



# Opinion

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**B**lack **H**istory **M**onth

## Booksellers lacking during MLK birthday

BY KRISTINE E. WOLFE  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I am entirely perplexed about the lack of commercial interest—particularly the interest of retailer booksellers—in the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. First, some context. My now 12 year-old sister Natalie was born on January 15. Since about the age of 5, when she was old enough to both appreciate books and recognize the people and recognize the people in them, I have included books, speeches and pictures commemorating the extraordinary life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in her birthday packages. She feels that sharing a birthday with an individual so important in our nation's history is very special, and happens to be the "class expect" on this particular subject. So last week, I began hunting around for interesting books to send. Imagine my surprise upon visiting no less than six Portland bookstores, all of substantial size and repute (including one surpassing all others in both of those categories) and single display or any visible hint that the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday might be worth commemorating. My seventh stop had created a single "end-cap" in the children's section displaying general "Black History Month" material. When I inquired about such displays, not one salesperson

in any of these establishments seemed to think that not displaying materials relevant to the holiday was an oversight—all them looked surprised that I suggested such a thing. As a frequent bookstore browser, I can tell you that these establishments rarely miss a holiday to generate related commercial activity. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas-Hannukah-Kwanzaa-even Valentine's Day—prompt extraordinary efforts to turn browsers into buyers. Evidently, Martin Luther King Jr. Day does not promise such commercial success. I don't get it. Even if you ignore the fact that the core customers of these establishments—the only ones shopping in January—are exactly the customers to whom this period of history might mean something, a number of purely market-based factors also point to the absence of such displays as a missed opportunity. First, what's the competition for shelf-space in January? The holiday season is over, kids are back in school, there are no current beanie-baby-like frenzies (Harry Potter books, by the way, were plentiful)—from what I could tell, prime 'shelf-space' was occupied by overstock. Second, chances are that most kids will be studying Martin Luther King Jr. sometime around the holiday named on his behalf. A fair number of kids will "hang-out" (whether with or without parents) in retail establishments over the holiday weekend. Isn't it at least possible that a few might purchase a book.

## Eye With A View

BY SAM PIERCE  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

I have stood by for months now as my friend and friend to this community, Becky Black, treated unfairly by Portland Public School. I have waited for voices more powerful than myself to come to her aid, but in their absence, I can no longer keep silent. For years, she has selflessly served this community's poor and unwanted, and she has done so successfully with very limited resources in comparison to her results. Moreover, she did not come to this community as a white trying to be its or our children's savior. But she came with a heart that loves, with a spirit that is bright with vision—and the results speak for themselves. One would think that if someone is successful at helping those who have traditionally been declared un-help-able or give hope to those the expert say could never have hope, that this would make one a target of abundance and accolades. But not in an environment where individuals are more concerned about power and money and the control of thereof. In such an environment are things such as envy, strife, petty jealousies, and outright treachery. These are the behavior and emotions that make my friend a target. She has done well and we should seek to reward her, not stand in her way. I understand that it was said that Becky did not have support from the community or more specifically, the black community. From all that I am aware of and heard, she does indeed have support from the black community. In fact, the meeting I attended consisted of many black people from the community. What we must not do is attempt to decide from our own myopic view what is "the" black community. Every person who lives and works in Portland is part of its community. And in particular, the children whose lives and future depends upon the McCoy Academy are surely apart of that community. Surely, the hearing that I attended was filled with these very important community members. As for "the black leadership" of Portland, I feel too that this category is also varied and cannot be considered a specific and exclusive group of individuals.

Concerning leadership, while I believe that leaders can be chosen or developed, yet the greatest asset that a true leader has is personal integrity and personal power. These are people who are not cliquish or political in their view of leadership. They give honor to where it is due even if they do not agree with the particular politics of the person. With that, anyone who attempts to deny Becky's impact on and commitment to our children is in my opinion a person who does not rise to this level of "true leadership"—leadership that is governed by integrity and pure motive. This is the kind of leadership that transcends ego and personal interest—and although I know of many such persons in the community of Portland who easily qualify, nevertheless, it represents a very short list! So if we want to be true leaders, let us all be willing to do some self examination and seek to ascribe to a standard that rises above mere words and positional power.

Long before Becky came to this community, she was fighting for the poor and the disenfranchised. Long before she came to this community, she had adopted children of mixed races—Black, Whites, Native, and any person who needed her! And she did so not as a rich white woman, married to a rich white man, but as a single mom, a poor white woman from Appalachia. She did it because she knew the pain and alienation of poverty, of being born on the wrong side of the tract—or mountain in her case!

As for my own position, Becky is a dear friend and I love her and her commitment to poor and disadvantaged children. And as importantly, she is known for her success with those kids, so why in God's name would anyone want to oppose her when she is doing and has done as well a job as she has? As a fellow Georgian, my free advice to you, Mr. Superintendent—if you envision a long and prosperous stay in Portland, care first and foremost about the success of students and extend your respect and appreciation to those who can help you achieve that success. Because in the end, that is who will be judged for. And if student's success is your goal, then you do them and yourself no harm, my friend, to support Becky Black and the McCoy Academy.

## Think Positively

BY JUNIUS RICARDO STANTON  
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

"Human thought, like God makes the world in its own image." Adam Clayton Powell said. Many of us depreciate the power of our own minds, our ability to think, cogitate, dream and visualize. We don't think in terms of success, accomplishment or dream of a world in which we as African people are powerful unless it is using someone else's model. We have the power to think anything we want and we have the ability to conjure up in our mind's eye thing that have never existed or happened before. We are far from being poor, pathetic and destitute. We are far more powerful than we realize. We are not who or what our enemies say we are. We carry in our genes the genius of our ancestors, people who build magnificent civilizations, invented mathematics, sciences, agriculture, metallurgy, music, human relationships and governance. We were/are all that. What are we

doing with this genius we have inherited? As the late preacher/politician Adam Clayton Powell jr. succinctly observed, human thought makes the world in its own image. Boardcast executive and activist Bob Law Said "Idea rule the world. Whose ideas are you tap dancing to? What do your ideas reveal about you? Our thinking is the Catalyst and foundation for our lives. Energy follows thought. Our lives reveal the quality of our thoughts. I know this is difficult to comprehend because we been duped into being outer directed. But it is true; our thoughts, values, desire and what we think is possible motivate our behavior. What do you think is possible for your life? What dreams do you harbor in deep recesses of your soul? What is it you really want to do, be or accomplish in life? Take a look at your life. What does your life reveal about your thought? If you are poor it is not because your parents were poor because of racism and yes factors. You are. We can refuse to give up. We have the power to decide our fate and our character. That is awesome.

You and alone determine whether you are a quitter or one who perseveres to reach your goals and objectives. You and only you set the tone and tender for quality of your life. Yes there are circumstances beyond our control but there are many that we have to direct control over, like our perception of yourself and our potential. We have the power to define and perception of yourself, your life and the world positive or negative? Is the proverbial glass half empty or half full? Do you consider yourself a genius or have you allowed others to define you, limit your horizon, your course and destination? What is your image for yourself and the world? This is no joke nor is it bogus psychological quackery. It is real. You are more powerful than you realize. What will it take for? You empower yourself and actualize your full potential? In what way will you manifest your genius? What obstacles will you overcome? I can't tell you how great you are/you can be. I just know you/we are. Why/how? Because in my mind I have fashioned a world where we are.

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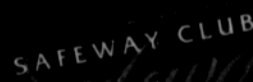
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