

**OPINION**

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		<p>BUSINESS MANAGER Gary Ann Taylor</p>	<p>DISTRIBUTION MANAGER Mark Washington</p>
		<p>ASST. PUBLISHER Michael Leighton</p>	<p>CREATIVE DIRECTOR Paul Neufeldt</p>
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<p>503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015 • EMAIL: news@portlandobserver.com subscription@portlandobserver.com ads@portlandobserver.com</p>			

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**CHARLES JORDAN SPEAKS**

City leader raises concern about few role models and our troubled youth

The Portland Observer is proud to publish an interview featuring Charles Jordan, Director of Portland Parks and Recreation. Jordan has compiled an extensive record of public service. He is currently the esteemed director of Portland Parks and Recreation and a former city councilman. Our correspondent Yugen Fardan Rashad recently sat down with this dynamic leader for this first part of a continuing series:

**Yugen:** In the modern age of professional sports, the black athlete has come full circle with achievements in tennis and golf.

**Jordan:** We want to see them (the black athlete) excel. Histori-

cally blacks were kept from competing in professional sports. Jackie Robinson, the first black person to play major league baseball, came in and the "doors were opened." In tennis today, you have the sisters, Venus and Serena Williams. And now golf with Tiger Woods.

Black people are elated that finally the world can see we can do things and do them exceedingly well. Why does this excite the masses so much? Because it gives young people a role model. It says to them, hey, "we can do it". We can be Number One. And Tiger Woods does it (role model) so well.

**Yugen:** I agree. It's certainly



Charles Jordan

refreshing. I cannot relate to the glutton, object worship so prevalent among black professional athletes - and their navete and apathy about business development in the community that produced and supported their genesis towards accomplishment and riches.

**Jordan:** Tiger does a lot of the right things. Some of them (black

athletes) are just spoiled brats making a lot of money. So many of our children may lead lives of frustrations and failure because there are just so many NBA stars, just one Tiger, and every kid cannot be a Tiger or Kobe Bryant.

Somehow we need to let them know that this (professional sports) is just one option. You got to have more options in life. If all a kid prepares for is one option, and those skills aren't transferable... A lot of basketball players would starve to death if they couldn't play ball! Some of them didn't graduate from school. The challenge for us is how do we glorify the teachers (education). We don't know how to do that yet, but we need our kids to look to them (teachers) just as they look to the ball players. Look at what we pay teachers...

**Yugen:** We pay them?

**Jordan:** (Smile). Hypocritically we will say "our kids are our fu-

ture", but where is your money going? Look at teacher salaries and the responsibilities they have. And with the enormous amounts of money we have, why haven't we fixed our schools? It just doesn't make any sense.

**Yugen:** And while we're talking about the young people, they face a moral dilemma that threatens and disrupts. In perhaps this or the next generation, we're on the cusp of squandering the sacrifices and suffering of the many who came before.

**Jordan:** People ask me "what do we do with the young people?" I honestly don't have an answer, but I know that every kid can be saved but every kid won't be saved, and that's a bitter pill to swallow.

**Yugen:** No, no, Charles. I'm counting on you to navigate this tough terrain better than I've been able to because I'm befuddled.

**Jordan:** If I was a benevolent

dictator what would I do? An overwhelming majority of youth started out only wanting to do the right thing. We got kids out there struggling just to make it. They haven't given up or turned their lives over to crime. I would find those kids, the willing souls, who say they want to make it, and put 85 percent of my resources there. I would reserve the remainder for those who have said the hell with it.

**Yugen:** Okay. These are youth steeped in wayward, nomadic lifestyles... You have a different sermon for them, what is it?

**Jordan:** "If you ever changed your mind, I'm going to leave a little bit out here for you." The ones who decided they want to kill people or do drugs, and then ask me to prove to them that I can give them a better life... No, no my brother. You've made your choice.

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*Letter to the Editor*  
**Schools Needs New Leader**

Jim Scherzinger has remained 'interim' superintendent of Portland Public Schools in spite of failings, poor and 'bad' management, lavish and unnecessary district costs and expenses, terrible leadership, lack of accountability, ineptitude, arrogance and more.


School district costs and expenses have soared while delivery to students has plummeted.

Educational racism and the gross lack of accountability has allowed for and encouraged student abuse and a widening 'disconnect'.

In the interests of all students, I continue to urge members of the Portland School Board to appoint Dr. Calvin O.L. Henry Superintendent of Portland Public Schools.


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