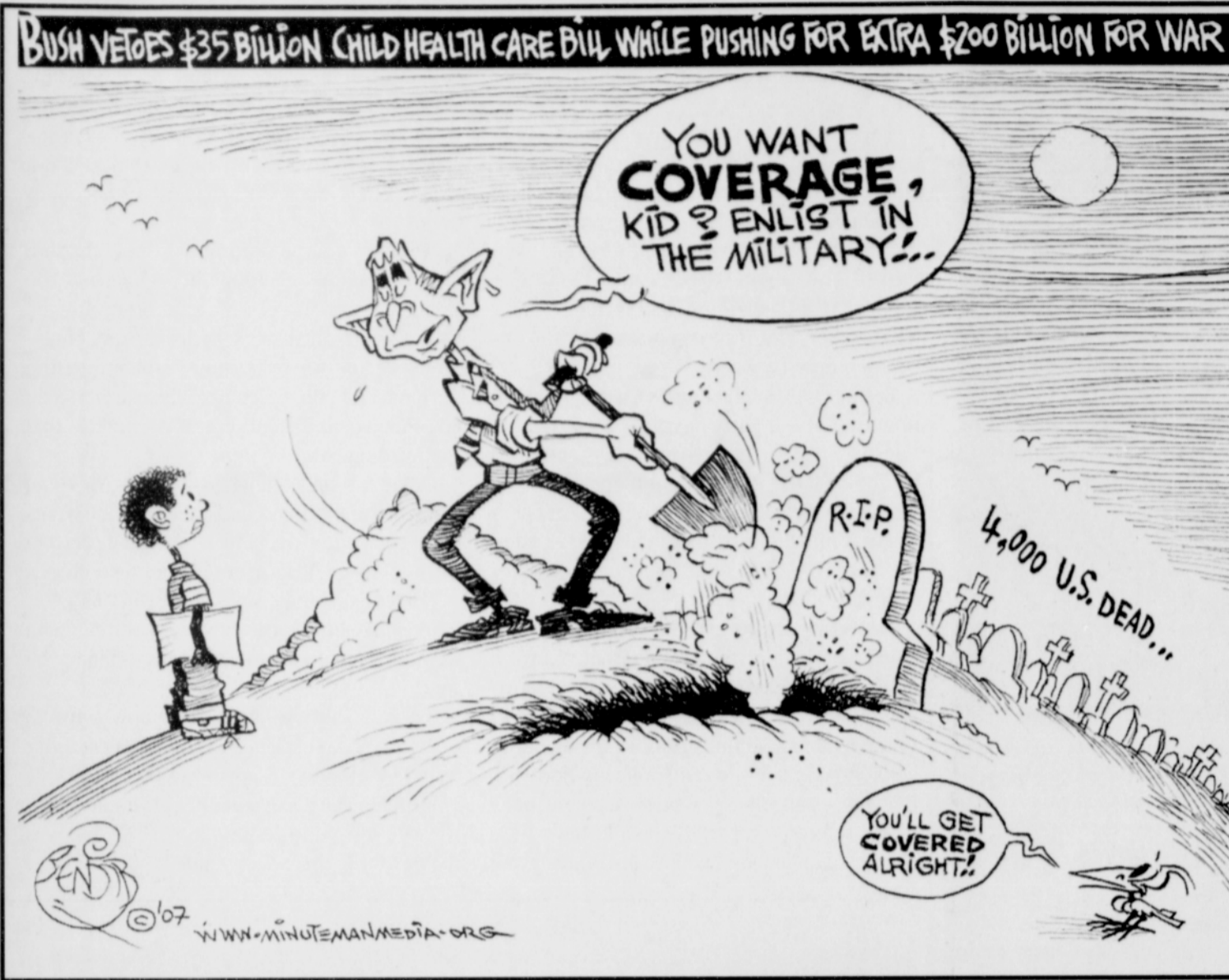


OPINION

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



Break the Silence about Racism

Confronting the evil in our midst

BY M. LINDA JARAMILLO

I can't stop thinking about how racism is ravaging this nation. I just can't get it out of my mind because I don't know if we realize how serious it is.

Thousands across this land were shocked and angered by the incident in Jena, Louisiana, when white students hung nooses from a tree outside the local high school. However, thousands more are taking this opportunity to revive "white pride" movements that encourage racial divide and bigotry.

Just two weeks ago, I wrote that the incident in Jena was an example of how racism continues to rear its ugly head in communities across this nation. Unfortunately, I was right. Nooses are a symbol of hatred and bigotry, a vivid reminder of the ever-present evil of racism in this country.

Hanging nooses from a stage rigging in Germantown, Tenn., just a month ago was motivated by racism and it was meant to intimidate. Nooses hanging from a tree at the high school in High Point, N.C. just two weeks ago were motivated by racism and it was meant to frighten students and the community.

Nooses strung on the back of a pickup truck driving past the peaceful demonstration near Jena on Sept. 20 were motivated by racism and it was meant to bully the demonstrators.

Yes, in each of these three cases, the persons responsible were held accountable for their actions. Some lost their jobs and

others were charged with various crimes.

For example, the 18-year-old man driving the pickup truck was booked on charges of inciting a riot. Police Sgt. Clifford Gatlin of Alexandria, La. stated, "I wish we had a charge in Louisiana for aggravated ignorance, because this is a classic case." Gatlin said the crowd of about 200 people at the bus station remained calm throughout the episode. He also added, "They were just offended and appalled that somebody would be that stupid to do that."

My question is why did this young man seem to think that this kind of behavior is even acceptable? I believe that many of the residents of these communities are horrified by the actions of some. I trust that many did not realize how racism is threaded in the fabric of their communities. I would submit that many of us do not realize that such incidents are happening in our communities every day. If we are aware, too often we remain silent.

There is no doubt that the racism revealed in Jena, Germantown, High Point and Alexandria was directed at African Americans. However, we cannot direct blame at the dominant culture in these communities alone. We are all responsible for a social culture that sees racism, yet says and does nothing.

Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." The racism we are witnessing today matters and it is time to break the silence and confront this evil in our midst.

M. Linda Jaramillo is the executive minister of Witness for Justice Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

Letter to the Editor

Time for Change

Thank you for your profile of my race for the Oregon Legislature. Often, I am asked "why are you running for office?" Primarily, I am running because I believe northeast Portland is a special place challenged by issues that have answers in Salem.

There is a chance for the Oregon Legislature to strengthen its laws around housing, job development, public education and preventative health care, all of which are just some issues effecting our families and friends in my district.

Also, I recognize that when home-grown people bring a historical and relevant perspective to authoring these laws, progressive solutions for all Oregonians emerge. I am one of these people.

I have dedicated my life to expanding emergency services and opportunity in northeast neighborhoods. Finally, in Oregon, we are at a turning point as many of our elected leaders retire. Now is the time for the emerging generation to bring their perspectives to the lawmaking process.

As a 27-year-old African American woman, I am a proud member of this dynamic generation. I look forward to a bright future of hard work and collaborative problem solving for the common good of this state.

Cyreena Boston
Democrat for House District 45

Advertise with diversity in *The Portland Observer*
Call 503-288-0033 ads@portlandobserver.com

Seasons change. Smiles are timeless.

Portrait Package Special
Only **\$995**

Package Includes:
One - 10 x 13
Two - 8 x 10's
Four - 5 x 7's
Four - 3 x 5's
32 Wallets

PLUS 6 Free Personalized Portrait Cards
40 Card Designs!

No sitting fees or charges

PORTRAIT Innovations
We've totally re-invented the studio experience.

The Streets of Tanasbourne
2219 NW Allie Avenue, Suite 1460
Hillsboro, OR 97124 • 503.645.9900
Studio Hours: Tuesday - Sunday 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
www.PortraitInnovations.com

Appointments Highly Recommended. Walk-ins are welcome but may be limited based on availability. No subject fee or additional charges. Only one \$995 Portrait Package Special of your favorite pose per family or group during each promotional period please. Offer not valid for business purposes, individual adult subjects or unaccompanied minors. Offer subject to change at any time.

Next stop: César E. Chávez Boulevard

Make your voice known

BY AMANDA SHANK

"Everybody knows that Rosa Parks did not like to sit in the back of the bus," a resident on Mayor Tom Potter's blog wrote recently, suggesting that we should have given Parks a more prominent honor than renaming Portland Boulevard as Rosa Parks Way.

On the other hand, during the heat of the debate around the street's fate last year, resident Rich Little urged the mayor to scratch the idea entirely and "name the street after someone who helped everybody and just not vocal minorities."

From changing Union Avenue to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in 1990, to this year's talks about honoring César E. Chávez, a labor organizer who worked to improve the lives of farmworkers, decisions to rename streets to remember our national heroes have been anything but unanimous.

Looking back, the Martin Luther King Jr. street proposal emerged not from a shared desire to honor a hero of the civil-rights movement, but from a crisis. The name change was meant to curb the increase in crime along the street, which was famous for its streetwalkers and boarded-up storefronts. The decision, when finally made by the City Council in 1990, was picketed in front of City Hall, and a petition to change the name back to Union Avenue gathered over 50,000 signatures, but was ultimately unsuccessful.

In the case of Rosa Parks Way, many Portland residents expressed concern that Portland Boulevard was selected because it was a non-central neighborhood thought to be primarily African American. In community meetings and in online discussion forums, some suggested that it would be more appropriate to name the downtown bus mall after Parks.

Still others argued that Portland

Boulevard had a history of its own and that to change the name equaled social blasphemy. In the end, the street name was changed by a unanimous vote of city commissioners in October of last year.

The current question of whether to rename Interstate Avenue has also brought much public comment. In the context of the Del Monte immigration raid last June that detained 160 immigrant workers, as well as Bush's failed attempts at immigration reform, the question of honoring a prominent Chicano hero strikes a chord in many Portlanders.

The César E. Chávez Boulevard Committee has said that their intention is "not only to rename a Portland street, but to draw attention to the legacy of one of our country's greatest leaders and to create a concrete reminder that the struggle for civil rights for all people still continues today."

But there remains a rift between those who are for it and those who would rather not see the name changed.

"He did nothing for the 'American' people, but bring in more work for the illegals," writes Marie Pokomy on a petition against renaming the street.

Still others believe that it is misguided for the community to focus on a street name rather than on border security and what many see as inhumane immigration laws.

Every street renaming has been discussed at length by community members who feel a deep connection to their city. And perhaps in that case it is more about the journey than the destination. It will be up to Portland residents in the weeks and months ahead to show up to community meetings, to make their voices known to each other and their voices heard.

Amanda Shank lives in north Portland.

NEW SEASONS MARKET

Pharmacy AT ARBOR LODGE



Meet your Pharmacist, Melinda Butler.

Yes! We are a regular pharmacy!

- ✓ We fill prescriptions - including antibiotics, high blood pressure medications, anti-depressants, birth control, and more.
- ✓ We have knowledgeable, friendly pharmacists who have the time to share information.
- ✓ Our prices are competitive. We accept most insurance plans and are adding others as requested.
- ✓ We specialize in custom compounding.

YOUR LOCALLY OWNED, NEIGHBORHOOD PHARMACY AT ARBOR LODGE
N INTERSTATE AVENUE & PORTLAND BLVD • 503.467.4848
www.newseasonsmarket.com • MON-FRI 9am-7pm • SAT 9am-6pm • SUN 10am-4pm

New pharmacy customers! Transfer a prescription & get a \$10 gift card. (one gift per customer please)