

Opinion

Articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680
Established 1970

STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF,

PUBLISHER

Charles H. Washington

EDITOR

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.

BUSINESS MANAGER

Gary Ann Taylor

COPY EDITOR

Joy Ramos

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Shawn Strahan

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, OR 97211
503-288-0033
Fax 503-288-0015
e-mail pdxobserv@aol.com

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:
Monday by 5 P.M.

ADS:
Friday by noon

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc., New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

Show King the money

BY EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

There was much hand shaking, back slapping and headline grabbing quips by advocates of a King memorial after the National Capital Planning Commission unanimously approved the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Washington D.C. But buried underneath the euphoria and behind the headlines. The small item that went virtually unnoticed was the remark by the project chairman that it will cost millions to build the memorial. After the design of the memorial is officially approved they have seven years to raise the cash to build the memorial.

Then the question is: Who should pay for the King memorial? The obvious answer is that those who benefited the most from the epochal social changes by King, who inspired and led the civil rights movement, should pay. That means virtually everyone. Since practically anyone who draws a breath on the planet has reaped the rewards of that movement. The civil rights movement had a global sweep. It ignited or profoundly influenced labor struggles, anti-colonial battles in Africa and Asia, social gospel priests in Latin America, student and pro-democracy movements in Europe, the gay, and women's movement, the peace movements, and ushered in a new age of economic and social justice for Americans of all colors. The civil rights movement also remolded and democratized much of law, politics, and theology in America.

The broad reach of King's shadow even extended to conservatives. Many of them have shamelessly misrepresented his remarks about a color blind society to hammer affirmative action and social programs. White Southern politicians who fought tooth and nail against King when he was alive have rode the crest of the white backlash to the civil rights movement to reemerge as major players in national politics.

While they all owe an eternal debt to King and should pay, and pay well, for a memorial to him, no one has benefited more from the gargantuan social changes than blacks.

Here are two compelling reasons why they should make it their solemn mission to bankroll the King memorial. The first reason is the total remake of Black America. The eternal media and public image of Black communities as a vast wasteland of violence and despair and in permanent crisis and chaos is false, phony and self-serving. In the three decades since the civil rights movement King smashed the barriers of legal segregation. This is how Black America has benefited and changed.

According to a recent census bureau report released in

February 1999:

•Nearly nine out of ten African-Americans aged 25-29 are high school graduates, and fifteen percent have college degrees. College enrollment among blacks has soared forty percent over what it was a decade ago.

•The black high school drop rate is only marginally higher than that of non-blacks.

•African-American median income continues to grow, and the drop in poverty rates for African-Americans accounts for sixty percent of the overall drop in poverty in America.

•Twenty percent of African-Americans worked in management or other professions.

•The number of Black owned businesses leaped nearly fifty percent, and their gross receipts rose 63 percent between 1987-1992.

•Nearly sixty percent of African-American children under 18 live in a married-couple family.

The second reason is money. More African-Americans have more of it than ever before in their lives. Oprah Winfrey, Michael Jordan, Bill Cosby, Michael Jackson and thousands of athletes and entertainers bag staggering mega buck incomes and contracts. They alone have the wealth and income to bankroll dozens of King monuments.

Yet they are only the most visible and conspicuous tip of the iceberg of black wealth. Nearly half of all blacks now earn incomes above \$25,000. And there are thousands of business persons and professionals who earn incomes far above that. According to a feature in the September 1999 edition of *Emergence* Magazine, there are at least ten predominantly black communities nationally where the average household income tops \$50,000. Some of these communities have average household incomes that far exceed even that figure.

The leading 100 black corporations in the 1999 *Black Enterprise* magazine annual business survey had sales of more than \$4 billion. While stock and mutual fund investments by blacks still drag behind that of whites, more than 30 percent of blacks have stock and bond investments. And the number of black stock investors continues to climb.

King's old fraternity the Alpha Phi Alphas will spearhead a national and international campaign to raise funds for the memorial. With the mountainous wealth, and income of many blacks, it shouldn't take 7 days, or even 7 minutes, for blacks to bankroll a memorial for the man who did so much for so many. And if it does take a second longer than that to show King the money it will be the nation's shame and disgrace and African-Americans special shame and disgrace.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is a nationally syndicated columnist and the director of the National Alliance for Positive Action. email: ehutchi344@aol.com

Federal and community efforts focus on teens leaving foster care

BY CAROLYN GRAE
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

At age 12, Debbie Thompson of Eastern Oregon entered the state's foster care system. Six years later, she is planning to graduate from high school, attend college and go on to medical school.

By anyone's account, she is a success story, a happy ending. Not all teens aging out of foster care are as fortunate. Nearly 20,000 young adults—about 300 in Oregon—prepare to leave foster care each year on their 18th birthday. Too many of these teens emerge with neither the maturity nor the wisdom to face life on their own. They not only lack permanent or stable connections to family or other caring adults, but many also do not have the education or skills to prepare them for the world beyond the state's custody and care.

Based on current statistics, one-fourth of the nation's foster children will become homeless. Others will be the victims of physical and sexual assault, become pregnant, incarcerated, or end up on public assistance.

In response to such reports from the states, Congress recently approved legislation to provide additional supports to young people aging out of foster care.

This newest version of the Federal Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 doubles funding for the Independent Living Program from \$70 million to \$140 million.

At the local level, county, community and state child welfare advocates are working to find ways to support youth leaving foster care. Through independent living programs, Oregon's foster care youth are learning life skills such as budgeting; receiving educational services, including preparation for higher education; and finding employment with the help of job readiness, search and placement programs.

In 2000, a new transitional program called Powerhouse is scheduled to open in Multnomah County. This is a collaborative effort among the Casey Family Program, Oregon Department of Human Services, The Inn, Housing Authority of Portland and the Sisters of the Holy Name.

The program is expected to serve youth, ages 17-24, with community support, employment, education, and housing for those 18 and older. The goal of the program is simple: Incorporate what youth want and need to become productive citizens.

As parents, it's the same goal we have for our own children. Children in foster care have the same needs as other children—time to grow up, be supported, take chances, and have opportunities to make mistakes and learn from experience. Most families don't expect children to be independent until at least their mid-20s. We can't expect more of foster children unless we can give them the tools they need to succeed.

The end of foster care is not the end of a community's caring for its children. You can help the youth in your community by:

- Becoming a foster parent to teens.
- Advocating for this population in schools, community meetings and places of worship.
- Volunteering to help connect teens with educational and employment opportunities.
- Providing on-the-job training and support.

As advocates for children we have all been handling parts of the problem. It is time to consolidate our efforts and energy so that when foster children reach the age of 18, it will signal the beginning of a success story, the next happy ending.

Have something important to say,
write it in a letter to the editor in

The Portland Observer



Look For Your
Safeway Weekly
Shopping Guide

In Your Oregonian FOODday
in the Portland Metro Area
...and save more by shopping
at Safeway.



Visit Safeway's Web site at
www.safeway.com

PRICES EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 1999 THRU JANUARY 2000

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
2	3	4	29	30	31	1

Items & prices in this ad are available at your local Safeway store. No sales to dealers, restaurants or institutions. Sales in retail quantities only. Quantities of some items may be limited and subject to availability. Not responsible for typographical or pictorial errors. We reserve the right to correct all printed errors. © 1999 Safeway Stores, Inc.

Savings Celebration!



**Boneless Beef
Chuck Roast**
Or Club Pack Steaks.
1.18 lb.
Safeway Club Price
SAVE up to \$1.71 lb.



**Bumble Bee
Chunk
Light Tuna**
6-oz. Water or Oil Pack.
Limit 3.
3 for 99¢
Safeway Club Price
SAVE up to \$1.08 on 3



**10-lb. Bag
Oregon
Potatoes**
SAVE up to \$1.51
.88
Safeway Club Price

Now the savings are in the Card!