

B_{lack} H_{istory} M_{onth}

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FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Prison Industrial Complex actually has its roots in history, particularly the system of economic slavery in the South. It evolved from a variety of constructs that has become a system where millions of young men and an increasingly large amount of young women in their childbearing years are being processed through a system that is creating a new norm for dysfunctional family life. So many young people have been through the justice system that the middle class attitude against imprisonment is changing by necessity.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE POVERTY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The end of slavery in the South after the Civil War meant vast changes in the economy of the conquered land. After the end of slavery and the occupation of the rebellious South, the economy of the rebellious agricultural region of America was wrecked.

Now, compounding the money woes were their former slaves who now had to be paid for their work instead of having a touch of the lash to motivate them. But they found a way out. After the Union troops

went back the southern power holders fell on the ex-slaves with a vengeance.

The South, using what came to be called the "Black Codes" instituted North American Apartheid and just made it easier to collect up able bodied men for petty crimes, vagrancy or being shift-less and convert them into workers for the state.

They were now put to work with chains clink-clinking along as they picked, hoed, chopped and baled cotton just as if nothing had ever changed. The roads were rebuilt, the rivers levees erected, the soil tilled and later the highways cleaned and paved.

The Southern chain gangs are the lingering heritage of those times. This is why the biggest, baddest prisons are in former slave holding agricultural and especially sugar cane producing states, such as Louisiana. Chain gangs are now being considered for Northern states, with the high-tech twist of having electronic incapacitators instead of chains.

THE CORPORATE, CORRECTIONS TIE-IN

Indeed a new caste is being created, with the Formerly Incarcerated being so numerous in some urban Black communities that high school to jail or juvenile corrections, to street (for awhile), thence to jail

again, out and back is part of the Rites of Passage of growing up for increasing numbers of young people. Coupled with the absence of fathers in the home a vicious cycle has been set in motion that keeps the raw material for the Prison Industrial Complex humming along, grinding up more and more people whose productivity is lost to their communities,

WHO BENEFITS FROM THE POVERTY PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX?

Corrections Corp of America aren't the only ones who are making bank off the rise in prisoners. There is a discernible cadre who directly benefit from this state of affairs on the civilian end.

The more children who are classified "Learning Disabled" or "At Risk" means more federal money flowing into a district. Teachers who become so certified are also paid a good deal more, so it's also like a jobs program that doesn't have to come out of the local school budget.

More people sentenced mean more probation agents, and more prisons. This means more builders and concrete, electronics, and prisons sited in rural communities to replace the falling agricultural economy.

Why? These social workers, educators, and politicians are supposed to be fighting for the



On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus. She was charged for violating the city's transportation laws. Her subsequent arrest, pictured here, resulted in a mass boycott of city buses and brought the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King to national prominence.

downtrodden. Sure, many in the Black Middle Class seemed to have "pulled up the rope" after they stood on our backs to get over the racial

barriers, and since then have been curiously slow about throwing down (Please see 'Prison' page 5)

kmhd for the love of jazz

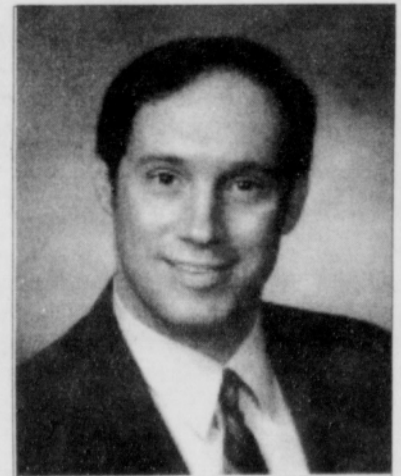
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On Black History Month

"The contributions African Americans have made throughout history needs to be told over and over again.

Of Specific note -- there is no memorial to the multitudes of African American soldiers who fought in the American Revolution. Many of those soldiers were still slaves when they fought and died for the so-called 'War for independence'.

We need reminders, such as Black History Month, to keep us actively thinking about the immemorial contributions all African Americans have made to the community and to our country"



Commissioner Dan Saltzman