

# EDITORIAL

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## The Portland Observer

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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

Dear Editor,

I have watched TV and read newspapers articles, about two Portland public schools, Humboldt and Jefferson. What I haven't heard is anyone taking the blame for the poor academic failure of our children, and the dismal future they all face.

Jefferson High School has always been blamed for the failure of the School Board and its Superintendent, for the poor jobs they've done. In our negotiation the School Board promised the Community Coalition for School integration, equity and quality education for all children in the Eighties. That was over eighteen years ago, in most cases we are worse off now than we were then. The Hierarchy at the top is still blaming the low people at the bottom of the totem pole. They knew there were a lot of deficiency in most of the teachers who were placed in the Albina area schools. At that time there were not too many good qualified teachers, the best ones were sent to the white area schools and the worse ones over here. Some did not have degrees and most of them were not even certified. If you could manage to keep some control in your classroom, (most of this was done by letting the students have their way) you had a job.

The school district has waited almost twenty years before they decide to clean the house, unfortunately for our children the damage has already been done. The price we suffer for this is having so many of our people on crack cocaine, or other drugs. Also, a lot of our young people are being in the State Jail system, for either selling or using drugs. You don't have to be smart; in fact the dumber you are the better those rich men who set up the drug houses like it. They know if you are dumb, you won't have sense to tell.

Students attend eight years of school, Elementary and Middle school before they enter into Jefferson or any other high school. The School Board must think that Jefferson's staff and teacher is Jesus Christ, Miracle doctors who should be able to perform surgery on a brain that has been dead or on ice for eight years without proper food to keep it operating. Something is wrong with this picture that I have presented to you. Those at the TOP MUST BEAR THE BIGGEST PORTION OF THE BLAME. It is up to them to stop blaming the staff, the parents, and the students; they all have been out on the playing field, was too long. The Superintendents both State and City, Governors, past and present, Legislators, The Board of Education, past and present, and everyone who is considered A LEADER. We can pass laws like measures to rid ourselves of the problem that we have created by gross neglect. When a person's skill level in math and reading is at a 3rd to 5th grade level, the persons mind has only been developed up to a nine year old. What kind of job can that person expect to obtain? We can continue to build nice jails to lock up our uneducated people. But when will we all start sharing some of the blame, after all we are our brothers keepers.

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

By Prof. McKinley Burt

It is in striking relevance to our "Supper Table" thesis that the December 18, 1996 issue of the Portland Observer featured two powerful and sensitive social reports - side by side, as though to support each other.

That week's "Family Living" section was read and commented upon by many community residents, and by other citizens as well. The first report was authored by that devoted and indefatigable ombudsman for our nation's children, Marion Wright Edelman, "Childwatch: House parties allow everyone to help black children" (A suitable multicultural model).

As Edelman described it, "KCMC" (Karing for Children Is Our Main Concern), a wonderful child care center in Kansas City, Mo., was 'one' of the 270 African American groups across the country who hosted house parties to support a "Black Crusade for Children." These inspired and energetic humanitarians ranged from neighborhood people and grassroots activists to such celebrities as Bill Cosby, Iman, Whoopie Goldberg, Oprah, Et Cetera.

The principal thrust was to come to the aid of the detached and alienated children and youth such as I have described in this series as having been deprived of such basic socialization processes (once considered the norm) as occur around the family dinner table - one is informed, directed.

The second relevant article, "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren" described a study by the "Center On Aging" at Bradley University, on a research grant from the National Institute On Aging. The Grandparent study is intended to "fill an important knowledge gap by providing information about the challenges and 'rewards' of grandparents who are raising a child."

I am given to a wry grin (like many of our readers) as the researchers describe a specific lack of information on the new roles of these grandparents - "a need to identify those who are struggling socially, emotionally or financially." Like you readers, I can supply a real-time observation from many points of our social infrastructure, including a personal one.

The interaction with the child or youth is a sort of virtual reality, true

enough, if you are not the actual grandparent in an interaction with the child or youth, but the insights of joy or pain, gratitude or humility are all there. Your relationship to such a 'family' may be as a friend, neighbor or relative - or in a professional role, teacher, counselor, social worker, coach, criminal justice, accountant, health care.

But in so many instances all of us have been forced to marvel at the strength and commitment these 'veterans' in the raising of children have brought to their surrogate role. Matters of finance, health, housing, personal safety and social mores are more difficult, now.

In the very first article of this series (5/27/98), I described my household as being headed by a grandfather. A role model nonpareil, his standards for morality, human relations and a search for justice are with me today as with yesterday. This, though I was only eleven when he died - and the 'family' split up very soon afterwards. This left me to be raised by a mother who had difficult coping and before long; I had dropped out of high school. But grandpa has always 'been there.'

Those who have had this experience and the "Supper Table" experience will understand; the inquiries and the discipline about school and home work, about the character of your peers and associates, about your ambitions, about your 'chores' and your bedtime. There was no television but you can bet your reading material was censored. A child ran nothing but his mouth, but was given more reign as his maturity indicated. What else?

And given that dinner time information exchange and data bank, I, like millions of others of similar circumstance, passed college entrance exams with no difficulty at all.

I could remember grandpa discussing his mortgages, deeds and giving me the installment book and interest tables for a math lesson. So when I got to Northwestern Law School (Portland), I hooked this right up with my early reading of Robin Hood; you know, the Sheriff of Nottingham, the 'Spring Assizes' when the traveling 'Circuit Judge' made his court appearance, the King's 'Eminent Domain' a piece of cake! Next week - Lot of guns in house.

## Greatest Threat to Security Since Cuban Missile Crisis

The announcement that Pakistan detonated five nuclear devices, surrendering to the temptation of bomb for bomb, eye for eye, is the greatest threat to international security since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The opportunity for an arms race between India and Pakistan and the specter of China's response destabilizes the entire world. The international community must come together, speak with one clear voice, denounce this game of "nuclear chicken," and stop this impending arms race.

Although Pakistan, India and others claim that nuclear weapons have a deterrent

component, there can be no comfort in "mutually assured destruction" because the operative word is destruction.

The world identified with India in its long and glorious struggle for independence from colonial rule, and continues to herald the great and spiritual legacy of Gandhi. The testing of nuclear bombs

retaliation and revival of meaningful dialogue over rejection. We must choose healing and hope over fear and hysteria.

Tragedy in Springfield; Culture in Crisis

The Tragedy in Springfield, OR demands that we examine how our culture is facilitating and exacerbating

As Rev. Jackson said, "As parents, our charge is to make our children smart, provide them with opportunity, give them character, and instill in them a sense of faith." If we do these four things, our children will be productive members of society.

Tragically, however, the love and care parents give to their children is sometimes not enough when our culture sets roadblocks between our children and their mental, emotional, and spiritual growth.

Gun Culture is the Primary Culprit

This is not fundamentally a public policy issue. It is a moral issue. Oregon has laws in place that seek to keep guns out of our kid's hands. Although Oregon could enact stricter sanctions and more comprehensive juvenile gun laws, legislation probably would not have prevented the tragedy in Springfield. We need to teach our children by our words and acts that violence is not a solution.

Our society's gun culture is largely to blame for the tragedies in Springfield, Jonesboro and Pедуcah. The NRA is marketing to our children. Their "Eddie Eagle" program is to guns as "Joe Camel" is to cigarettes.

We have to reevaluate our priorities. Do we continue to blindly defend our rights to own guns or do we exercise some degree of restraint, and think first of our children?

# RAINBOW PUSH COALITION

is a step backward for this proud nation - the world's largest democracy. More than that, it is a moral disservice to the human race. India's government showed nuclear power or nuclear force, but it did not show what the Indians call Satyagraha or "soul force."

Both India and Pakistan have cherished traditions, some of the world's most talented people, yet, some of the world's poorest. They should be racing to eradicate poverty, to provide universal education, to end the scourge of disease and to lift the living standard of the common people.

A nuclear arms testing race is a step in the wrong direction. We urge the leaders from India and Pakistan to choose reconciliation over

our dysfunction. Our schools, which should be safe havens for our children, are suddenly shooting galleries. Something is desperately wrong in a society where children kill children.

Springfield, OR is only the latest community shaken by this trauma. Springfield is Anytown, USA. There is a Springfield in every state. We are drowning in a culture of violence fed by a constant barrage of TV murders where the line between news and entertainment is blurred or removed entirely.

Turn Off the Television for three hours every night

Instead of subjecting our kids to the mindless sex and violence that is so often glorified on TV, turn the TV off. Talk with our kids. Read with your kids.



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