

EDITORIAL

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The
Portland
Observer

USPS 959-680
Established 1970

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POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to

Portland Observer

PO Box 3137

Portland, OR 97208

Periodical Postage
paid in Portland, OR

Subscriptions are
\$60.00 per year

DEADLINES

FOR ALL SUBMITTED MATERIALS:

ARTICLES:

Friday by 5 P.M.

ADS:

Monday by noon

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By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

Before Congress adjourns this fall, they must make an important decision. The juvenile justice legislation that passed the U.S. House of Representatives kept the so-called DMC — disproportionate minority confinement — provision that would continue requiring states to develop plans to address the fact that Black and other minority children are much more likely to be in the juvenile justice system and face confinement than White children. However, the U.S. Senate version of the bill substantially changes this, and unless the conference committee can agree to the House-passed version, it is likely that states will no longer have to pay attention to this blatant form of discrimination against our children.

In our country today, African American youth are seven times more likely to be held in public detention facilities than White youth, and the incarceration rate for Hispanic youth nationwide is 60 percent greater than for White youth. This is especially true when it comes to secure confinement. African American youth aged — 10 to 17 make up only 15 percent of the U.S. population, but they account for 26 percent of juvenile arrests, 30 percent of delinquency referrals to juvenile court, 45 percent of juveniles detained in delinquency cases, 40 percent of juveniles in secure corrections facilities, and 46 percent of juveniles transferred to adult criminal court after judicial hearings. This is shameful.

Some people might say that the large discrepancy in minority youth incarceration is because of young people in different racial groups committing different kinds of crimes. But federal and state research data have shown this is simply not the case. Because of the state-by-state study the current law called for, several months ago the U.S. Department of Justice was able to issue a report, Disproportionate Minority Confinement: Lessons Learned from Five States, that proved there was different treatment of youth depending on whether they were White or

minority. The report highlighted some of the promising interventions taken in five states to address and remedy this disparity. There was also a study done in California that showed minority youth were more likely to be incarcerated than White youth for the same offenses. Because of the current law passed in 1992, which the Senate version of this legislation would change, 40 of the 50 states have implemented or are developing intervention plans to address disproportionate minority confinement. It is important to continue this progress. A prerequisite of an effective juvenile justice system, or any justice system, is to treat every offender as an individual and provide needed services to all. All youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system should receive appropriate and non-discriminatory responses.

This is not a new issue. In 1988, the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention commissioned the University of Wisconsin and Portland State University to review the literature and program models in this area. The universities' report, Minorities and the Juvenile Justice system, concluded there was substantial evidence that race plays a direct and indirect role in the outcome of many juvenile justice decisions.

Increasingly high rates of incarceration for minority youth can lead to a devastating impact on minority communities. In addition to the individual and family tragedies these statistics represent, negative effects on minority communities include the removal of large numbers of potential wage earners, disruption of family relationships, and a growing sense of isolation and alienation to the large society.

Many groups nationwide have joined the Children's Defense Fund in asking Congress to keep this important law intact.

Won't you join us and make your voice count? Call your Senators today at 202-224-3121 and insist that the Senate conferees on the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJA) agree to adopt the House-passed language which would save the current law.

"Deadbeat dad", the blackbelt of oxymorons

By JOE KLOCK, SR.
SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

When I first encountered the word/oxymoron, "I thought it referred to a dull-witted beast of burden, which still makes a lot more sense to me than its real meaning, which is "the combination of incongruous or contradictory terms."

My favorites, if you don't mind the digression, are (in alphabetical order) bagpipe music, butthead, criminal justice, death benefit, good grief, guest host, ill health, Kosher ham, legally drunk, military intelligence, Microsoft works, non-stop flight, open secret, peace offensive, pretty ugly, sanitary sewer, temporary tax, united nations, wholesome, and work party.

In my estimation, though, the most oxymoronic expression of all is the so-called "deadbeat Dad," so often in the news these days. No two words in the English language are less congruous or more contradictory than those. The "deadbeat" part of the expression is a consistent with "Dad" as Ross Perot is with sex appeal. A Dad worthy of the title may fall short of perfection in terms of sensitivity, thoughtfulness, patience, and household chores and, in some cases, gastric restraint. He may (and probably does) tend to hog the TV remote, forget birthdays, neglect small shows of affection, terrorize boyfriends, blow his cool, show his anger and show his wet towels where they drop on the bathroom floor.

But a Dad never forgets that when he became a father, he took on a solemn obligation to provide for his young for as long as he is alive and they are in need. Mom may share this burden and, due in some instances to the aforementioned Deadbeat Dad Syndrome, a lot of Moms do so nowadays, but the primary responsibility is, was and ever shall be his.

The title of Dad incorrectly claimed by a number of mere sperm donors, who think it, is a descriptive term that automatically accrues to the male participant in a miracle of creation.

Sorry, guys, but fertilization is within the skill package of all animal life and demands minimal talent. Notable exceptions include the daunting challenges facing male porcupines, hippopotami and humming birds. (Who says Mother Nature doesn't have a sense of humor?)

Letters to the editor

By BEVERLY STEIN

Dear NE Community Leader,
As you are probably aware, I recently cancelled Multnomah County contracts with the Urban League of Portland due to significant financial management problems at the League that I believed compromised the services being provided. This decision was difficult for me, but as Chair, I am accountable for the public dollars that fund services in the community. I am convinced this action was necessary to protect the services to people in Northeast Portland. Understandably, many leaders in Northeast Portland are interested in working to restore the League to financial health. Earlier, I met with leaders from Save Our Urban League (SOUL) to hear their ideas for doing so.

The County administers a contracting process that determines which community providers are funded to provide services in specific geographic areas. Our responsibility to the community (and our obligation under State statute) is to make sure this contracting process is handled fairly and impartially. To ensure this we conduct a Request for Proposal (RFP) process that requires community providers to submit detailed plans describing how they will deliver services and the associated costs. An impartial panel scores and evaluates the best proposal for each service. The best proposals earn County service contracts.

The service contracts for Northeast Portland are put out to bid on a regular

basis. Over the next eight months, the County will be evaluating proposals from a variety of providers for how they would offer services in the area. These RFP processes would have happened whether the situation with the Urban League came up or not. In the short term, until all the former Urban League contracts are rebid, the County continues to work with the Urban League and other community providers to transfer services in Northeast Portland. We are hiring some League and other community providers to transfer services in Northeast Portland. We are hiring some League employees as temporary County employees and other community non-profits are doing the same.

As you may know, the county has a request for proposal (RFP) currently available to combine our family services (Family Centers and Community Action programs) in geographic areas of Multnomah County. I believe this will improve our flexibility and coordination of services to families in NE and other parts of the county. A panel is now being recruited to review the RFP's. The panel must consist of people with no conflict of interest. The Community & Family Services Department wants community volunteers to serve on the panel. If you are interested you may call my office to volunteer or for more information.

I cannot guarantee that Urban League, or any other provider in particular, is going to earn future contracts. It wouldn't be a fair contracting process if I could. What

I can guarantee is that the money the County puts into Northeast Portland will continue to be invested in critical services for that community. The Request for Proposal processes will determine what agencies are best suited to provide these services.

I support the efforts of Northeast community leaders and groups like

SOUL to restore the Urban League's financial credibility and standing in the community. The sooner the League is brought back to health as a true community organization, the sooner the League will be competing for and perhaps earning service contracts with the County.

I appreciate the communication that

has occurred so far to keep me aware of the community's concerns and planned activities. I would like to keep this line of communication open. If you have responses or feedback for me, please feel free to call my office at 248-3308.

Sincerely
Beverly Stein

You have family behind you.

Wow! Today changes a lot of things. "I" becomes "we." "Ours" replaces "mine." And happily ever after becomes a goal, not a given. Nervous? No way. You have a strong family behind you. American Family Mutual Insurance. When you're building a future, trust means everything and 70 years in the insurance business is experience that helps you both feel secure. When it comes to commitment, our consistent A+ (Superior) rating from the respected insurance rating authority A.M. Best speaks for itself. Just call and one of our helpful, knowledgeable agents will gladly tell you more. Now, take a deep breath. And... jump! We've got you covered.

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keeps us afraid to attend demonstrations for fear of arrest. We are fed up with our friends and family being frightened and beaten into complacency! We are sick and tired of our bones being broken for practicing our freedoms of speech and assembly! The police are sending us a clear message; if you have an opinion you feel compelled to speak out on, you'd better keep it to yourself or you'll face arrest and brutality! This is a direct assault on our constitutional rights! This is a personal assault on our freedom! And folks ain't having it!" said Leslie James Pickering of Portland's Liberation Collective.

Rosebraugh is in the process of filing a lawsuit against the Portland Police Department for police brutality. Demonstrations in support of Mumia Abu Jamal are ongoing nation-wide. For more information contact Liberation Collective @ (503) 525-4975.

(This is not the opinion of The Portland Observer newspaper.)

By LIBERATION COLLECTIVE

After attending a peaceful protest in support of political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, locally and nationally known activist Craig Rosebraugh was brutally beaten and arrested for arguing his right to remain in a public park. Immediately after Rosebraugh was charged with failure to disperse and released he was rushed to Emanuel Hospital and diagnosed with a compound fracture of his arm in need of surgical attention.

Over 400 people attended the peaceful demonstration to protest the death penalty given to the framed and wrongly accused journalist Mumia Abu Jamal who's execution date was set on Wednesday for December 2nd.

Four other activists were also arrested while leaving the demonstration and given similar petty charges. "The Portland Police practice a tactic to prevent large demonstrations like these from happening. They wait until the demonstration is coming to an end and folks start heading home in small groups where they pick us off and throw bogus charges at us. This