The Hortland Observer Celebrating Diversity

August 13, 2008

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.



Bridge Repairs Can Create Jobs

A works program to uplift disadvantaged

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Page A4

It has been a year since the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis collapsed, killing 13 and injuring a hundred more. That accident prompted a formal review of the nation's bridges. The resulting report is troubling: 152,000 of the nation's 600,000

bridges are in need of a major overhaul.

Experts estimate it will cost over \$140 billion to repair or upgrade the bridges.

descend

Consider that the welfare reform act of the 1990s gave black women access to job placement and training services that not only boosted their incomes but also their self-esteem. As a result, black

> female unemployment rates declined.

> Black male unemployment, however, has been nearly double that of white males for the last 10 years. The picture is bleaker for young black males: nearly 40 percent of

The federal government must institute

The staggering rate at which

focuses on the repair and overhaul of our nation's bridges could be such a program. It could be utilized as an effort to assist black men, teaching them skilled trades while also addressing a very important national infrastructure and public safety issue.

In the 1930s, the government instituted the Works Progress Administration, a program created to employ the nation's poor during the Great Depression. Anyone who needed a job was eligible to participate.

Though the jobs offered were diverse, most workers repaired or built public buildings, highways and roads. The works program had a strong emphasis on family,

training individuals so they could support their loved ones.

our men stumble and fall and A similar program, one that focuses on the nation's bridges, would create tens of thousands of jobs and assist the largest segment of the country's unemployed: our men. Like our nation's bridges, black men can no longer afford to be neglected. If something is not done to support them, they will collapse. Judge Greg Mathis is a national vice

Justice and Healthcare Everybody should get coverage

BY ERVIN MILTON

Not long ago, I got sick and ended up in the Emergency Room of a local hospital. When I arrived, I was asked the usual questions: name, address, insurance informa-

tion and responsible person. I was then taken back for an initial exam.

As I was taken to the room, I passed several persons who appeared to be as sick as I, either sitting or laying in the hallway. I received excellent treatment and I was set up for follow-up. Today, I am back in good health.

I later found myself reflecting on how I was treated in the ER and the way that a friend who I had taken to the emergency room a while back was treated. He had no insurance. I remember him being treated as one of those that I had passed in the hallway. I remember the sign in the hospital that says that they will treat everyone that enters the doors. I have found that to be true.

The difference comes in the level of the treatment. I saw a clear difference in both the level of treatment and dignity offered to the patients with health insurance and those without. In the parts of the country that have public hospitals, some form of treatment is usually offered to all. What is at stake is that so many persons in the U.S. do not have insurance coverage. This means that the poor, who are often employed, but do not have insurance, are treated unjustly and not given the same medical care as others who have the privilege of medical coverage.

The National Center for Health Statistics found in a 2007 survey that there were 43 million uninsured Americans under the age of 65. With the cost of healthcare as well as other basic necessities of life constantly rising, more and more people are bound to find that health insurance simply won=t fit into their budget, and they will add to the numbers of people who are using emergency rooms.

Many people go to the local emergency room to get basic care that many of us get from our local medical doctor=s office. If we took seriously the concept that access to adequate medical care is a right that should be given to all, then every American would benefit from the same excellent medical care that the financially advantaged have.

If you, like me, are "privileged" to have medical coverage, then thank God. I would then urge you to join the fight to get adequate health coverage for everyone.

Ervin Milton is a team leader and director in justice ministries for the United Church of Christ.

Blended Races, Ethnicities

BY JUNE POTTER ACOSTA How many of us realize that we are racially and ethnically mixed?

There's agreement among woman and former slave. scientists -- those 'pro-evolution' scientists - that about a refuge and a creative environ-65,000 years ago, a band of hunter/gatherers, a few hundred strong, exited East Africa. Some of them traveled down into In-

Alexandre Dumas, the father was biracial. He was the grandson of a white French military man and an Afro-Caribbean



them are unemployed.

While the cost of repairs is incomprehensible to most, the impact of a federally managed repair program would have could potentially uplift and empower some of the country's most maligned

citizens: the African American male.

· The staggering rate at which our men stumble and fall and fail to get up, is due, in part, to denial to equal access and employment opportunities. When others appear to rise, black men seem to

fail to get up, is due, in part, to denial to equal access and employment opportunities.

> a plan, much like the welfare reform act that uplifted so many of our women, that offers viable skill and job training so our men can go out and get jobs that pay a sustainable wage.

A government-based jobs program that

president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



dia; and some beyond, into Australia, when there was a land bridge.

Then, over the cen-

became known as the Middle cestry. East and later into the British of the planet emerged from the Ice Age.

From that one band, came

More recently, racially mixed

John/James Audubon - the

those epic novels, The Three races in our ancestry? Musketeers, The Count of

France has always provided ment for American blacks to be fully accepted socially, and fully respected.

Josephine Baker, the singer/

entertainer, found it necessary to flee to France. As did Richard Wright, the novelist. More recently, James Baldwin, too. For shame, America! Many others, from

mind you- and north into what other nations, have mixed an-

Queen Charlotte, the wife of Isles and Europe as that portion George III (from whose authority, we rebelled), very obviously was biracial. She came from a branch of the Portuguese Royal the entire population of our family that was racially mixed.

Most painters of the time depicted Queen Charlotte as white. people - some, our most loved But one painter saw her as she truly was and painted her that way. Charlotte, by the way, was a good wife to King George who was mentally unsound.

The Russian novelist French naval officer who had Pushkin proudly proclaimed his Ethiopian grandfather. As did

More recently, Broadway enwas educated, and found his tertainer Carole Channing spoke about her father who was biracial.

How many of us, if we did a

June Potter Acosta is a regu-

Subscribe 503-288-0033 Fill Out & Send To: The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208. subscriptions are just \$60 per year (please include check with this subscription form)

AME:		
ELEPHONE:	ADDRESS	

or email subscriptions@portlandobserver.com



turies, new generations traveled back to Africa - all on foot,

planet!

and respected icons- have achieved prominence.

bird man, remember? - was the son of a Haitian woman and a fought in the American Revolution. In 1789, Audubon's father British actor Peter Ustinov. took him to France, where he true calling in the study of birds in America.

How about the Dumas father and son duo, the creators of search, might discover other Monte Crisco, The Man in the lar contributor to the Portland Iron Mask and others. Observer.