

EDITORIAL

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Letter to the Editor

Throughout this legislative session, I have listened closely to the debate on education funding. I have also heard the legislative leadership say there is not enough money to fund education at the \$4.95 billion level. Three months ago, I brought forward a plan to use part of Oregon's tobacco settlement money for education and healthcare needs. This money would have brought the education budget up to an adequate level. However, that plan has been rejected, while at the same time the legislature is underfunding the K-12 education budget. As an African-American who grew up in the south, I know firsthand that education is the greatest gift that we can give to our children.

I am angered that there are schools out there in dire need of new in-

structional materials deferred maintenance and capital improvements. In many schools, children are forced to share torn, outdated textbooks, many with missing pages and covers, and it is not uncommon to find children in classrooms with leaky roofs. This substandard learning environment is unacceptable. All Oregonians, and I would think certainly all legislators, should be bending over backwards to provide our children with the best education possible. If that means \$4.95 billion then that is what we should pay. After all, a quality education system not only benefits our children, it benefits all of us.

If the legislators adjourn without giving our children the money they need to receive a quality education, then they simply haven't done the job they were elected to do.

An Open Letter To White Parents

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

DEAR EUROPEAN AMERICAN PARENTS AND FRIENDS:

I've occasionally written letters to my own people, but this time I feel the need to speak to you. I write because I know no other way than to warn you; I write because the mainstream media are not informing you; I write because we are bound together in this nation and what happens to you and your families impacts us all.

I write because I am fearful that we are losing young European American males to hate. We are losing your sons, your nephews, your neighbors to hate groups, to white supremacist groups, to so-called Christian identity groups, to militia groups. We're losing the sons of doctors, of soldiers, of teachers to the hate. We're losing college students and bright high school students to hate. Yet everyone seems to be talking around it.

I first heard a warning back in 1996, when Rose Johnson, the attorney

from the Center for Democratic Renewal who was doing the investigations into the arson of African American churches, warned that white supremacist groups were courting young white males and that it looked as if some of the church burnings were initiation rites for some of these groups. In the three years since then Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed 13 of their classmates at Columbine High School (including an African American who was especially targeted) on Adolph Hitler's birthday; the brothers Benjamin and James Williams of Redding, CA have been arrested in the murders of a gay couple and are being investigated in the arson fires of three synagogues in Sacramento; Benjamin Nathaniel Smith murdered two people, one African American, one Asian American and shot a number of others including orthodox Jews, African Americans and Asian Americans and dozens of African American churches have burned.

Both the Williams brothers and Smith seem to be associated with the World Church of the Creator, and extremist religious group which predicts a racial holy war and which recruits on the internet and on college campuses. Its web-site has a coloring book for children and a crossword puzzle with racist clues for adults.

These hate groups want your children, especially your sons. The fact that you are a professional, the fact that you live in a middle-class suburb, the fact that you have never used racist epithets, the fact that your son is in college or seems to be only interested in computers is no protection.

These hate groups want your sons and they will do whatever they have to, to get them. They prey upon those who are a little lonely, for those who are isolated or have recently been rejected or those looked down upon by their peers. They come into your home via your computer or the telephone, they seek out your children on their college campuses and you

may never even know about it. They tell your children half-truths and outright lies, they scapegoat people of color, Jewish people and gay and lesbian people. They find ways to give self-esteem to those who are lost and attention to those who are lonely. They're using sophisticated language and the wonders of technology to steal your sons, but they are just as destructive and hate-filled as the Neo-Nazis and the KKK of the past.

Only you can stop this insidious, secret stealing away of your sons. Only you can talk with your sons about what is going on in their lives. Only you can help them understand what is going on in the world is not the fault of blacks or Jews or gays or Asians. Only you can help them to cope with the storms of life as a teenager. Only you can conquer their fear with unconditional love. Only you can reclaim your sons. It's not too late, but only if you begin right now, today. May God give you strength and courage and wisdom to do so.

Once Again, A Promising Kennedy Life is Cut Short

By ARTHUR SPIEGELMAN

NEW YORK, July 19 (Reuters) - Once again, a Kennedy has been struck down in the prime of life before achieving what he might have.

One sad undercurrent sweeping through the national mourning for John F. Kennedy, Jr. on Monday was the thought that here was a young man who was going to make a contribution to American life on a grand scale but never got the chance.

"This was a career cut short not even at the midway point," said Kennedy family expert Gerald Posner as divers searched the waters off Massachusetts for the aircraft that crashed Friday night carrying Kennedy, his wife and sister-in-law.

"John F. Kennedy Jr. would have had the ability to run (for office)," said Posner. "We will never know if he would have had the fire in the belly but the Democratic party would have embraced him with open arms. Whatever he wanted was there for the asking."

Kennedy's father had 1,000 days in the White House and, when he was murdered in 1963, many Americans thought not of what he had accomplished but of what he might have done had he lived: the always unfulfilled promise of Camelot.

In three years in office, some historians argue that President John F. Kennedy had miscalculated by provoking a nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union and dispatched American troops to Vietnam to fight in a war in a far-away land that few Americans knew anything about.

But after his death, there were many who argued he would have cut the Vietnam War short, avoiding the traumatic fall of Saigon, untold casualties and the student protests that left an indelible polarizing mark on American life.

Then there was the president's brother, Robert Kennedy, assassinated in 1968 as he campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Had he lived, most historians agree, American politics of the next 30 years would have been radically different: maybe no Watergate, maybe no Reagan revolution, no politics of greed and maybe no erosion of confidence in government.

And now John F. Kennedy, Jr. is gone — at age 38 in a plane crash. Friends and associates said he died at a point when he was about to make a major life change, including possibly entering the family business of politics.

Newsweek Magazine quoted one Kennedy confidant as saying he was seriously thinking of entering politics and had even considered running for the Senate seat being vacated by New York Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan before Hillary Clinton declared an interest.

"I think that was obviously a

possibility. Obviously 'George' (the political magazine Kennedy founded and edited) was in trouble and was a candidate to be folded and I think it would have been a difficult time in his life," said Laurence Laemer, author of the bestseller "The Kennedy Women."

"He was interested in the mesh between politics and popular culture and celebrity. It would not have been a very big jump to politics," Laemer added.

Historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., a close friend of the Kennedy family, agreed. Writing for Time Magazine, he said young Kennedy "seemed to be edging into politics.... He was a cautious man, methodically feeling his way, but I think he sensed an evident opportunity and acknowledged a dynastic responsi-

bility. He was destined, I came to feel, for political leadership."

Posner, the bestselling author of "Case Closed," a major book on the JFK assassination, said that the young Kennedy had left the same questions behind as his father and uncle.

"The frustration here is going to be that lingering question of what might have been. What would Jack Kennedy have done if he had eight years in the White House? What would Bobby Kennedy have done had he been able to pick up the standard?" he said.

The New York Times, in an editorial, said, "It would have been interesting to see if Jack Kennedy's son would have developed his father's gifts for hard politics and inspirational leadership."

Kennedy's hometown paper praised him for living his life the way he did — "keeping his dignity and sense of humor about the mixed blessings of inescapable fame."

He did it even when the New York Post headlined "The Hunk Flunks" when he failed the bar examination for a second time years ago.

That failure led to a touching tribute note left at his New York apartment saying: "Thanks for the inspiration from someone who also passed the bar examination on the third try."

As was said of John F. Kennedy Jr.'s father: "Johnnie, We Hardly Knew Ye."



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