenship Education Fund ad-

ressed this issue and hosted the second annual "Closing the Gap" Education policy conference Sunday, March 8-Tuesday March 10.

The highlight of the conference was a three-stop tour of a suburban high school (Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville, IL), an urban high school (DuSable High School in Chicago), and the Cook County Corrections Center.

Rev. Jackson said, "This tour is a poignant illustration of the disparities between the haves and the have-nots and why poor children end up in jail

and affluent children end up at Yale."

Neuqua Valley High School - A \$62 Million Model

\* Nine specialized computer labs, two gyms, and exercise room, and an Olympic-size swimming pool.

\* Teachers' salaries are as much as \$20,000 higher than their inadequately funded urban counterparts.

DuSable High School, by contrast, simply does not have the resources to compete. It is the ultimate statement of cynicism for the state to have confidence in jails over schools and to fund them

accordingly.

According to the Education Trust's 1996 Education Watch State and National Data Book...

\* School districts with less than 5% of their children in poverty spent on average \$6565 per student.

\* School districts with more than 25% of their children in poverty spent \$5173 per student.

Poor children, whether urban or rural, need more support, not less, to overcome the obstacles to learning in their daily lives.

## BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES: Supporting Family Strengths



"When our family faces a challenge, we face it head on. With all our minds put together, we'll come up with something to meet that challenge."

—GENEVA JONES, grandparent of six, great-grandparent of three



The Portland Observer Multnomah County's Family Centers support family strengths with 14 locations throughout the county.