

EDITORIAL

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Teenage Smokers

By BARBARA CIMAGLIO

You don't have to look far to find a group of teen-agers smoking a cigarette. They're outside the malls and fast-food places, and standing around on street corners all over Oregon.

Twenty-five percent of Oregon's youth consider themselves smokers. That's 3% higher than the adult population. And smoking rates among youth are increasing.

That statistic is just one of many that should concern us all. Tobacco alone kills more than 7,000 Oregonians each year. It's our leading cause of preventable death, accounting for more than four times the number of deaths from motor vehicle accidents, suicide, AIDS, and homicide combined.

The number of young people who smoke and chew foretells a possible future of even higher levels of preventable death and suffering, and tells us that we need to do more to convince young people that smoking and chewing tobacco are wrong.

To convince teen-agers not to do something or change destructive behaviors are daunting tasks. Hollywood stars are seen smoking in popular movies, peers convince their teen friends that

smoking or chewing is "cool," and the tobacco industry spends millions of dollars every day promoting its products.

Advertising messages appeal particularly to teen-agers, and they are effective. Smoking rates nearly doubled among adolescent females following introduction of Virginia slims advertising, and smokeless tobacco use among adolescent males doubled following heavy promotion of a special product for "beginners."

So what can we do?

One weapon in the fight is reducing young people's access to tobacco products.

In cooperation with Oregon State Police, my office coordinates regular inspections, or "stings," at retail stores throughout the state. In the inspections, a teen-ager 16 or younger, accompanied by a plain-clothes police officer, attempts to buy tobacco at supermarkets and mini-marts.

My office keeps track of whether store clerks check the customers identification, how often tobacco is sold and other statistics. Clerks who sell to the minors are cited and can be fined up to \$500.

There is good news. In the most recent inspections in

Marion and Lane counties, it was harder to buy tobacco than it was last time we conducted inspections. The overall statewide rate of sales to minors is about 27%. That's improving, but still unacceptably high. Oregon's goal is to reduce sales to minors to no more than 5%.

We continue to see that clerks frequently sell tobacco to minors even after checking identification. We're working to improve the system so that clerks can easily determine a customer's age and make the correct decision about whether to sell or not sell.

Our office and others from the federal to the local level also spend a lot of money, time and energy developing anti-tobacco advertising and programs.

But no program will succeed without one major ingredient: Parents. Parents who educate their children about the dangers of smoking and chewing are our most potent allies in the war against tobacco.

I urge parents to help us make anti-tobacco messages a regular topic of conversation. Also, I urge parents who use tobacco to quit, not only for their own health but to serve as a good role model for their children. Together we can make a difference.



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

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A reader says, "thanks for that 'little short-form reenforcement of our history last week. We always take copies of your articles to work and pin them on the bulletin board. And no matter how easily most of your revelations can be proven, the hard core racists at our plant never give up."

Through the years old buddy, through the years! "The truth and the whole truth" are there. Though some of our country's most erudite scholars and the cultural elite - who control of our communications and school curriculums - insist on suborning perjury when it comes to African and African American history.

It is said that "power corrupts and absolute power absolutely corrupts." The "guardians at the gate" whom I have just described ignore or pretend that there are no such key sources for research and documentation as the

"The Truth, The Whole Truth, And Nothing But The Truth," II

British Colonial Office, Archives of the Spanish and Portuguese nations, The Vatican Library, and urban centers, and "Lloyds of London" files.

There are European publications of collections of letters sent home by immigrants in America - what really went on in ante bellum society and on those plantations where blacks performed every skilled craft and innovated technology (I have several of these). And then there are the detailed military records of the 'occupying' Union armies during the 'reconstruction Period' following the Civil War (some I found in the archives of the Oregon National Guard).

That Military described the former slaves as using the very technical skills and necessary interaction exploited by their greedy masters to "promptly set up their own schools, road systems and other elements of county government." That doesn't quite sound like the bungling, grinning, artless 'darker' (sic) of our con-

ventional historians who write to slyly justify the terror and rape of the murderous Ku Klux Klan as they took back the land from the newly 'freed' blacks (see Geonovese, Meier and Rudwick, W.E.B. Dubois, Booker T. Washington on black technology).

And if one were really seeking truth, certainly America's state and county historical societies would not be ignored - or their records censored before publication, as I have found to be the case. For instance, when lecturing on black contributions to technology before a U.S. Forest Service personnel group, I was often interrupted by a member of the audience who had his own story to tell.

Typically, this person would be a white southerner (99 or a 100% white audience) who would ask to talk to me after the seminar because he or she knew a black inventor. I remember one encounter in Eastern Oregon where my account of the invention of the most practical of the railroad

semaphores by Richard B. Spikes elicited the information that "a even more practical semaphore had been invented by a southern black man in Iowa." (Read it within the engine").

The only details I was given were that the inventor was originally from Alabama, the time was the early 1920's on (or less) with so many of these black innovators.

Too make a long story short, I found a historical society in the same county as Buxton, and in the cooperative manner of most of these groups they went to work, polling members, citing many query in their newsletter. Within a month I learned that a large number of blacks had come to that area from Alabama when coal veins were discovered in Iowa. In another few weeks an elderly resident called who knew of the inventor and a remaining family member. I was able to take it from there, finding the patent in the downtown Portland library.

Cont'd next week.

Amending American History

By HUGH B. PRICE

President, National Urban League

In *Practicing History*, the eminent historian, Barbara W. Tuchman, describes the cardinal sin of her field this way: "Leaving things out because they do not fit in writing fiction, not history."

You don't have to be a scholar to realize that in the past many American history textbooks as well as general-interest history books were in fact partly fictionalized accounts of the real American history; they left certain things out because they did not "fit" the prevailing notion that, among other things, American history should be seen as the history of white Americans and as free of significant blemishes.

That invariably meant that in nearly all of the history texts published before the 1970's-college as well as primary and secondary school-

no people of color had an American history worth learning about.

Such distortions of American history still continue. In *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, written in 1995, James W. Loewen presents a detailed, devastating examination of the "mis-history" of a dozen secondary school history texts which are currently widely used. These books, he writes at one point, present "distorted and indefeasible incomplete accounts of our past," and goes on to add that "our textbooks are so Anglocentric that they might be considered Protestant history."

Loewen also identifies some of the

ramifications of this false scholarship: the telling of the American past largely as a story of the triumphs of whites over other peoples, the pretense that other peoples have simply been passive actors in the building of the United States; the obscuring of the fact that in American history as that of other nations, sometimes wrong has triumphed; and the depriving young minds of the awareness that potential role models for good exist amongst all those who have been Americans.

None have fought more vigorously to amend that warped view of the American past than African Americans. It is the primary reason the historian Carter G. Woodson, whose parents had been born

into slavery, began the celebration of Negro History Week (now Black History Month) in February of 1926. This year we at the National Urban League have celebrated the occasion by devoting an issue of our newly-revived *Opportunity Journal* to a multifaceted discussion of African American history.

That such a discussion is still necessary was underscored for me recently by the letter a parent, who is also a teacher, wrote to the *Boston Globe* newspaper after seeing the movie "Amistad."

"As a parent and teacher, I find it discouraging that before (the movie), few of us knew about this important event from our nation's history," she wrote.

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