OPINION

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Letters to the Editor

Police Misconduct

In the last six months, Portland police have once again attacked a mentally ill person. Your Dec. 20 account of Sir J. Millage, a 15-year-old African American autistic boy, who was tasered made me sick to my

Portland police officers stated that the reason Millage was stopped was because he didn't have a shirt or shoes on in the middle the night. As far as I see it, no law was broken. With the many cold nights that we have had, why didn't it cross Portland officer Andrew Griggs' mind that Millage may have been a person who suffers a mental disability?

I feel that Millage who has the mind of a 2-year-old and can hardly talk was probably more afraid of Portland P.D. officers not knowing what to do or how to defend himself.

Officer Griggs said that Millage was holding a large tan item, "possibly" a large piece of metal, and that Millage's fixed gaze led him to shoot the kid with the tazer. Not once did the officer state that Millage tried to attack him or any other officers. As far as a fixed gaze, I myself would have a fixed gaze if officers were standing in front of me with a tazer pointing at me.

The police stated that they interpreted Millage's cries as anger rather than pain. And that he refused to roll onto his stomach. Remember this African American youth had the mind of a 2-year-old. This was probably the most pain he had ever encountered in his life. Millage's cries would be more of a child who couldn't understand to roll on his stomach at the time he was being tazered. With the kid being tazered a number of times why would Officer Michael Chapman beat him with his baton?

The Portland Police Department needs to be accountable for what happened. All the churches across Portland need to stand and support Pastor Mary Overstreet Smith, Millage's great grandmother. The churches need to get involved in the community like they used to in the 70s. Not only the African American organizations, but all organizations fighting for people's rights need to support Pastor Smith.

The mental health organizations also need to teach Portland P.D. to know and understand when they are dealing with a person who might have a mental disability.

Sir J. Millage was brutally tazered and beaten by the real gang in blue. Power to the people.

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James Brown Electrified a Generation He reminded us to rejoice in our heritage

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Day. But James Brown's spirit lives. The career and life of the Brown electrified a generation, an I'm Black and I'm Proud" unified "Hardest Working Man in Show entertainer with so prolific a body and energized the African Ameri- ful garb and larger-than-life per-Business" ended on Christmas of work and so distinctive a genre can community in our period of of style that entertainers for more mourning over the death of Rev. pan or a one-hit wonder. He continthan four decades have either bor- Martin Luther King Jr., who had ued to persevere in the music inrowed from or have been inspired been assassinated five months ear-

> - his own man with his own vision on the Top 10 charts. and immense pride in his heritage. In his art, he embraced the blues,

the consummate showman. The tributes following his death forward ways.

proved the perfect encore for a life that was at times difficult and painful but nevertheless important and exciting. Only the "Godfather of Soul" himself could make such a dramatic and riveting exit in death.

Brown emerged the Every Man in the black community,

where he forged his strongest bonds. He set aside convention and remained true to himself - warts and all. With hits like "Please, Please, Please", "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag" and "I Got You (I Feel nity. Good)," he made an indelible im-

During the Civil Rights Moveto rejoice in our heritage and shout

He showed us that we didn't need to conform to the expectations of mainstream America to take a rightful place in society. He made us realize that we are as entitled to the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship as anyone else.

In 1968, Brown's "Say It Loud: than four decades. lier. It became one of the most popu-From the time he first took the lar black power anthems of the stage in the 1950s, James Brown, 1960s and also struck a chord with proved to be a cultural tour de force mainstream America, getting to #10

Through songs like "I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothgospel and R&B of his musical pre- ing (Open Up The Door, I'll Get It decessors in forging a musical des- Myself) that chronicled the chal- Jagger in the 1960s concert film tiny that defied convention and lenges faced by blacks in the United "The T.A.M.I. Show" who built was completely his own. He was States at the time, Brown made his much of his own stage persona activism known in real and straight- around Brown's signature style.

Despite his penchant for colorsona, he was hardly a flash in the dustry up until his last days.

Where he had his greatest impact was with the countless artists he inspired. Brown shines through in the work of his successors - from the guitar licks of Prince to the dance moves of Michael Jackson. He mesmerized Rolling Stones' frontman Mick Rappers have borrowed his beats

print on American culture.

ment of the 1960s, he emerged as an icon of black culture - reminding us out in pride for ourselves.

wonder. He continued to persevere in the music industry up until his last days. In addition to being the godfa-

Despite his penchant for

life persona, he was hardly a

flash in the pan or a one-hit

colorful garb and larger-than-

ther of various genres of music and dance moves, you could say he was the godfather of economic empowerment and equal opportu-

While Brown had a different impact than Ray Charles or Sam Cooke on mainstream Americans, he surely struck a nerve among African Americans.

With 60 songs in the Billboard Top 10 R&B chart, he racked up more hits than any other artist. His success on the Top 10 Pop chart was not as great - less than a dozen hits - not enough to put him in the top 25 artists, something that befuddles music critics given Brown's ability to get on the charts for more

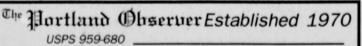
and funk. And his unforgettable stew of blues, gospel and R&B, unconventional rhythms and captivating life shows spawned a wide range of new musical genres.

He was not only the "Godfather of Soul" - but the godfather of disco, funk, hip-hop -- the list goes on.

At the various celebrations of his life -- at the Apollo Theater, in his hometown in Georgia and elsewhere, James Brown left this world just the way he led his life - a consummate showman and courageous visionary. He leaves an enduring legacy that will remain forever etched in our memories.

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