

OPINION

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The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680

Established 1970

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, OR 97211

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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

503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015 • EMAIL: news@portlandobserver.com subscription@portlandobserver.com ads@portlandobserver.com

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Remember the Peacemakers

Those committed to non-violent and civil rights deserve honors

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

This Memorial Day holiday took on new meaning to the 160 American families who lost loved ones in the war against Iraq. Suddenly for them, this was more than a holiday for barbecues and baseball. It's appropriate that our nation honors those who have died in war for our freedom. But why do we only honor those who fought in wars for freedom, why don't we also honor those who make peace for our freedom?

Of course, there is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the day we have set aside to honor him. But what about those others who died for their commitment to non-violence and civil rights for all Americans? People like Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman and James Chaney who went to Neshoba County, Miss. in 1964 and who were killed for their voter registration work in the black community there. People like the Michigan housewife Viola Liuzzo who was killed in Lowndes County, Ala. for her civil rights work in 1965.

Or Jonathon Daniels, an Episcopal seminar-

ian who was killed in that same Alabama county in that same year. Daniels, a New Hampshire native, was shot dead trying to protect a young African American woman and friend after both had just been released from prison.

Where are the national monuments and moments of silent thanksgiving for all those who died who were incarcerated repeatedly, who were harassed and beaten because of their non-violent work on behalf of the oppressed and disenfranchised in our own nation?

Or do we pause to remember the contributions of Jean Donovan, a Catholic laywoman, and Dorothy Kazel, an Ursuline nun, and Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, both Maryknoll missionaries, all of whom were working with the poor in El Salvador and were killed in 1980 by paramilitaries financed by the U.S.? Extraordinary women committed to peace for the poor in that war-torn land. When do we honor them?

Then there are the peacemakers like Amy Beale who made the ultimate sacrifice for her beliefs. Amy Beale was a Stanford University graduate, whose Fulbright scholarship took her to South Africa, where she was studying and working with those trying to put back together a nation torn asunder by decades of apartheid. While driving in Capetown, her car was surrounded and she was beaten and stabbed by a group of outsiders who did not know her or what she had done on behalf of that community.

And this year, when do we honor Rachel Corrie, the 23-year-old young American killed

by an Israeli Defense Force bulldozer driver as she stood non-violently in front of the home of a Palestinian family? Even those who might not agree with her position must acknowledge that she was a young woman committed to peace in one of the most violent places of a war-torn world. As she stood there in an orange fluorescent vest, she practiced what all non-violent protesters have been taught — to try to look at your attacker in the eye with love and find that person's humanity.

Earlier this year, the World Council of Churches issued a statement decrying the war in Iraq. In it, Dr. Konrad Raiser, the World Council's general secretary, said, "Wars cannot be won, only peace can." Last December, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, former President Jimmy Carter said, "war may be a necessary evil, but it is evil." Yet we honor only war.

There is the Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Ala. which tells the story of not only the civil rights movement but also of human rights activists. There is the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tenn. located at the old Lorraine Motel where Dr. King was killed. But as our nation discusses whether more war memorials should be built on the Mall in Washington, D.C., perhaps someone should raise the question of where is the monument to those who work for peace.

Bernice Powell Jackson is executive minister of the Justice and Witness Ministries for the United Church of Christ.

Hunger is Old Story with a New Twist

Giving spirit is nourishment for the soul and those in need

BY BILL CONYARD

Look out your window and pick out a house. Now think about who lives there and imagine that they've been laid off due to company downsizing. How long could they survive without a paycheck? How long could you? It's a frightening thought, isn't it? Unfortunately it's a new reality for thousands of Oregonians today.

Thursday, June 5 is National Hunger Awareness Day. It promises to raise awareness and stimulate new donations to help end hunger in America. Born out of a post Sept. 11, 2001 nation, last year's first National Hunger Awareness Day addressed the growing number of people falling victim to the economy's downward turn. In addition, budget cuts to the Oregon Department of Human Resources were huge, hunger relief organizations had less food to give and charitable dollars were unavailable.

Even the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, successfully helping the needy since 1833, has felt the crunch of the present rise in poverty. For example, in 2002 we gave \$641,500 in direct assistance and collected and distributed over 954,000 pounds of food to a total of 230,000 emergency contacts in six counties. Most were the working poor or homeless.

Now we are seeing many seeking assistance for the first time — they never dreamed they would be in this position nor do they know where to turn for help. Our current resources aren't able to keep up the pace — some of those who donated before are the very ones in need now. But together we must find help for them and everyone in distress. We must defend against increased homelessness and indigence. Our hope is that National Hunger Awareness Day will heighten our situation with a renewed call to action.

Look again at the house next door and remember, today you and I might enjoy our stocked refrigerators and roofs over our heads, but our neighbors may not. And for us, tomorrow's wealth is no longer certain. The only certainty is that a giving spirit is abundantly nourishing for the soul and your help through donation and volunteering can fill your cup as well as provide sustenance for those in need.

Bill Conyard is the executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

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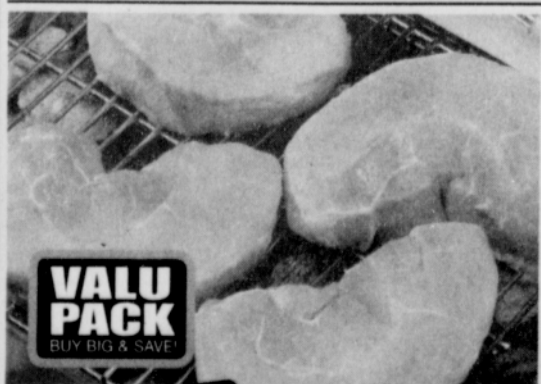
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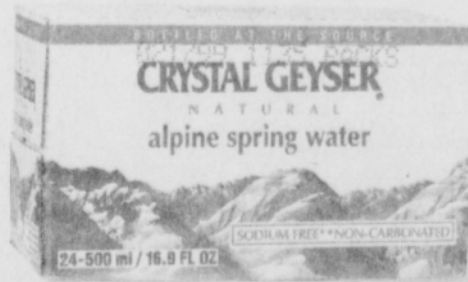
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