

# OPINION

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## Letters to the Editor

### Wakeup Call

I have just read the Feb. 7 edition and with special attention to the "America's Cradle-to-Prison Pipeline" opinion by Marian Wright Edelman. It must be viewed as a wakeup call!

In talking about the criminalization of poor and minority children who enter America's "Cradle to Prison Pipeline" Edelman is really talking about any family with a family income of \$100,000 or less.

Take the Duke University sex scandal. If those young men had been from mostly poor families, they would have been "railroaded" into prison and their families would have lost their homes in the defense of their sons.

For all for the ambition of a District Attorney to keep its job, when it is over, not much will happen to the DA. And the rich families will be out a lot of money.

When the same or similar thing happens to the rest of us, we are left in poverty. The criminal justice system is not about justice it is about money.

Many businesses have found it to be very good business to have their production plants located in the prisons. An English-speaking work force in a controlled place. In addition, they can say, "Made in America". This will lead many of us to be victimized by the "Prison Industrial Complex".

John Sweetley  
Southeast Portland

### Troop Support

Sticking a yellow magnet on your car or wearing a Nazi/Communist-like flag lapel pin is not 'supporting the troops.'

I was drafted and served overseas during Vietnam. Supporting the troops means protecting them from being sent into a civil war inadequately equipped and under-prepared. It also means impeaching George Bush Jr. and Richard Cheney for lying the U.S. into wars.

It is outrageous that Republicans label any plans to provide soldiers with proper equipment and training "anti-troop". It is the Republicans who have repeatedly sent our armed forces into conflict inadequately equipped and under-prepared. Then when these same troops return home the VA is underfunded so that there can be massive tax cuts for the top 1 percent of the population.

C. Currey, Southwest Portland



## Ending Homelessness in America

### We can't forget those living on the streets



BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

For the last several years, the black empowerment movement has focused on closing the education

and income gaps; we want to level the playing field, so to speak, so our people are better able to reach for and grab that elusive "American dream." This is an honorable goal and the work must continue. However, we can't forget those individuals and, often, families, living on the streets and in shelters, in unthinkable conditions, in cities across this country.

A large percentage of the nation's homeless are African-American. As our people collectively strive towards a middle class life and all the benefits it provides, we must remember and support those of our people who don't have access to a basic life necessity: shelter.

New data released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development revealed that more than 700,000 people sought shelter at least once during a three-month period in 2005. Nearly half of these people were black. One third of them were families, with children. Since the data only counted those seeking shelter and not those living on the streets, the number of homeless people in this country, and the number of black homeless in particular, could be much higher.

Many homeless women are victims of domestic violence; having no safe space to run to, they seek

refuge in shelters and on the streets, often with their children in tow. Men returning home from prison, cut off from their families for years, often find themselves without housing.

According to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, about 16 percent of homeless people are considered mentally ill; 26 percent are substance abusers, 13 percent are employed and 9 percent are vet-

ing centers and affordable housing units in urban areas — where poverty and homelessness go hand in hand — is yet another way to address the issue. Of course, all of this would require a long-term financial commitment from the U.S. government.

The powers that be would have to rethink the country's spending

*Many of these men, women and children are our people; we owe it to them to get involved.*

erans. America, often well-regarded overseas for its wealth, has historically ignored and discarded its most vulnerable citizens; these numbers are a clear example of that.

If service providers, community leaders and most importantly, the government, work together, these numbers can be reduced. By providing supportive housing services — that provide counseling, life skills training and other services — for abused women, recently released inmates and drug-addicted individuals, we can begin to tackle this issue.

Prevention strategies, including a comprehensive, universal healthcare system, one that covers the treatment of mental illnesses, will also help reduce the homeless population. The creation of job train-

priorities — less on war, more on education, housing, social services and urban development.

As individuals, we too can and should rethink our priorities and play a part. You can support your church's emergency shelter, if they have one. If they don't, research local organizations in your area that support and empower the homeless. Go one step further and write your local legislators, urging them to support programs that will help break the cycle of homelessness. Many of these men, women and children are our people; we owe it to them to get involved.

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

## Long Past Time to Recall Troops

### Time for an exit strategy

BY STATE REP. CHIP SHIELDS

Sen. Avel Gordly, Rep. Diane Rosenbaum and several of my colleagues in the Oregon Legislature filed House Joint Memorial 9 urging Congress to oppose the president's plan to send even more troops to Iraq. It also urges the Congress and president to develop an exit strategy from Iraq and begin troop redeployment no later than August 2007. We're calling it the Oregon Homeward Bound Act of 2007.

This memorial, like a similar one we introduced in the 2005 session, was intentionally crafted to avoid partisan finger-pointing and recriminations in the hopes of gathering bipartisan support. I am happy to report that this effort has paid off.

Rep. Brian Boquist, a Yamhill County Republican and I reached a compromise on resolution language. He has agreed to sign on in support.

At the national level, we see courageous Republican senators

like Chuck Hagel saying it's time to bring our troops home. Now is the time to put aside any kind of differences we may have had in the run-up to the war. It's time to stand up for our troops. It's time to stand up for their families, and say there is a way to bring our troops home... and the time to do it is now.

Last session, I remember hoping with all my heart that another resolution this session wouldn't be necessary because the war would be over. I regret today that is not the case. We the co-sponsors felt this was an important dialogue to have in the Legislative Assembly.

The message from America in the last election was clear that we cannot afford, in either blood or treasure, to provide security for Iraq forever.

You can help by calling your legislator and urging them to vote yes on House Joint Memorial 9, the Oregon Homeward Bound Act of 2007. The Legislature's number is 1-800-332-2313.

Enough is Enough. It's time to bring our troops home.

Chip Shields is a Democrat representing north and northeast Portland in Salem.

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