

EDITORIAL

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Dear Editor,

The local papers have been reporting on Boise neighborhood the past few months. Most of it has been negative. The reports have been about problems. This letter to ask the city to help find a solution.

The city and the transportation Department will make a decision regarding the future of Boise Neighborhood on April 12, 1999 when they decide to destroy or open the Failing Street Bridge.

The joining of the Boise Neighborhood to the rest of the city will be decided forever on that day.

For years Boise has been unable to cross over the freeway using the Failing Street Bridge because it was closed down due to the high crime rate in Boise. Now we have one last chance to open the bridge or have it removed forever.

Crime rate is down 38% in the Boise Neighborhood. That is the good news. Many of the problems in the Boise neighborhood experience are because of city actions in the past and the current housing policies. The I-5 cut this area off from the advantages of

a whole neighborhood and the city developed a policy of increasing subsidized housing in this walled off area.

Boise has 64% of the home units as rentals; too many are subsidized housing. This creates an unusable neighborhood. Too many people move in and out of housing units, kids move too much to feel part of a community. We have too many broken homes. We have too many people who have very little of the American dream.

What does this have to do with the Failing Street Bridge?

To solve the problem of the Boise Neighborhood we need to address some of the other problems as well. Those will be addressed one at a time in the proper venue.

With all of all of Boise's problems, we had a 33% crime decrease from 1992-93 to 1997-98. On Failing, the direct street to the bridge, we have closed down all but one drug house and the residents are working on keeping drugs out of the area. We have increased awareness and involved homeowners and renters are learning

It's A Whole New Ballgame

By HUGH B. PRICE
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

The formal indictment for second-degree murder of the four New York City police officers that shot Amadou Diallo, an unarmed West African immigrant, to death in a fusillade of 41 shots means that particular drama has moved into a new phase.

So, too, has the pressure his shocking death-and other controversial incidents across the country involving white police and people of color-has generated to reform questionable police practices and attitudes.

But at this point is worth remembering why this horrific incident has become a watershed. Just ask Miguel Lora.

Miguel Lora, 23, who works in a mental health clinic, lives in a part of the Bronx in New York City where drug-trafficking is a serious problem.

Lora is one of the neighborhood's many residents who are law-abiding.

But that fact did not prevent him from being stopped by two police officers one morning last summer as he was on his way to work.

The officers ordered him to put the cup of coffee he was carrying on a car hood, put his hands up, and spread his legs. One officer frisked him-and then, as Lora turned to gather

his things and go, the other officer began frisking him a second time.

"I told him I was already searched," Lora told the New York Daily News, "and he said, 'You're a tough guy' and took my belt off so my pants were slipping down.

"I know it's a drug area, but I live here," Lora continued. "I work. I'm a taxpayer. I never committed a crime."

Lora was one of 100 black and Hispanic males between the ages of 14 and 35 the newspaper's reporters randomly interviewed on the streets of New York recently. Their findings: That a "starting" number of them-81 said they had been stopped, patted down and questioned without being arrested.

"You fit the description," the paper went to say, "is the common refrain heard by high school and college students, working men and fathers as the reason for the intrusion."

Across the city, in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, 17-year-old Jason Perry told the New York Times that he takes it for granted he will be stopped by police out on the streets around his home after dark. "They see a black boy walking down the street and of course they're going to stop you."

Recently, officials at a small, all-male, academically rigorous Catholic high school in Harlem arranged for police to conduct a daylong seminar for the students on how to behave when stopped by police. They did so because so many of their students-even while wearing the school's distinctive sweater-are routinely stopped and have their clothing and schoolbags searched.

Stories like this from African American and Latino adolescents and adults, males and females, have been flooding the public domain in the aftermath of the Diallo killing.

They've helped provoke the most intense national discussion of police departments' relationship with people of color-the problem, of course, exists everywhere, not just with people of color-the problem, of course, exists everywhere, not just in New York City-since the late 1960s.

What is clear from the accumulated evidence is that the use of racial profiling whether on city streets or interstate highways-and the lack of black and Hispanic officers on these policy it produces among people of color and whites of conscience.

What is also clear is that there is a growing multi-racial ethnic coalition

of individuals and organizations who believe that people of color should not have to surrender their civil liberties to the larger society can continue to enjoy a reduction in crime.

In fact, this determination makes them, not anti-but pro-police as well as "pro-community," because we have voluminous evidence that the most effective way to both reduce and prevent crime is for police and community residents and organizations to work together. We have many "models" of how to achieve this.

This kind of policing have to become the norm if there is to be racial peace and progress in America.

That is why the demonstrations over the Diallo killing have drawn an increasingly multi-racial and-ethnic crowd of supporters from all walks of life.

They know, as Cindy Greenberg, acting executive director of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, told the Daily News recently, "It becomes a whole new ball game when people from all different parts of New York start participating in this kind of action."

She and many others understand that this is a "ball game" both at the police and law-abiding citizens can-and must-play together in order to win.

Record Drug Deaths

By FLOYD FERRIS LANDRATH

I am sorry to report that both Multnomah County Health Dept. and the Oregon Health Division are paralyzed by fear of controversy over last year's record 235 drug related deaths in Oregon controversy over last year's record 235 drug related deaths in Oregon (117 in Multnomah County). What makes these health officials freeze like deer in a beam of headlights is a classic 'Catch-22.' On one level it's a legal and philosophical conflict between cops and doctors, jailers and healers. At another level it's ignorance and rigid attitudes even within the public health itself. "How can you save someone bent on killing them self," lamented one state health official who wisely requested anonymity.

As the number of drug related deaths continues to soar each year, it becomes painfully obvious that this problem is killing many who had no intention of committing suicide. Even with the obvious social disapproval and stigma attached to illegal drug addiction, only extremists would support a death penalty for that alone. Yet in effect, that's

how to keep the drug element out of our neighborhood.

We are working to bring our neighborhood up to par. We worked with TriMet to locate bus stop in areas to decrease drug dealers excuses for hanging out at bus stops. We want a safe neighborhood for everyone. We want a safe design for the bridge ramp. The city can create a design that will discourage criminal activity and increase accessibility between the neighborhoods.

Please do not keep us blocked in a ghetto. Let our people have access to Kaiser, to the #5 bus and to the new light-rail.

I use to live in the Overlook area. I know the Overlook wants the bridge closed. They are saying stay on your own side of the tracks", "Not in our backyard, and they are letting cars keep us apart.

Open the bridge, we are improving the Mississippi Avenue, Overlook may find that the next job they apply for is on Mississippi Avenue. OPEN THE BRIDGE; Let us be one community again.

Thank you, Kay Newell

exactly what is taking place.

It does not look good for the future, especially with a glut of heroin on the streets and even playgrounds these days, "drug counselors warn that the toll likely will stay high because the addictive drug is cheap, potent and widely available," according to a Feb. 10 report from the Associated Press.

Reports from the Oregon Medical Examiner's Office offer grim credence to that dire warning. For every year since 1988, with the notable exception 1991, drug related deaths in Oregon have seen a steady increase. It went

from 67 in 1988 to 235 in 1998, a nearly 200 percent increase. Heroin related deaths went from 37 in 1988 to 179 in 1998, a nearly 500 percent increase. In 1991, for reasons unknown, only 39 people died statewide.

Dr. Ernest Drunker (1), a professor of epidemiology at Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine reports on drug-related research in the January-February issue of the Journal Public Health Reports, the official journal of the U.S. Public Health Service.

Even though the federal govern-

ment reports drug use has been in decline since 1979, Drucker reports that between 1978 and 1994: drug-related emergency room visits have gone up 60 percent (from 323,000 annually to 518,500) and overdose deaths increased by 400 percent (2500 to 10,000). Drucker also draws a direct correlation between increased heroin-related fatalities to a dramatic rise in purity (from 6.7 percent in 1981 to 41.5 percent in 1996) and notes as contributing factors both a sharp decline in price and abundant supply.

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H.B. 5056 requesting \$3,350,000 for Oregon Public Broadcasting is scheduled for consideration April 27, during its 30 plus years of existence Oregonians have paid well in excess of \$3,000,000 to create and sustain OPB. At present less than 4% of channel 10's prime time scheduled is dedicated to Oregon issues, Oregon stories, Oregon culture.

We imagine Public television that mirrors the vitality and creativity of our state. Television that engages us in the important issues that connect

all of us. Television that tells the stories of who we are, how we got here, where we are going. Television that provides a venue for young people to express themselves. Television that explores Oregonians' role in the global economy. The list of things we could be doing with this extraordinary medium goes on.

For three years independent producers and others have been meeting regularly with OPB management to awaken them to the opportunity for creating television truly vital to the

health of our region. That appeal has fallen on deaf ears. Please write your state representatives to encourage them to earmark the \$3,350,000 requested by OPB to create programming, 'for' about and 'by' the people and communities OPB Service. An additional two hours a week would not interfere with the best of PBS and would create a vital link between all of us who share this place on the planet.

Sincerely,
Tom Chamberlain