

Portland  
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**Opinion**

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**...And a resolution for the new millennium**

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I am aware that the new millennium technically starts in 2001, but for the vast majority of the billions of people around the world, 2000 marks the beginning of the millennium. For most of us, this is a crossing over period, a time when we are pausing to assess our own lives and those of our communities and our world. In ordinary years, we make resolutions to lose weight or stop smoking or work harder in school. But this is no ordinary year.

Thus, my resolution is not an ordinary resolution. It is a resolution to work ever harder for justice and reconciliation, not just for one year but for all the years of the new millennium that I am allowed to live. My resolution is to work ever harder for justice in the new millennium. First, to work harder for racial justice. While we surely have made progress as a nation on racial inequities, we have much yet to do. As long as there are hate crimes based on race, as long as

there are systemic discrepancies in health care, education, housing, and employment we will have work to do. As long as there are more black or Latino men in the criminal justice system in this nation than in college, we will have work to do. As long as toxic wastes are more apt to be dumped in communities of color or as long as people of color are targets for police brutality and harassment, we will have work to do.

But justice is more than racial justice today. Our world cries out for economic justice where no child goes hungry or with out shelter or clothes. Our world cries out for economic justice where all people earn fair wages for their labor, where child labor is abolished and where there are no sweatshops or unsafe workplaces. Our world cries out for women to be paid comparable wages for the same work and in this nation for safe, affordable, quality child care.

Justice is more than economic justice as well. It is justice for those with disabilities, many of whom would like to work, but are never offered the

options of jobs. It is justice for those who are gay or lesbian and who too often are denied basic rights and find themselves victims of hate crimes across this nation.

It is justice for millions of women who are victims of domestic violence and for millions of children who see violence as a normal part of their lives in their homes.

There's plenty for me—and you—to be busy with in the next millennium. But part of our justice work must include working toward reconciliation. In the native Hawaiian culture I am told there is a concept called pono—of making things right, restoring right relations. In the African cultures of the southern part of the continent there is a concept called ubuntu—the idea that a person is a person in the context of the community. I have come to believe that there can be no reconciliation without justice, but I am also coming to believe that there can be no real justice without reconciliation. Only when the victims, only when the community, only when nations work

from a commitment to reconciliation can we achieve true justice and peace. My resolution for the millennium,

then, is to work for justice and reconciliation. May millions of other resolve to do the same.

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**A Dialogue Between Generations**

BY DR. MANNING MARABLE  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Several weeks ago I attended and spoke at a conference on race which was organized at Stanford University. After delivering my lecture, I walked down the steps from the stage. Clustered around the steps were several male and female graduate students. One young black man, about 25 years old, handsome and confident, began to raise a series of questions. I quickly apologized, and explained that I had to leave immediately to be transported by car to the San Jose airport, to catch the red-eye evening flight back to New York. The students expressed the desire to continue our conversation on foot, and would even help carry my suitcase. I agreed. We walked across the large campus at a quick pace, as I was peppered with queries. The young black man wanted to know if I still considered myself a democratic socialist, and if so, why?

I started to talk about the rich tradition of black American leaders and scholars publicly identified themselves as "socialists," including

W.E.B. Du Bois, A. Philip Randolph, Paul Robeson, Angela Y. Davis, Bayard Rustin, Audre Lorde, June Jordan and Cornel West. At the end of their lives, both Malcolm and Martin had increasingly come to believe that capitalism as a social and economic system could never empower the overwhelming majority of black people inside this country as well as worldwide.

"But what makes you think socialism can be relevant or even make sense to black people, when everywhere its been tried it has failed?" the young black man asked sincerely. "What socialist societies can serve as realistic models for us today?" Well yes, I replied, the concept of socialism has been discredited largely due to the collapse of Soviet Communism, as well as the retreat of European Social Democratic Parties into neoliberalism. But despite their problems, socialist economies did deliver many real benefits, such as free education, universal health care, low cost housing and pensions, far better than market societies. Markets are engines of inequality, I asserted. When a group of people

sits down to play poker, at the end of the game everyone doesn't go home with more money than they came with. It's a zero-sum game, with winners and losers. And in a racist society, the economy designed to ensure that African Americans, Latinos, working class and poor people are almost always permanent "losers."

"Maybe you're wrong about history," the young black man countered, as we walked to the parking lot, looking around for the car to take me to the airport. "Look at the economic prosperity of the 1990s. Even poor people in the U.S. have a much higher standard of living than anyone in the Third World."

That fact is little comfort to the 44 million Americans who don't have medical insurance, I replied. In 1999, more than 500,000 Americans will go to hospital emergency rooms and will be turned away because they have no health insurance. A black man born and raised in Central Harlem has life expectancy of 49 years of age, lower than many Third World countries. How can any of this be justified?



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