

# OPINION

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## JIM FRANCESCONI

**"I will fight for more diversity on Portland's police force to better reflect the community it serves."**

— Jim Francesconi

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"I met Jim when we were having problems with drugs, alcohol, gangs and shootings in my NE Portland neighborhood. We couldn't get the police to come out half the time. Jim provided us with the tools to take back our neighborhood."

— Maggie Gibson



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## Voting Rights under Threat Justice Department should intervene

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In the 1960s, the Justice Department was called up to help ensure that African-Americans were afforded their Constitutional right to vote. From election monitors to armed guards, the federal government had to ensure that American citizens were afforded their God-given rights to exercise their voting power. Unfortunately, 40 years later, the Justice Department needs to, once again, intervene and ensure that citizens' votes are not suppressed or otherwise compromised.

To begin with, the Vice President's general counsel is leading a thinly veiled voter suppression movement entitled "The Ballot Integrity Project." When the current administration appears to be behind efforts to deny and frustrate the right to vote, we should all be concerned and demand action. The problem, however, is not just on the federal level. It exists, open and notoriously, on the state level.

No one needs to restate the problems in the 2000 Presidential election; there were almost too many to mention. In Florida, black voters were 10 times as



likely as white voters to have their ballots rejected. In Michigan, a state representative was so bold as to go on record as saying that the GOP needs to "suppress the Detroit vote." In a city with an 83 percent African-American population, there is little doubt as to what the representative meant by his statement.

I recently spoke to students at Prairie View A&M University whose right to vote was threatened by the county district attorney. Thankfully, these students fought back and maintained their voting rights and achieved the district attorney's resignation.

Meanwhile, the Republican Party in Kentucky is so bold as to announce that they intend on placing voter challengers (read: intimidators) at predominantly African-American polling places.

This is real, this is now and this is happening right here in America. The right wing knows that it has much to lose without the use of these illegal measures.

Federal intervention does not guarantee that there will be no problems come Nov. 2. However, Justice Department oversight is a step in the right direction of maintaining a fair and intimidation-free voting environment.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

## Adjusting to an Alienable City Racial climate is more of the same

BY RONALD WHITE

It is amazing that those of us blacks that have resided here for the last several decades have adjusted to Portland's alienable social policies. I have noticed a steady but significant change in the racial climate here.

Ever since the infamous police opossum throwing incident about 25-years ago, some of our black self-anointed leaders appear dumbfounded in their response to atrocious police and civic behavior. Our reigning black city official then was Charles Jordan. He made the heroic, bold and unprecedented move of firing the police officers involved. He knew that the people of the community were important. He also saw the importance of a healthy community and an ethical police force.

Everyone seemed to bask in the aftermath of what we saw as justice and seemed quite intoxicated by it. Shortly later the hatchet dropped. The mayor, Francis

Ivancie demoted Mr. Jordan as if he was implying that this Negro had no right to fire a police officer. And we would later find that some outside arbitrator would restore their jobs along with back pay.

I don't know how this affected everybody but I was overcome by disbelief and grief, a grief that I really never really got over. Mr. Jordan appeared to fade away into the night and I didn't notice a lot of people coming to his aid, which I thought was strange. I felt a grim uncertainty about the future for blacks in Portland.

Well in the next 25-years, we would realize atrocious behavior by both the onslaught of white and black gang activity and police. With the black leadership response to these issues leaving much to be desired in the way of justice.

Given the all this historical evidence about disparate treatment of blacks in Portland, why can't we be more proactive about these issues? Why haven't people like Al Sharpton, Johnny Cochran or other national black leaders been called to witness this injustice and get Oregon on the map?

*Mr. Jordan appeared to fade away into the night and I didn't notice a lot of people coming to his aid, which I thought was strange. I felt a grim uncertainty about the future for blacks in Portland.*

It is obvious that blacks here need some kind of galvanization given their lower per-capita income and low rates for home ownership. And not to mention proposals by the Aryan Nations to rid the Northwest of blacks and the government waging gentrification war on our communities.

It appears that any pro-active response is stymied by our incessant psychosis.

If we don't get off of our high horses and acknowledge that we should heal ourselves psychologically, we may find ourselves here in Oregon in a spinout of poverty and self-denigration.

## Letter to the Editor Yes on Medical Marijuana

Thank you for the story "Pain Relief with Legal Pot" in last week's issue. I was a chief petitioner for the Oregon Medical Marijuana Act passed in 1998. It is successful with over 10,000 registered patients, and more than 1,400 Oregon doctors have signed applications.

Unfortunately, the original act forces patients to grow medical marijuana or find someone who will grow it for them without taking any reimbursement - even for itemized expenses. Your article's description of the expensive materials, gardening skill, and plain old luck necessary for a regular supply of medicine makes it obvious why dispensaries are needed. Without dispensaries, many patients are without medicine.

Measure 33, an amendment to

the OMMA, provides improved access to medicine through regulated dispensaries that will sell medical marijuana only to qualified patients. The dispensaries would act like pharmacies for medical marijuana. This would allow patients who need medicine immediately or patients who are too sick to grow safe access to the medicine they need.

Measure 33 is not legalization, because one must be qualified by an attending physician and it will remain a felony to sell to any non-registered person. I encourage everyone to support patient access to necessary medicine including medical marijuana. Please vote Yes on 33.

Rick Bayer, MD  
Southwest Portland

## Tax Keeps Our Promise

In 2003, we as Multnomah County residents passed a three-year temporary tax measure to support basic school and human services. Our most vulnerable citizens are watching and waiting to see if we keep our commitment. As adults, we all need to remember that children look to us as their role models. Therefore, we are keeping our promise by voting 'no' on Measure 26-64.

Stand For Children Team  
Augustana Lutheran Church