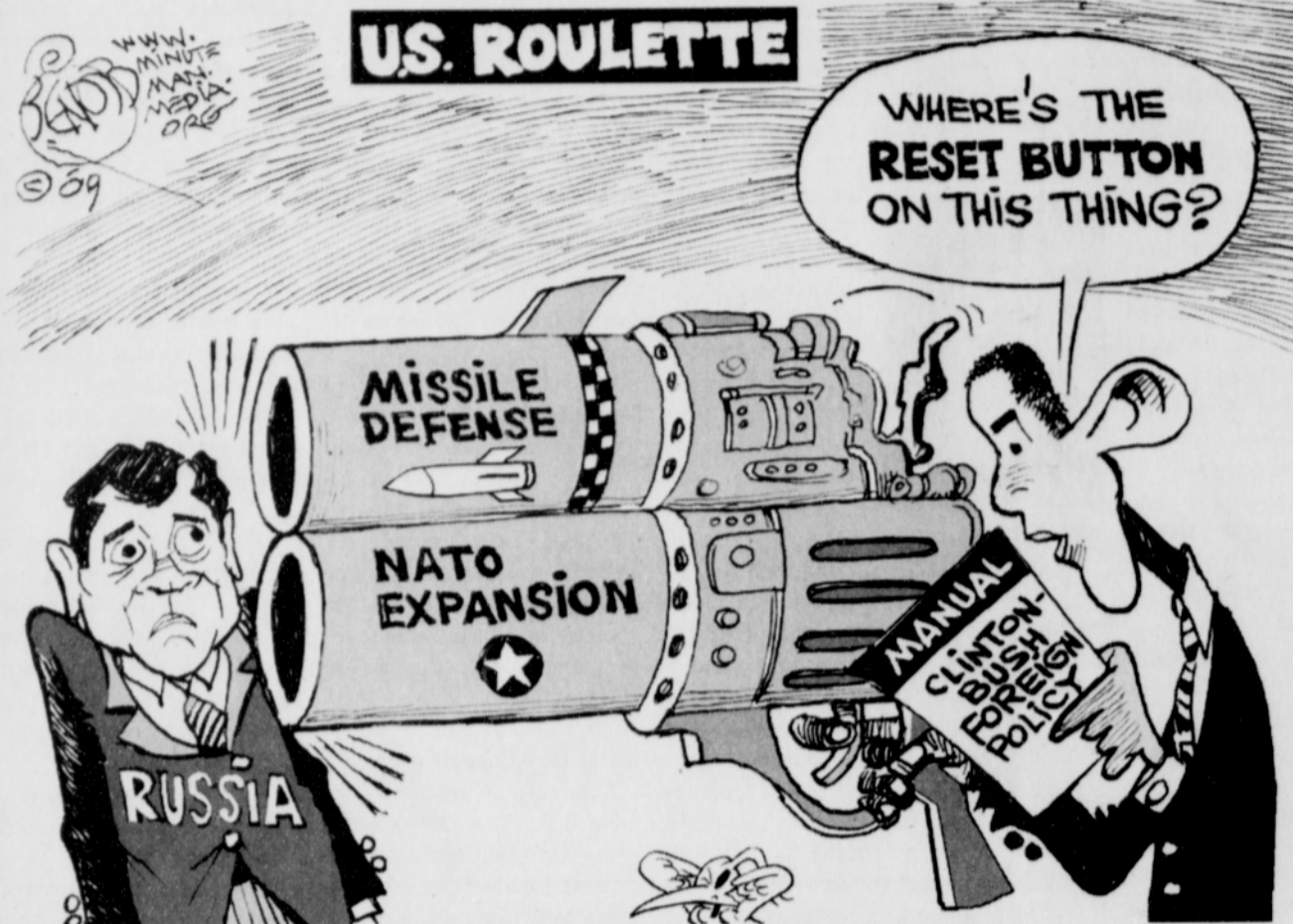


OPINION

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.



Letter to the Editor

Racial Profiling in Portland

Portland is in dangerous territory right now on the issue of race and racial profiling. Did you notice that, even though Portland City Commissioners are in the midst of a huge fight with African-American leaders from Oregon Action and their allies about when and how the city will actually do something meaningful about racial profiling by the Portland Police Bureau. Most people don't know that the Chief Sizer released a plan that has no individual office accountability, that citizens have to get approval from the office in question for review of their personnel file to take place or that Portland Police Union is fighting tooth and nail to prevent the plan from having any meaningful impact on the behavior of officers. Additionally, Mayor Adams refuses to meet with African-American leaders on the issue, while simultaneously leaving the Chief's plan unfunded. Finally, the new process for resolving racial profiling now resides in the Human Rights Commission that is apparently seeking to discover love and harmonic convergence in the cosmos. The newly minted Community Police Relations Committee, (PPB screens, interviews, and selects community members and outnumbers citizens 5-4) is just another rehashed, time worn strategy of "if we could just get the Blacks to understand how hard our job is, everything will be just fine". Portland, I think we can do better.

Ron Williams
Organizer, Oregon Action

Taking Care of Our People Health care is worth the investment

BY MARI CASTELLANOS

The folks in the Congress have been burning the midnight oil these past few days, trying to come up with a healthcare plan that can pass both the House and the Senate and make it to the President's desk for his signature.

It's a tough issue. Some say too tough; especially in this economic environment. But you know what they say happens when things get tough.



The older folk used to say that's when the tough get going.

It is time for some tough love. The kind of love that is about truth telling.

Let's look at where we as a people, as a nation, put our money:

We put our money into weapons with a defense budget of over half a trillion dollars a year.

By some estimates the cost of this year's economic stimu-

lus, plus the Wall Street and auto industry bailouts, is higher than the cost of all wars the U. S. has fought in all its history, combined.

We put our money into sports: Last year Tiger Woods made, \$128 million, LeBron James \$40.5 million, Alex Rodriguez and Shaquille O'Neil \$35 million each. The new Yankee Stadium and the Met's Citi Field cost a combined \$2.3 billion.

A pair of Lanvin trainers go for \$560; a 30 seconds Super

bowl ad for \$3 million.

In contrast, the average public school teacher's salary is \$51,000; a registered nurse's \$53,000; a firefighter \$44,000.

The U. S. is the only industrialized country without a healthcare plan that covers all its citizens. A major healthcare crisis or a chronic illness can devastate a family and often does.

Where is our treasure? Where is our heart?

It's time for some tough love of country. Truth telling is an

act of love. This is a critical time to let our elected officials know that healthcare for all people must be a top priority for the United States.

We need a healthcare plan that covers all persons, is affordable for all, provides comprehensive benefits, offers a choice of physicians and other health providers, eliminates racial, ethnic and all other disparities for health care, waives pre-existing health conditions and does not further impose financial barriers to health care.

A nation cannot prosper when it does not take care of its people. President Obama knows that healthcare is a national priority.

Tell your senators and representatives that you agree with the President. Our people's health and access to health care are worth the investment of our treasure, because our people are our nation's heart.

Mari Castellanos is minister for policy advocate for domestic issues for the United Church of Christ.

Crossroads in Civil Rights, We are Not Alone

BY MARC H. MORIAL

In 1903, when the scholar and civil rights leader W.E.B. DuBois predicted that "the problem of the 20th Century will be the problem of the color line," African Americans had every reason to agree.

Seven years earlier, segregation and the since discredited doctrine of "separate but equal" were legalized in the Supreme Court's infamous Plessy v. Ferguson decision. That outrageous decision set the stage for the civil rights struggles of the last century.



It also helped give birth to two of the greatest defenders of equality in our nation's history -- the NAACP, which was founded in 1909, and the National Urban League, which came into existence in 1910.

One hundred years later, both the NAACP and the National Urban League are still opening the doors of freedom, insisting on full admittance for the descendants of slaves.

But, because of the leadership of these two organizations and countless others over the last century, many of the legal

The big challenges now facing our communities are increasingly the same as those facing the rest of the country.

barriers to equality have fallen. DuBois would be astonished to see that at the beginning of the 21st Century, America elected its first African American President.

The election of Barack Obama was a watershed moment in America's oldest and most difficult internal struggle. It indicated how far we have come since the Supreme Court agreed with the State of Louisiana that a black man could be jailed for sitting in

the "whites only" section of a rail car. And for the National Urban League, it signals an important shift in both our mission and our message.

Incidents like the expulsion of black children from a swimming pool in Philadelphia and the wide disparities in education, criminal justice and health make it clear that the civil rights struggle is not over.

But, we have reached a crossroads. The big challenges now

facing our communities are increasingly the same as those facing the rest of the country.

While African Americans continue to suffer disproportionately from the lack of universal health care, the epidemic of housing foreclosures, and the current economic meltdown, we are not alone. These are challenges that affect every American and they require that we combine personal responsibility with sensible public policies to make the American Dream real for everyone who is willing to work for it.

That will be the over-riding theme of this week's National Urban League Annual Conference in Chicago. In one of the most comprehensive line-ups of workshops and speakers ever

assembled, we will emphasize that our path to power in the 21st century requires that we lead beyond the narrow confines of traditional civil rights for African Americans to speak for every American -- Black, White, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American -- who shares our vision of equality and justice for all.

As the great Urban League leader, Whitney M. Young Jr. once said, "every man is our brother, and every man's burden is our own. Where poverty exists, all are poorer. Where hate flourishes, all are corrupted. Where injustice reigns, all are unequal."

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League.

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Give Grave Diggers Life No sentence is too harsh

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS
When family members lay a loved one to rest, they expect that the final resting place for their body will be the same as the one they envision for their soul: peaceful.



So it's no surprise that relatives of those buried in Burr Oak are outraged that the graves of their dearly departed have been desecrated all because of greed. Those who

the side. Family members are horrified, and rightly so. So many have no idea of knowing where the remains of their loved ones actually are; they can only wait for authorities to identify the bodies.

For a time, Burr Oak was

cago boy who was lynched in Mississippi in 1955 for whistling at a white woman, is buried at Burr Oak. The gruesome nature of Till's death, and the public funeral his mother was determined to have, breathed life into the civil rights movement.

Till's family reburied him in a new casket in 2004 after his body was exhumed as part of a new investigation into his death. His original casket, viewed by more than 50,000 at his funeral, should be considered an important piece of civil rights and American history and treated as such. Instead, it was found resting in a shack on the cemetery grounds.

That a company which originally showed so much support to the black community could show so little respect for one of its most memorable figures is shocking. Thankfully, Till's gravesite was intact.

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

The four people charged with this crime abused the trust of those who selected them to handle a very personal and private matter.

are responsible should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law; life in prison for such deplorable behavior is not too much to ask.

If you aren't familiar with the story, the manager of Burr Oak Cemetery in Alsip, Ill., a Chicago suburb, and three grave diggers dug up more than 300 grave sites, reselling the plots.

Bodies were found pounded down, buried on top of one other, body parts were scattered around and head stones carelessly tossed to

one of few cemeteries near Chicago that buried blacks. Its early importance to the African American community makes this story all the more outrageous. Over the years, cemeteries began to tear down their color lines, allowing blacks to be buried among whites. However, African Americans in the area continued to revere Burr Oak. In return, the owners victimized those who have supported it for generations.

Emmett Till, the 14-year Chi-

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Q: My lower back has been aching for months. But I'm afraid of chiropractors, so I haven't seen a doctor. What should I do?

A: Back pain is one of the most common medical complaints for people ages 45 to 65. It's also one of the most common reasons people miss work. Fortunately, not many people need back surgery because non-invasive treatments help control most back pain. If you have recurring back pain that makes it difficult or uncomfortable to complete your day-to-day activities, experts suggest you see a doctor who specializes in spine diseases and injuries, and who works closely with other specialties related to the spine. A chiropractor will first rule out any serious conditions you might have, and then work with you to determine the best way to treat your pain.

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