

Portland
Observer

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, ORSubscriptions 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 many shades of prejudice

BY JOE KLOCK, SR.
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A dear friend of mine, now departed, was fond of admonishing one and all to "never say 'never', never say 'always', but always say 'maybe.'" It was good advice, particularly when someone was conversationally painting with too broad a brush.

Elimination of "never" and "always" from human communication would convert arguments to debates and, as just one benefit, promote domestic tranquility. Similar words of caution should be directed to those who indiscriminately use "the" in referring to large groups of people who happen to share one common characteristic, be it ethnic, religious, or whatever.

As soon as anyone speaks, writes, or even thinks in terms of "the" Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Orientals, Jews, Catholics, Gays, or even teen-agers, they have already pled guilty to at least some degree of prejudice.

This most often occurs when "the" is used, but "all" is clearly suggested. (If one may dare to paraphrase our Chief Spinmeister, it depends on what the meaning of "the" is.)

While it may be true - let's face it, folks - that certain characteristics and behavior patterns are more prevalent among certain identifiable groups, it is patently unfair (not to mention inaccurate) to imply that all members thereof can automatically be so branded. It might be called judgment by stereotype, and it's as wrong as wife-beating.

I was raised among "nice" people in middle-class Philadelphia, whose attitude toward those who were not like them in almost every respect was largely shaped by prejudices, some of which were inherited and others cultivated by the tight social circles within which they moved.

The prevalent advice was to "stick with your own kind." This meant consorting, cavorting and ultimately coupling with peers of the same religion, national ancestry and, above all, skin color.

Thus living in a social cocoon of sorts, I came to "know" things about people about whom I really knew next to nothing, this by virtue (or vice) of having little or no significant contact with them in my daily life. Things are better now, but a troubling residue remains.

Many, if not most, of our present problems with "those-people-you-know-who-I-mean" stem from the fact that we don't actually know much about them and, worse than that, we don't try to learn more about them. Worse still, neither do many of "them" work at understanding "us."

With respect to the White/Black situation, which is probably the most troublesome of all intergroup barriers, these attitudes of ignorance have nurtured not only fear, suspicion and hostility, but exaggerated accusations. In turn, these allegations have generated matching defensive postures in both camps, with the result that what should be a middle ground of understanding and compromise becomes a battleground between monolithic forces. "The" Blacks become "the" source of crime, welfare abuse and a deterioration of family values, while "the" Whites become "the" greedy oppressors, insensitive to the needs of minorities and bent on condemning them to second-class citizenship.

Similarly, "the" police became sadistic pigs who routinely dispensed vigilante justice to the Blacks, reserving due process to Mr. & Mrs. Whiteface.

All the while, the demagogues in both camps fan the flames of bigotry with their angry rhetoric.

Well, folks, its long past the time for all of us to get off our high (and low) horses of demagoguery and activate the four F's of problem solving, which are:

1. Find the facts, as they apply to each individual, regardless of color, creed, etc.
2. Filter the facts, to separate the pertinent ones from the irrelevant and convoluted.
3. Focus on those remaining facts...and those facts alone.
4. Face the facts and take appropriate action to mitigate the problem. Sure, some of we Whites will, in that process, surrender perks and share some social turf that has been heretofore privileged; and some Blacks will have to leave race cards in the deck and play the hands that have been dealt; and both sides will have to acknowledge that the other side has been right about some issues, despite their present unwillingness to yield an inch of ground or a single phrase of impassioned oratory.

"The" trouble with all of us is that there just isn't room for "the" in describing either the social problems that beset us or "the" people on either side of controversies. SOME of us and SOME of them are right about SOME things. None of us and none of them are right about everything.

ALL of us have much to learn about the people who are different, whether in their beliefs, customs or pigmentation...and they have much to learn about us. Until we all begin that learning process, the "the" problem will stand between us and the genuine understanding that is the very soul of America.

Keith Stockdale, another legal and racial travesty

CONTRIBUTED COLUMN
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

On June 16 in a juvenile courtroom in Rancho Cucamonga, a mostly white, conservative bedroom community 60 miles east of Los Angeles, Keith Stockdale, a 15 year old African-American male, was slapped with a 46 year to life sentence. This is believed to be one of the longest sentences ever handed out to a minor in a juvenile court case. Stockdale was convicted of the rape of three teen-aged white girls.

Legal experts say the average prison sentence in adult rape cases where no weapon is used and the perpetrator has no prior record is 4-6 years. The arresting officer, the judge, prosecutor, and the court appointed

psychologist in the case were white.

These colossal flaws in the case back the charge that his stupendous sentence is a legal and racial injustice:

- Unsupported victim's statements.
 - A huge lag in the time gap between the time the sexual acts occurred and when the alleged rapes were reported.
 - No medical evidence of physical injuries to the victims.
 - No allegation that a weapon was used.
 - No criminal record or prior evidence of sexual misconduct by Stockdale.
- "This may be another case of a racial and legal travesty that entraps many young black men," says Earl Ofari Hutchinson, director of the National Alliance for Positive Action, "This case certainly demands immediate action."

Black America's challenge: going back to the future

BY HUGH B. PRICE
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE

As the National Urban League convenes its annual conference, this year in its birthplace, New York City, it's important to recall why the League was founded 90 years ago.

It was founded to help the Negro American migrants from the rural South, then beginning to flood into the cities of the East and Midwest adjust to the demands of urban living and gain the education and job skills they needed to have a viable chance to improve their lives. The point of this recollection isn't to indulge in nostalgia. It's a reminder that the work we have before us now is powered by the same fundamental motive and need.

That is to help African Americans gain the full measures of their American citizenship: the unfettered enjoyment of civil rights and an unrestricted opportunity to pursue economic advancement.

For all the advances Black America has recorded since the League's creation in 1910, and especially since the civil rights victories of 1960's, that goal still remains some distance away. The trenchant essays in the Urban League's annual scholarly journal, The State of Black America 2000, which we've just published, make that clear.

Millions of black families have yet to make the journey to the economic mainstream—the journey for welfare dependence to economic independence; from isolation to assimilation; from poverty to prosperity.

Getting the roughly one-third of black Americans still in economic distress squarely into the middle class is the main unfinished business facing Black America—and America.

In succeeding columns, I'll explore more specifically how that can be accomplished. But I can declare here what one facet of that approach for American Americans must include: We've got to go back to our past in order to go forward to our future.

If African Americans are to make: great surge toward the American mainstream, they must summon the inspiration and faith and steely determination that enabled blacks to triumph over Slavery and legal segregation with their humanity and patriotism intact.

There's never been a better time in U.S. history to make that move than in the midst of a thoroughly robust economy.

Three years ago at our annual conference in Washington DC, I declared that Economic Power is the Next Civil Rights Frontier.

Some of the things Black America must take the lead in doing to cross that frontier include:

Establishing community-based programs that equip our youth for, first, academic for African-American Achievement we've launched with the Congress of National Black Churches and twenty programs that provide the training and counseling to help more breadwinners land good jobs, and become homeowners, and then become confident investors also that they can build a viable nest egg for their families; Establishing community-based technology centers that enable resident of poor and less-affluent neighborhoods to grasp the opportunity of today's technological revolution.

But Black America cannot, and should not, be solely responsible for tapping the full measure of the "human capital" of its segment of the American population. That's the responsibility, too, of the entire network of government agencies, and private institutions, including corporations and other businesses, that make up the society of which we're a part.

For example America's powerful economy has been absorbing able workers at such a rate, particularly in high-tech fields, that many businesses are clamoring for Congress to pass legislation that would raise the limit on guest workers destined for high-tech fields. (By some estimates, upwards of 400,000 jobs are unfilled. This costs the economy and culture \$4 billion annually in lost productivity.)

There's no doubt that immigrant and guest workers inject a vital energy into our economy and culture.

But there's another solution to our labor shortage in the science and high-tech science sectors right under our noses: investing in homegrown talent. Blacks, Latinos and other underrepresented minorities comprise a quarter of American's workforce. Yet they hold less than 7 percent of jobs in these fields. So, Congress should shelve raising the ceiling for guest workers and promote instead the partnership of government, private-sector companies and community-based and nonprofit organizations to mine the untapped talent among those Americans thus far isolated from the technological revolution.

This kind of social program worked two generations ago. It's not rocket science to figure out how a national effort of similar scope can work today.

Indeed, this is a great reason for Washington to embark some of that record surplus it keeps boasting about — to jumpstart the journey of the least we — off among us into the economic mainstream.

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.amfam.com

Come visit us on the web at
www.portlandobserver.com