

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

Letter to the Editor

KBOO Strives to be Welcoming

KBOO 90.7FM is a community radio station that relies on hundreds and hundreds of volunteers who do everything from music DJ'ing to news production to training other volunteers and more.

In our rich and vibrant community, disputes arise between individuals, and we take them very seriously, particularly if any form of harassment may be involved. Tyrone Hines recently made such a complaint.

I found Mr. Hines to be a very pleasant and reasonable person. One challenge in interpersonal disputes is that two reasonable, thoughtful people may have different interpretations of the same incident, and that was our finding in this case. People like Mr. Hines are the lifeblood of our station, and I am truly sorry that he felt unheard or disrespected. With the help of a KBOO board member, I spent many hours working on the complaint, and we did follow up fully with both parties.

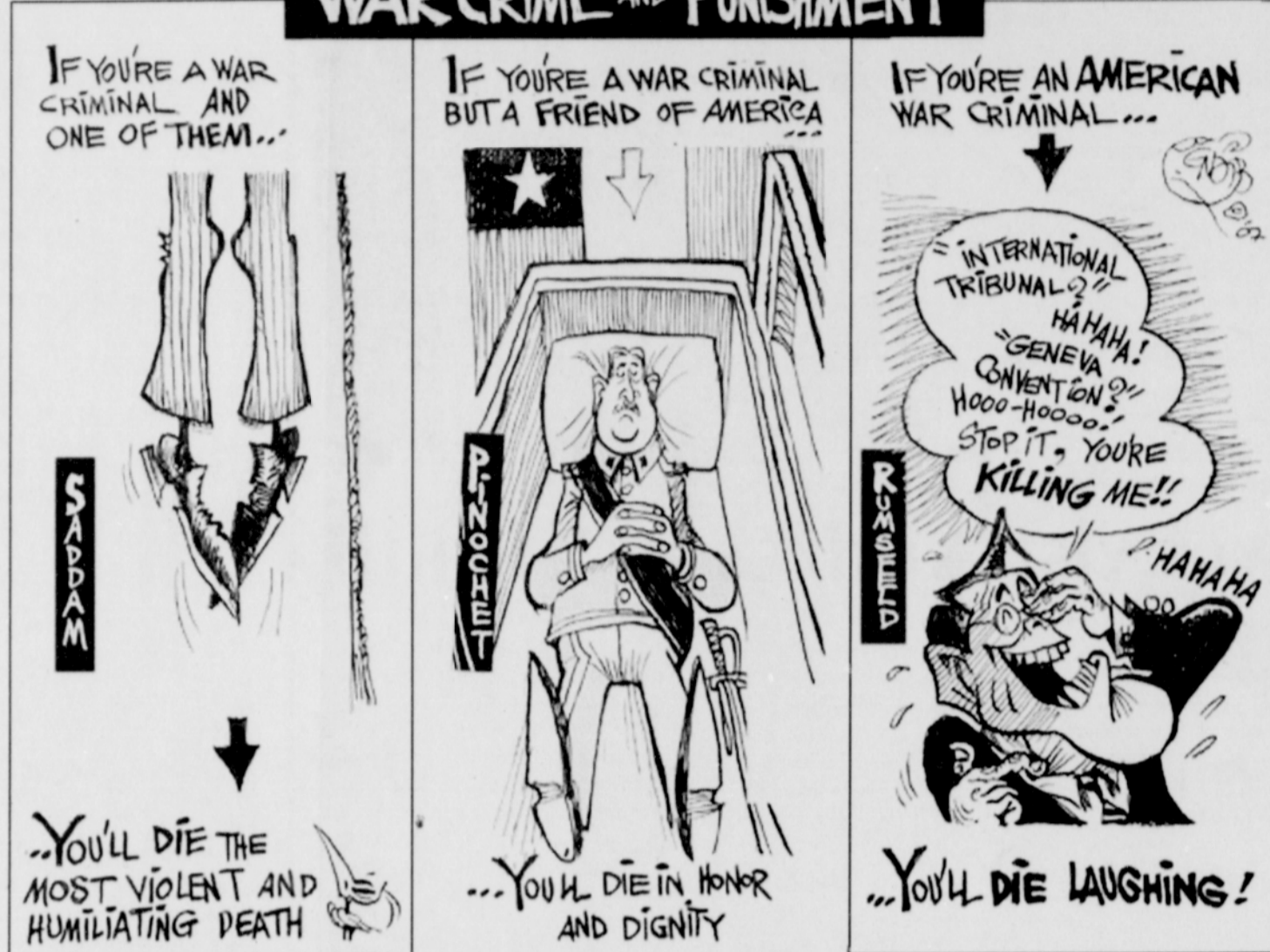
One important correction to your story (Portland Observer, Jan. 3 issue) is that Mr. Hines did not claim sexual harassment by the "volunteer coordinator" as stated in the photo caption. Our Volunteer Coordinator is a full-time professional staff member and she had no role in Mr. Hines' grievance. The complaint was against a volunteer who is not an employee.

Whatever may happen with Mr. Hines, we feel it is most important to make sure each and every reader of The Portland Observer knows that we strive to make KBOO a welcoming, vibrant, multi-cultural organization, and our doors are open to everyone, regardless of race, gender or creed.

We host monthly volunteer orientations and ongoing training in engineering, news and public affairs production, all free of charge.

Arthur W. Davis
KBOO Station Manager

WAR CRIME AND PUNISHMENT



Are Your Investments Adequate to Help You Meet Your Children's Education Needs?

MAKING THE GRADE: A Step-by-Step Guide to Education Funding

Learn How To:

- Estimate Educational Expenses
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Hosted by: Hakim Jones, Financial Advisor, Financial Planning Associate
Guest Speaker: Hakim Jones

January 19, 2007 @ 6:00 p.m.

Seminar location: Sabin Elementary Auditorium, 4013 NE 18th Ave., Portland

RSVP: Hakim Jones @ (503) 221-7600

This is a free seminar, with limited seating. Reserve your place today.

Bringing Fairness to Justice System

Conyers goes after mandatory minimum sentences

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The House Judiciary Committee, under the direction of Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., will soon begin hearings on the controversial mandatory minimum sentencing laws.

Up first: a review of the sentencing disparities in cases involving crack and powder cocaine.

In Conyers' 40 plus years in Congress, he has supported legislation to protect and advance civil liberties, ensure equal protection and access to the voting booth and protect women from violence. Conyers is one of the 13 founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus, started in 1969 to strengthen African-American lawmakers' ability to address the concerns of black and minority citizens.

Conyers' commitment to social justice is a welcome and much-needed addition to the justice system. The leadership of Conyers should put a new face - one that is fair and balanced - on the American justice system. At the height of America's 'war on drugs' mandatory minimum sentencing laws were put in place to punish dealers. They require judges to hand down set sentences to individuals convicted of a crime, regardless of extenuating circumstances - Was the individual coerced? Do they have any previous convictions?

According to the Drug Policy

Alliance, mandatory sentencing fails to deter crime and, as originally intended, do not punish big-time dealers. Instead, mandatory minimums have sent record numbers of people of color and women - an overwhelming number of them addicted to drugs - to jail, many of them for life, despite the nonviolent nature of many of their crimes.

The laws have been especially

dangers of crack or powdered cocaine. There is, however, a difference in the type of user that favors the two drugs: because of its much lower street price, crack is associated with poor, minority and urban users, while powder cocaine tends to be favored by more affluent users.

Nonviolent drug offenders would be better served by a drug treatment facility but are, instead, sentenced to long sentences - overcrowding prisons and running up a

The laws have been especially detrimental to black women.

detrimental to black women. If caught acting as a courier for her drug dealer boyfriend, a woman would receive the same, stiff sentence she would had she actually sold the drug. As a result, the number of black women in America's prisons has skyrocketed over the last 10 years.

When the penalties for drug possession were set, the punishment for crack was set higher because lawmakers believed crack was a more dangerous drug - and associated with more violent behavior - than powdered cocaine. Research has shown that there is no real difference in the potential

prison expense tab that is now in the billions.

Conyers has long been a critic of mandatory minimums and believes that no distinction should be made between crack and powder cocaine during sentencing. We only have to look at Congressman Conyers' track record to know that the upcoming hearings will go beyond the surface and dive deeply into the issues, an important first step towards change.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Hey, the Rich Have Problems Too

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

As anyone who has read the New Testament knows, Jesus spent most of his life among the poor and the shunned, rather than hanging out with the rich.

Indeed, he frequently blasted the avarice of the wealthy elites of his day, even declaring that, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

But, gosh, if Jesus visited our country today, surely he would feel the pain of the modern rich - wouldn't he?

For example, consider the tragic agony of "wealth status." let's take the case of some swell who's sitting on \$999,999,999. Are you aware that this poor wretch does not even make the "Forbes" list of America's 400 richest people?!!

In this year's ranking, it took a

Forget about fishes and loaves for the masses - what about caviar for the 'Forbes' rejectees?

billion dollars just to be number 400 on the list. Sure, such ultrarichies as Bill Gates, Michael Dell, and all five Wal-Mart heirs easily acquired "Forbes" status, but what about Martha Stewart, Steve Case, and others whose incomes fell short this time and were unceremoniously dropped from the list?

Forget about fishes and loaves for the masses - what about caviar for the "Forbes" rejectees?

Also, what many of us ordinary riff-raff fail to understand is that while the rich have so much money, it costs them a bundle to live.

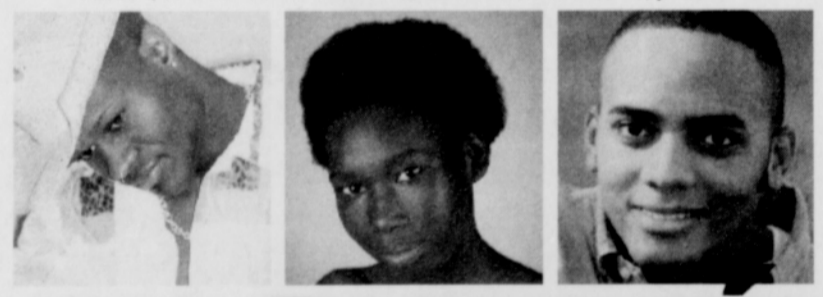
Were you aware, for example, that there was a 10 percent hike last

year in the price of a Sikorsky s-76c helicopter with VIP options? No, I dare say you were not. Also, the price of six-passenger Lear jets is by up to \$350,000 this year - and you don't even want to know about the cost of housing in the Hampton's!

Yes, while Jesus focused on the poor and the wretched, he also kept a wary eye on those who chose to serve mammon. And so should we. Blessed are the rich, for they will inherit the fate they so richly deserve.

Jim Hightower is the best-selling author of "Thieves in High Places: They've Stolen Our Country and It's Time to Take it Back."

B2B's Ujima Eshé and A* (African American AIDS Awareness Action Alliance) present:



ESHÉ WEEKEND

(Life Weekend)



Promoting Life and Health In the Black Community
January 20-21, 2007

FREE:

Community Health TalkBack; Health Screenings;
Teen Summit; Arts & Crafts
Food, Entertainment, Education!!! Community Resources!!!!
Saturday Jan. 20, 10:30am-3:30pm

PCC (Cascade) - Student Center Building

HIU/AIDS Ministries Outreach

Sunday Jan. 21

For more information call (503) 417-7991

Eshé Weekend is an event of Brother To Brother's Ujima Eshé program and is sponsored by: The African American AIDS Awareness Action Alliance (A6), The Portland Chapter of LINKS, Inc., Self-Enhancement, Inc., Brother To Brother, Inc., Collective Care Services Inc., Multnomah County Health Department, Office of WQomen's Health, Oregon DHS-HIV/STD/TB Division, Oregon Office of Multicultural Health, The Bridge Builders, Inc., Portland Community College (Cascade), The Urban League of Portland, Inc. and Gilead Sciences.