

OPINION

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Hangman's Noose in the Workplace

Racial tensions boil over

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Closely associated with lynching in the Jim Crow south, the hangman's noose is one of the most powerful visual symbols that can be directed against Black Americans.

The noose has been in the news quite a bit in recent months. Media outlets have widely reported the noose appearing in trees on college and high-school campuses throughout the country.

Black students, and their parents, are troubled by this disturbing "trend". Most think, and rightly so, that the noose is being used to incite fear in students of color; these are essentially acts

of domestic terrorism.

Many local authorities brush the incidents off as pranks and have failed to acknowledge that these are, in fact, even hate crimes. Now we know the noose isn't just a tool of terror used by immature students: it has been showing up in America's offices and factories.

According to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, a federal agency created to end employment discrimination in the United States, there has been an increase in the number of racial discrimination and harassment complaints filed in this country in the last few years.

Racial harassment complaints have more than doubled the past 17 years; about 7,000 complaints were filed with the agency in

2007. The hangman's noose has appeared in several of these complaints. In the last six years, more than 30 lawsuits that involve a noose being displayed in the

nia case that alleged a noose was displayed and Klan videos shown in an employee lounges was settled for \$600,000. In 2006, more than \$1 million was paid to

civil courts.

However, financial reparations are not all that is needed. Those who have committed these acts need to be charged with hate crimes; loss of a job is not enough.

If this type of behavior is to end, the consequences must be stiff. Companies must increase the diversity and sensitivity training it offers to employees.

Clear organizational policies that denounce and punish this type of behavior must be set and enforced; any sign of racist and prejudiced behavior should be addressed immediately. Employers must also not attempt to cover for those employees who cross the line.

In more than one case filed with the EEOC, when a company settled, a spokesman would say the settlement "indicated no wrong doing". By not firmly denouncing this type of behavior, the employer gives the offender — and would be offenders — the idea this type of thing is okay.

Racial tensions in this country are boiling over, if communities don't ban together to bring an end to these insensitive and criminal displays, generations of work towards racial harmony may come undone.

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

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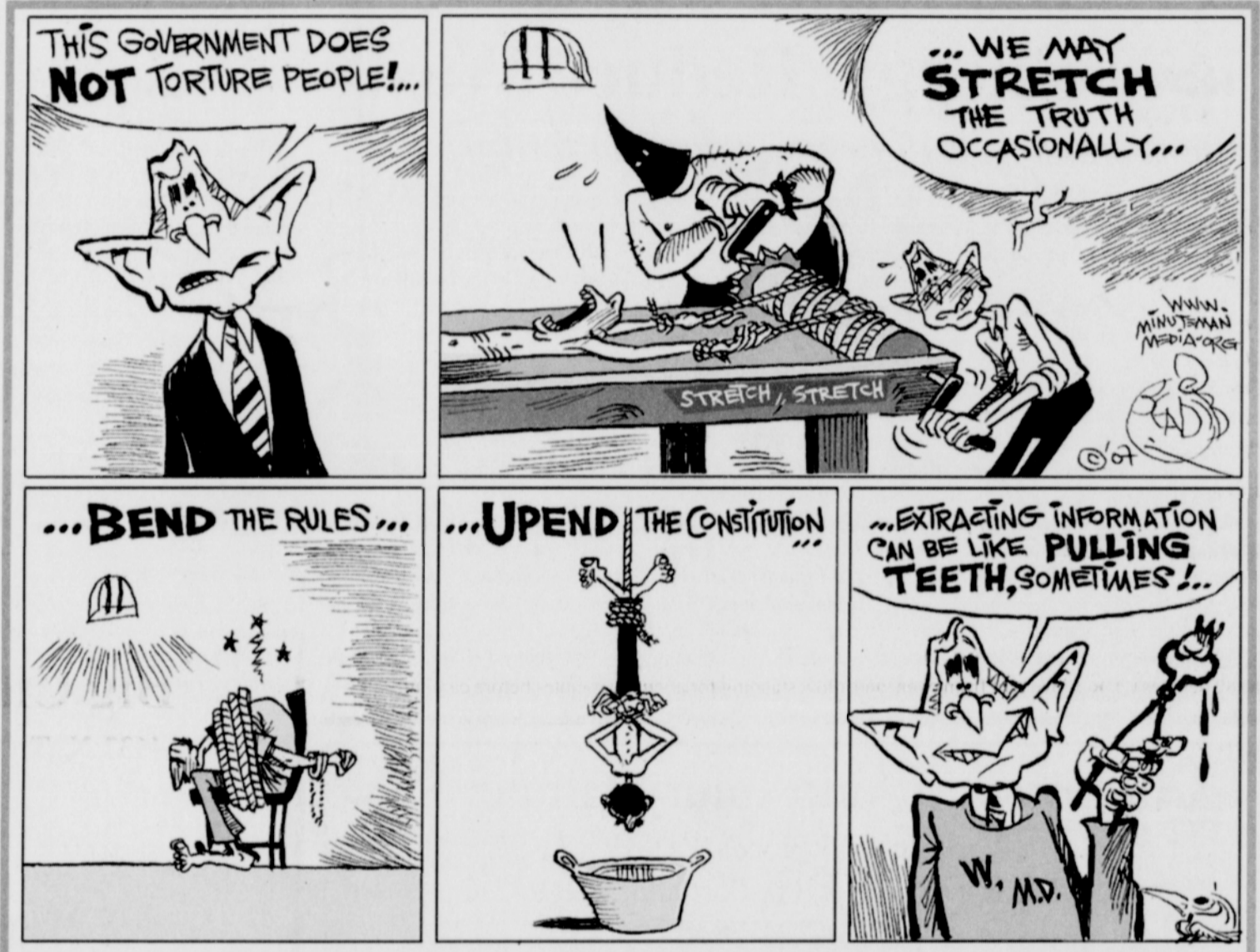
workplace have been filed.

Some of the suits filed are quite disturbing and can easily transport African Americans to another era.

Earlier this year, a Pennsylvania

black employee who alleged white co-workers placed a noose around his neck.

It's somewhat comforting to hear that those who have been victimized are finding justice in



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In My Own Words: A school journey at the age of 30

BY CARMEN ANDERSON

I began my school journey in the spring of 2002 at the age of 30. I was the single mother of a 12-year-old son and an infant daughter. I began to wonder how I could single-handedly change the destiny of my children within my own power. I decided to enroll in Portland Community College and I started with one class, math.

I had heard horror stories about math being the "nail in the coffin" of higher education. Therefore, I decided that I would challenge myself by confronting math first. I was never a strong math student and I did not finish high school, so the prospect of college math was daunting. I de-

ecided to take along with my math class, the history of mathematics, and conquering math anxiety. This is how I became a student, and learned how to succeed as a student.

I earned an Associate of General Studies at PCC in 2005, and became the first college graduate in my family. At PCC, I was a "B" average student that went to classes and quickly returned

applied for was "The Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program." This is a scholars program for undergraduates who are under-represented and have a chance at pursuing a PhD. I was awarded a McNair scholarship in the winter of 2006.

In 2007, I was chosen to represent my school as a Student Ambassador where I will represent PSU at campus functions

It was reported that I have experienced "all the stereotypical things that happen to young people when they're not doing what they're supposed to," such as teenage pregnancy and drug use. Those were not my words.

I experienced stereotypical things such as poverty, welfare, and low income housing due to the fact that I did not finish school and I had my first child as a teenager. I did not identify myself as a prior drug user. I also never went to school to be a Special Ed. teacher, nor do I think that children are in Special Ed. because of their upbringing.

There is nothing exciting about my story from a sensationalist standpoint. I simply went to the college and signed up; I thought of my babies and signed up, I thought of my deceased "granny" and signed up, I thought of other single mothers with no skills and I signed up.

I am giving tours at PSU on Wednesdays at 11 a.m. Please come and learn about the college system, and tour Oregon's largest university.

As a result of signing up, and sticking with it, I am earning something that no one can ever take from me, my education. In June of 2008, I will earn my Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Science, becoming a college graduate for the second time. Anyone can do it because success is not reserved for anyone in particular.

I am earning something that no one can ever take from me, my education.



home when they were over. I never sought to make my voice heard or do anything "extra."

When I began my junior year at PSU in the spring of 2006, I decided to go about it a different way. I vowed to apply for every opportunity that I was eligible for. My first month at PSU; I wrote an essay for "The President's Commission on the Status of Women" essay contest.

I was shocked when I was chosen as one for the four winners. I had never won anything before especially an academic prize. This really fueled my fire to go after every opportunity. I applied for "The Diversity Recognition Scholarship," and was awarded a full scholarship for the remainder of my undergraduate degree.

The next opportunity that I

and give tours to the community. I feel that the Portland Observer misrepresented me in its story about my PSU ambassador position (Making Education the Top Priority, Oct. 3 issue).

As a single mother of two children, I know the traps of welfare, housing, and poverty. I urge single mother especially mothers who are living in low-income housing like myself, go to school. There is money available for you to go to college; money that is sometimes not utilized. You will stop the generational cycles of poverty and welfare for your children. Even if you are the only one in your family who goes to college and you feel like you are in a foreign land; your children will not, when it is their turn. I know everyday I go to school I am the originator of a new family tradition.



Dr. Billy R. Flowers

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