

EDITORIAL

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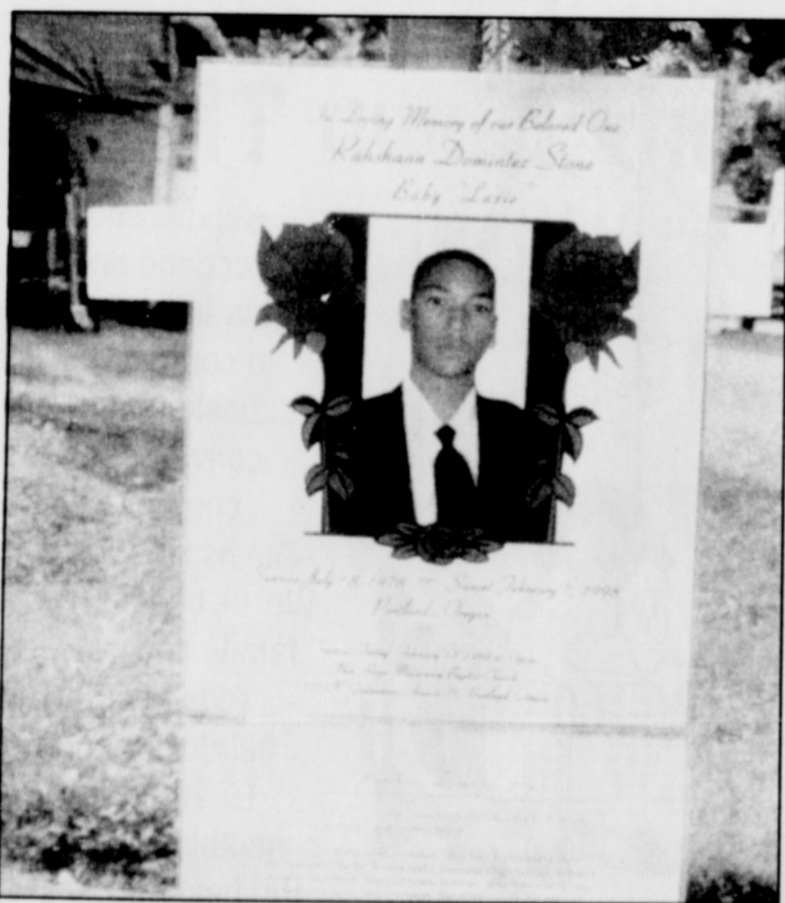
THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Letter To The Editor

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

On February 7, 1998 my son Rahshann Stone was murdered on N.E. 14th and Going St. At the time of his death he had made some positive changes in his life, was working, taking responsibility for his son and no longer associating with former gang members.

At the time of my son's death, had he been a gang member I would not have loved him any less and he still would not have deserved to be murdered. Love for our children is unconditional. We love them in spite of things they do we may not approve of. On Memorial Day, a community came together for the first time not only to remember Rahshann but the many other young men slain in our streets. It was very hard for me to return to the scene of the crime where my son was murdered but we came to make a statement that we respect the dignity and worth of every human being. We wanted to show how valuable life is and how positive things may bring about positive change and some healing. We formed a circle and held hands to show unity, a speech was read about senseless acts of gun violence. Rahshann's sister made a cross; another sang church hymns, a cousin read the names of 15 friends Rahshann had written down who preceded him in death. More were added to this memory list as so many more had died since he began his list. At the top of this list he wrote "Rest In Peace" and now he too joins a growing list. My prayers are that this list well stop and that my son's memorial will bring public awareness to our dying



race. At the end of the memorial we spoke of our undying love for Rahshann and the plight of our Afro American community.

We shared memories of my son's short life and we passed a

picture around the circle of him in the coffin to show the finality of death and the anguish and pain etched upon the hearts and minds of those left behind.

(Poem Read)

Last Monday in May we pause to remember those who died.

With so much courage

So much pride

They'll never come back

But memories endure

To remind us of freedom fragile, pure

We think of the senselessness of their deaths each day

Not just on the last Monday of Memorial Day in May.

Thelma Stone

In memory - Rahshann Stone

7/18/78 -2/7/98

Rest in Peace

perspective

'Supper Table Input'; What Was It? What Now? II

BY PROF. MCKINLEY BURT

A reader says that "Supper Table Input" is just as important an observation as the "Takes a whole village to raise a child" principle-that age-old African concept that was borrowed by Hillary Clinton for her recent best seller.

Conversations with a number of people soon revealed that more than a few had experienced the warmth and character building nature of this process-and were exceedingly grateful for this nurturing phase of their adolescence. Others were somewhat wistful; "I knew what you were talking about, but there wasn't time for it in our family."

There were some who could not relate at all to this kind of socialization within the family, and would cite varied and sundry sources for their guidance, role models and moral compasses. As at other time, people cited books, peers, television, movies and the streets. And I always note that there is an age and time gradient in these recitals.

That is, as you draw nearer to the present generation, your interviews reflect changing life styles which in

turn parallel certain real estate economics. There is less and less room for that "extended family;" increasingly less "Supper Table Input" from grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins.

So, if there is "No room at the inn" as the saying goes, I was quite right last week in respect to what is being missed at one of civilizations most important hours.

"Then contemplate, if you will, the richness and variety of the conversations and information that would flow back and forth across this 'supper table.' The broad knowledge and experience of many age groups and occupations reaches the ears of adult and child alike." Apartments have changed the culture.

My phone has hosted a broad spectrum of viewpoints in these past few days. "I think you have described very well the situation that has produced these 'Latch Key Terrorist' that roam our neighborhoods in the evening." And reflecting on the habits of two preceding generations; "I'm sure you say that long ago the famed 'Dr. Spock' in

Sunday's newspaper" (5/17/98). This latter caller says the issue has been compounded.

"Mr. Burt, I think that man opened the door for the escalating permissiveness besieging our society. Adding some of Sigmund Freud's esoteric infant psychology to his own rebellion against a rigid (and ridiculed) childhood, he served us up a 'Spock designed extension of the womb.' I am sure that he is not completely to blame but in each succeeding generation Dr. Spock has counseled, there has been decreasing discipline among our youth. This has been accompanied by a pronounced increase in violence, vandalism, and a general disrespect for society's norms.

As I mentioned last week, I was barely into that article (5/27/97) when the news flash came "Gunfire and Casualties at Springfield, Oregon high school. Well, you know the rest of the story "as that commentator used to say. Seeking a "rationale," every major psychiatrist and psychologist at home and abroad has been asked to pontificate on this latest tragedy. And a

cottage industry of similarly opinionated pundits-without portfolio has risen at every TV and radio station; and on every daily newspapers Op-Ed page.

A great number of Americans hold the big corporate media and entertainment combines responsible for a large part of the general decline in the standards and role models held up to our youth. But as one reader puts it, "I listen to the pious simpering of their prime time commentators following each tragedy-when they know perfectly well that there will be no tampering with the almighty 'bottom line' of dollars."

I appreciate the favorable comments from the father who says my suggestions for kids is to construct models rather than being given ready built toys is working out beautifully with his young ones. Much less television, more reading science and instruction manuals, and less time "on the block."

Next week. Is it possible to establish a "Supper Table" situation where there is only a nuclear family-or just one parent, the case with so many million of our youth?

Tension On World Stage

After thirty-two years of nepotism, cronyism and abuse of power, Indonesian President Suharto wisely chose to step aside and allow his people to breathe free.

However, his departure does not solve the broader, structural problems facing Indonesia:

* There is legitimate concern among Indonesians and international observers that Suharto's hand-picked successor, Vice President Habibie, will be a puppet of the Suharto family and the military.

* Students still do not have a voice in government.

* Political prisoners remain in jail.

* The vast gap between rich and poor is growing.

When Rev. Jackson traveled

to Indonesia two years ago, conventional wisdom was that Indonesia was enjoying improved economic conditions and was ripe for growth. However, Rev. Jackson observed that poverty remained widespread and that, for many, the growth was not shared. The financial good times masked the status quo for the poor.

When the Asian financial crisis hit, the masks were removed, and the gap between the haves (Suharto's family and friends) and the have-nots (almost every-

one else) was exposed for the world to see.

During his trip, Rev. Jackson also met with Mughtar Pakpahan, a prominent labor organizer. Mr. Pakpahan was arrested immediately after Rev. Jackson left and has been in prison ever since.

The United States should:

* Demand the release of all political prisoners.

* Place pressure on the new government to hold free and fair elections as soon as possible.

* Hold Indonesia to the same

standards that we held South Africa - reform first, trade and aid second.

* Use its influence with the IMF to make democratic reforms a prerequisite to aid.

For the Indonesian economy to grow and mature in the next century, its government must be founded on democratic principles. And for the United States to reap the benefits of increased trade with the fourth most populous nation on earth, we must not compromise our commitment to democracy and human rights.

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Tip of the week: Grasscycling

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