



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

news@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.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.

The growth of unequal opportunity

BY JOE KLOCK, SR.
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When Shakespeare wrote that "something is rotten in the state of Denmark," he referred to the poisoning of Hamlet's Daddy by his Mom and her boyfriend.

Something similarly rotten, albeit less violent, is threatening the state of business here in the USA. The victims are the less-than-stinking-rich in America, and the culprits are a growing horde of newly wealthy and powerful people. The poison is greed, and I know of no available antidote.

Exhibit A is that ever-widening chasm between the compensation level of our captains of industry and commerce and that of the crews in their company forecastles. A couple of decades ago, those in the executive suite might have earned 40 times as much as the file clerks and schleppers below. That multiple today could be 500 or even more, given bonuses, options, pensions, perks and, if things go badly, golden parachutes. It isn't that I begrudge talented people a fair reward, but I find it difficult to imagine that the top guns of today's corporate America are worth so much more than their predecessors in command. I have the same reservations about the sports and entertainment figures whose incomes have soared into stratospheric orbits at growth rates almost immeasurably higher than the purchasing power of their patrons at the box office. Getting back to the business of big business, my problem with the high paid help at the helm is that too many of them are doing well for themselves and a selected few others, but not doing nearly as much good for their customers, their firms and the laborers in their vineyards.

For most of my life, large enterprises tended to be organizations with either a long history or a predictably long future - or both - with new competitors setting their sights on similar patterns of stability and longevity.

Today's entrepreneurs and mover-shakers seem bent on getting in, fattening up, either going public or getting acquired, then heading for the lush, green fairways of retirement. Somewhere along the line, it became fashionable for bigger fish to gobble up littler fish, reducing competition and enhancing profits, cutting corners in customer service and putting serious squeezes on the workforce...always after solemnly swearing to do none of the above. Enter, too, the corporate raiders who, knowing little or nothing about the businesses they acquired, gobbled up successful enterprises, spun off the least profitable activities, dehydrated the payroll, sucked out as much loose cash as possible, and loaded the company with debt in the form of so-called junk bonds. Then, like black-hatted Lone Rangers, they rode off into the sunset in search of similar prey. CEOs, COOs and CFOs, besides feathering their nests and greasing their exit slides, now seem to focus on slurping up or merging with competitors, then wringing out every possible employee and mandating every possible reduction in expenditures - this to enrich mostly passive investors and favored insiders, not to mention qualifying themselves for incentive goodies.

Wage controls? Price controls? Profit controls? Protective tariffs? I'm told that they're all contrary to the precepts of a capitalist economy and the great American system of free enterprise. But some things are spinning OUT OF control.

It's an ongoing soap opera that poses this question: Can free enterprise and fair play woo, wed and live happily ever after? If not, we might be headed for those extremes of wealth and poverty that keep Third World nations those two giant levels below Plateau America.

Grace to lead our children home

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Black Church Initiative was launched in 1997 by the Children's Defense Fund and the Black Community Crusade for Children we coordinated to bring a critical mass of Black congregations together to respond to the growing crisis facing Black children. Religious institutions have always played a role in the development of Black children and families, and we believe today's churches and mosques must be the moral locomotives for the urgently needed movement to save our children from the grip of hopelessness, violence, and the juvenile justice and prison systems.

We began with a series of gatherings in cities across the country where religious leaders, advocates, judges, and young people came together to discuss the alarming statistics on the disproportionately high numbers of Black children who are victims of violence or involved in the juvenile justice system. Each gathering also featured solutions—panelists describing innovative church-based youth programs across the country making a difference in the lives of their community's children, because sharing positive solutions is key to change. In order to share these examples with other congregations we have profiled ten of these successful programs in a new manual, "Grace to Lead Our Children Home".

The budgets, staff sizes, number of children served, and activities provided by the programs described vary widely so that almost any church can find a model they can use. For example, St Augustine's Church in

Washington, D.C. Freedom Temple Church in Garner, N.C., and Metropolitan Baptist Church in Memphis all run after-school or evening enrichment programs that can be staffed primarily with volunteers from a congregation. The Church of Saint Adalbert in Cleveland also relies on volunteers to run two successful group mentoring programs, one for boys and one for girls.

Mt Pleasant Missionary Baptist Church in Kansas City, Missouri, is one of nearly sixty sites across the country currently hosting one of the summer Freedom Schools which DCF/BCCC sponsor and which will serve over 5,000 children this summer. Freedom Schools' paid staffs of college-aged servant-leaders integrate reading, conflict resolution, and social action into a well-developed activity-based curriculum that promotes cultural and historical awareness and provides summer options for children where there are none. Parents attend weekly parenting workshops.

The Boston TenPoint Coalition, founded by three Black ministers, is a coalition of churches from many denominations, the police, the juvenile justice system, and many other public and private organizations who have come together to work on behalf of these programs and encourages churches across the country to follow their positive examples. Working together, the faith community can make a tremendous difference in helping to lead all of our young people safely home.

To order a copy call 1-202-662-3652. For more information call 1-202-628-8787.)

Feds nail more dirty cops, but not violent cops

BY EARL OFARI HUTCHINSON
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Attorney General Janet Reno publicly boasts that she will do everything in her power to nail more dirty cops. She's backed up that boast. In the seven years she has run the Justice Department, federal prosecutors have slapped more than 600 corrupt cops behind bars, an increase of nearly 600 percent. And she has told prosecutors throughout the country to be even more vigilant in cracking down on police corruption.

There are plenty of signs that they are heeding their bosses' admonition. In big and small cities nationally more police are being arrested and indicted on bribery, racketeering, and drug peddling charges than ever before. The Los Angeles Police Department continues to be rocked almost daily with fresh allegations that LAPD officers beat, shot, planted weapons and drugs on suspects, and gave perjured testimony against them. At last count more than 70 LAPD officers are under investigation on corruption charges and more than 75 felony convictions have been overturned because of tainted evidence.

Yet despite Reno's admirable zeal to lock up corrupt cops, she has not shown the same zeal to bag rogue cops who beat and kill mostly young African-Americans and Latinos. According to a recent report on police misconduct by Human Rights Watch, an international public watchdog group, in 1998 federal prosecutors brought excessive force charges against police officers in less than 1 percent of the cases investigated by the FBI involving allegations of police abuse.

The group also found that there was almost no difference in the skimpy number of police misconduct cases prosecuted by the Justice Department under moderate Democrat Clinton than there were under conservative Republican President George Bush.

When activists demand that the feds prosecute cops who gun down unarmed citizens such as the four New York City cops who riddled African Immigrant Amadou Diallo, their ritual response to them is that the shooting is under "review." Meanwhile, months, sometimes years, pass with no word from the Justice Department on what if any action, it will take. In nearly all these cases no officers are prosecuted and the case is quietly closed.

The reflexive see-no-evil policy of the Feds toward police violence comes of a time when the number of police abuse complaints have soared nationally. The nearly 12,000

complaints in 1996 almost matched the total number for the entire period from 1984 and 1990. To better aid law enforcement agencies and federal prosecutors track patterns of abuse, the Violent Crime and Control Act of 1994 authorized the Justice Department to collect data on the frequency and types of police abuse complaints. At the end of 1998, it still had not issued any report on the level of police misconduct in America.

Worse, the Justice Department has long had on the books a strong arsenal of civil rights statutes to prosecute abusive police officers. However, more often than not, it has taken major press attention, large scale protests, and even a major riot, such as the L.A. riots in 1992 following the Rodney King verdict, before it used its legal weapons. Meanwhile federal prosecutors say they can't nail more rogue cops because they are hamstrung by the lack of funds and staff, victims who aren't perceived as criminals, credible witnesses, and the public's inclination to always believe police testimony.

They also claim they are pinned in by the almost impossible requirement that they prove an officer had the specific intent to kill or injure a victim in order to get a conviction. These are tough obstacles to overcome and since the Justice Department is in the business of winning cases many prosecutors are more than happy to take a hands-off attitude toward police misconduct cases.

But this is no excuse for federal prosecutors not to at least make the effort to prosecute more officers when there is substantial evidence that they used excessive force. This is the legally and morally right thing to do. And it sends a powerful message to law enforcement agencies that the federal government will go after lawbreakers no matter whether they wear a mask, or a badge.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark understood the importance of prosecuting abusive officers even when there is virtually no chance of getting a conviction against them. He felt this acted as a "stabilizing force" to spur police and city officials to take stronger action to halt the use of excessive force in their departments. Clark was right.

Reno's failure to aggressively go after cops who gun down unarmed civilians will continue to feed the dangerous cycle of more shootings and more racial turmoil, and deepen the distrust and cynicism of minorities toward the criminal justice system. Reno should worry as much about this as she does about dirty cops.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of *The Disappearance of Black Leadership*: email: ehutchi344@aol.com

Imagine this: You're proud of the children you raised. Your grandkids are talented and beautiful, too. The reality of retirement has finally arrived and it's even better than the fantasy.

You have family behind you.

You couldn't have done it without family behind you. American Family Mutual Insurance. When it comes to your future, over 70 years in the insurance business is experience you can trust. With over six million policies in an operating area of 14 states and a consistent rating of A+ (Superior) from insurance rating authority A.M.

Best, we've got the kind of stability that invites you to relax. And isn't that precisely what you had in mind? So, call today and talk to a helpful, friendly agent. Then dive right in. We'll be close behind you.



AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE
AUTO HOME BUSINESS HEALTH LIFE



All Your Protection Under One Roof.

American Family Mutual Insurance Company and its Subsidiaries, Madison, WI 53783-0001 www.arnfam.com