

OPINION

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Community Left Behind

Jefferson cluster planning team should include all

BY BYRD

While some herald Portland Public Schools Superintendent Vicki Phillips' latest attempt to involve the community in the re-configuration of Jefferson High School as a good faith effort, others view Phillips' plan as yet another divisive tactic imposed by the school district, and that these efforts will come to naught.

Last month, Phillips revealed the process by which the Jefferson cluster design and planning team will be

"the interest of students at heart." The fact that one is willing to volunteer speaks clearly to the condition of the heart. What's important is for people to be able to ask the hard questions. When hard questions have been asked before, they are often labeled as angry, hostile and passionate and don't get answered.

Those seeking a seat on the design team were also asked to "possess a variety of experiences in the community." Wouldn't it stand to reason that if one is raised in a particular community that they would have enjoyed a variety of experiences?

The design team is supposed to be representative of parents, community and faith based organiza-

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comprised: The superintendent, along with the student representative of the board, would meet with and take recommendations for students to sit on the design team from Whitaker and Tubman Middle Schools and Jefferson High School. The Portland Teachers Association and principals would recommend teachers.

How can the design and planning team be defined as involving the community while simultaneously defining the community? In addition, it sets an immeasurable if not ridiculous criterion, insulting the intelligence of the predominantly black Jefferson community. No such criterion has ever existed in dealing with other areas within Portland Public Schools.

The superintendent also sought individuals who possess the ability, among other things, to have

tions, businesses, higher education and school-based partners. A team made up of 15-20 individuals is wanted.

This procedure marginalizes if not omits genuine community input by creating a lottery like condition whereby many hope to be selected to this so-called community process and that shouldn't be.

If Phillips truly wants to deal with the predominantly black Jefferson cluster, then she should do just that, deal with the entire Jefferson cluster. Instead, Phillips defaults to a handpicked selection process that will not represent the many voices within the Jefferson community. She should reject this filtered process and open it up to the community. Otherwise, she will leave an entire community behind.

Byrd is a local community activist.



New Food Pyramid Hard to Stomach

Industry influence contaminated result

BY KATHRYN MULVEY

Many of us greeted the unveiling of the government's new food pyramid with a mixture of puzzlement and confusion. Indeed, the dizzying layers of rainbow-colored lines helped distract from the fact that the food industry's fingerprints are all over the new dietary guidelines—in ways that hurt rather than help consumers.

What most people don't realize is that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's original vision for the pyramid included visual indicators to show people how often they should eat certain foods. Pastries and donuts, for example, would be marked "occasional." But these guidelines are now nowhere to be found in the new pyramid thanks to giant food corporations and their lobbyists.

Perhaps the most glaring evidence of

the industry's influence is the government's refusal to recommend which foods not to eat, while putting a strong emphasis on individual responsibility. The only mention of unhealthy foods in new dietary guidelines is a gentle reminder to "know the limits on fats, sugars and salts."

Also missing are recommendations limiting the amount of food people eat. Considering that 28 percent of American men and 34 percent of women are obese, this omission is especially troubling.

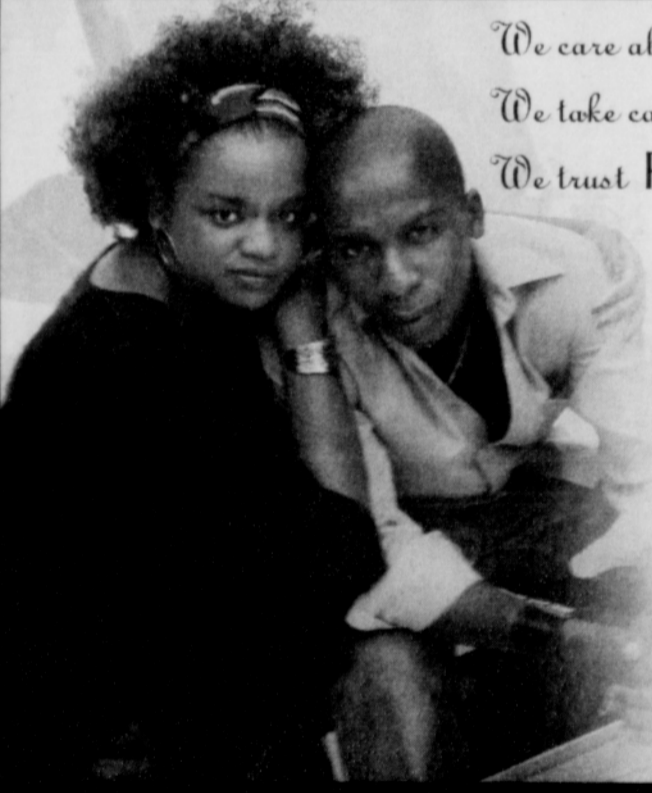
America's obesity epidemic is now the nation's second leading cause of preventable deaths. U.S. government guidelines on food and nutrition should provide specific recommendations to limit foods high in sugar and salt, which can contribute to obesity and other serious health problems, including diabetes, high cholesterol and high blood pressure.

Our organization is currently supporting national and international regulations that would hold food manufacturers ac-

countable for their contributions to the global obesity epidemic. Specifically measures to curtail the promotion of junk food and inform consumers about the dangers of foods high in sugar, salt and fat.

The USDA food pyramid is a trusted American icon that many of us first encounter in grade school. It then follows us throughout adulthood as we become parents ourselves, responsible for planning meals for our families. Something so essential to our well-being shouldn't fall into the hands of the food industry — or any other private industry whose bottom line could conflict with what's best for our health. That's what makes the food industry's incredible influence over the government's dietary guidelines so hard to stomach.

Kathryn Mulvey is the executive director of Corporate Accountability International, a membership organization that challenges irresponsible and dangerous corporate actions around the world.



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Two Wrongs Do Not Make it Right

Appalling reactions to a temper tantrum

BY JERMAINE A. WYRICK

A whirlwind of controversy began when a videotape was released depicting the handcuffing of a five-year old African-American girl at her school by law enforcement officials after she was engaged in disobedient and mischievous behavior. The public outcry led to an investigation as to whether the law enforcement officials exercised bad judgment or conversely acted appropriately.

Was she treated fairly? As with any five-year old, she was small, dwarfed in size, outnumbered and outgunned by three law enforcement officials. Factually, she was sitting in a chair and calmed down when the three sheriffs arrived. The sheriffs forcibly stood her up, pinned her hands behind her back, put handcuffs on her. She screamed no and cried. The scene was videotaped as part of a classroom self-improvement exercise. Before the sheriffs arrived she tore papers off a bulletin board and punched an assistant principal.

Her temper tantrum was caused by her jelly beans being taken from her. What is appalling is the actions demonstrate perhaps one of society's most pernicious evils - racism. A salient issue is whether a five-year old Caucasian girl has been treated the same way. Further, her behavior has been characterized as disruptive, reckless, and violent. How can a five-year old child who does not even have a weapon be violent? When she

tried to hit her principal, her arms were too short to reach her which precluded her from causing any harm. Moreover, five-year olds do not even know what the word reckless means.

There is a clear line of delineation between the goals of the juvenile justice system and the adult criminal justice system. Certainly the measures taken by the three sheriffs who handcuffed her were punitive, which is consistent with the goals of the adult criminal justice system.

A prominent issue is whether the sheriffs violated her constitutional rights. At the time law enforcement arrived, the child was not

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acting wrong because she had calmed down and was sitting down. Consequently, she did not pose a threat to anyone whatsoever, not school authorities, classmates, nor the sheriffs. The egregious conduct in escalating the situation - handcuffing her - constituted disruptive, reckless, and violent behavior itself, and accordingly wrong.

The actions of the sheriffs were reprehensible, unconscionable, and inexcusable. At her tender age, does this teach her the right lesson? Absolutely not! The law enforcement agency should be held accountable and implement self-improvement measures with respect to the treatment of citizens, even the youngest ones, with respect to basic fundamental human principles of dignity, freedom, and liberty.

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