

BLACK HISTORY

On Bondage, Slavery and Freedom:

'The Wedding Gift' is a powerful tale

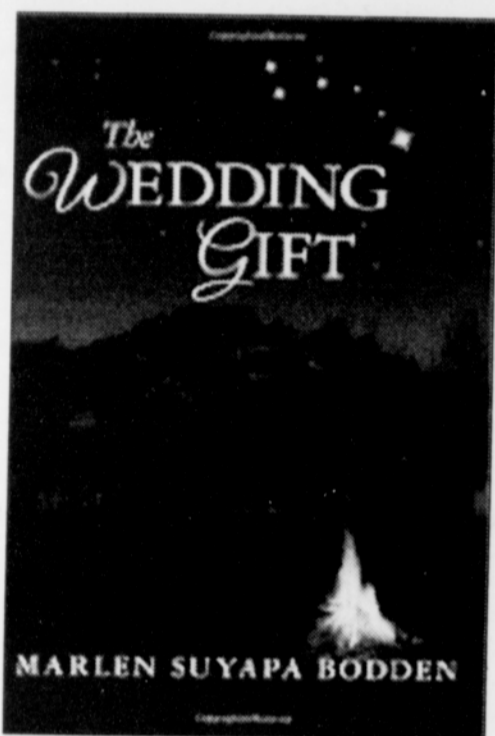
BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

With a black president in office and no shortage of wealthy African Americans on television, slavery has become a distant memory on our collective consciousness, and it's not uncommon to hear calls "to get over it."

But slavery was a powerful blemish on our national history that is with us today. Thousands of people were ripped from their homeland, robbed of their culture and religion, and forced to spend the rest of their lives doing unpaid back-breaking work for the benefit of others.

"The Wedding Gift", a novel based on an actual court case that occurred in the antebellum South, paints a gripping picture of the desperation experienced by generations of slaves, and the repressive and patriarchal social environment of the era that robbed so many of any control of their lives.

Written by Marlen Suyapa Bodden, a New York lawyer who represents low-wage and immigrant workers, the book tells the story of Sarah, a slave who is ripped from her family when she is presented as a wedding gift by her master to wealthy plantation owner who in-



tends to wed his daughter.

The plantation's patriarch, Cornelius Allen, prides himself as a benevolent master who keeps his "chattel" healthy and cared for.

However, the slaves live demeaning lives with every waking hour devoted to making the Allen's content.

We learn that Allen fathered Sarah after years of forcing on her mother, Emmeline. When Emmeline refuses, Allen sells her other daughter to a more brutal plantation owner who beats her and makes her hands bleed picking cotton from sun up to sun down.

After Sarah's new master begins making sexual overtures to her, she splits disguised as freedman with forged papers.

The book succeeds in providing a nuanced look at the abomination of slavery and the social complexities that surrounded it without bludgeoning the reader with a moralistic tone. The prose is lean and makes for a pager turner.

However, a couple passages seem contrived, and could have been scenes from a b-list 1940s movie. Its "shocking" conclusion also seems forced.

Regardless, "The Wedding Gift" does a better job than most history textbooks in revealing the abomination of slavery, and why it's so hard for some to "just get over it."

Dishman Hosts Free Event

Portland Parks and Recreation hosts its 7th annual Black History Month celebration, Saturday, Feb. 20 from 6 pm. to 7:30 p.m. at the Matt Dishman Community Center, 77 N.E. Knott St.

The community is invited to the free event which will include food, music, poetry and arts & crafts.

Special guests and activities will include event master of ceremonies, Keith Dempsey; the Maranatha Miracles Choir, a hip-hop dance class performance by Motion Monsters; Trivia questions for prizes; an art presentation by Shajahan Sheriff; poetry and a performance by 1st Infantry; and a presentation on The Black Panther Party for Self Defense by Kent Ford.

CORE of the Solution

A Black civil rights activist, James Farmer helped organize the 1960s "freedom rides" which led to the desegregation of interstate buses and bus terminals.

He also played a major role in the activities of the Congress of Racial Equality serving as national chairman and was later elected national director.

The freedom rides, along with other demonstrations, captured the imagination of the nation and exposed to the world the brutal retaliation of many southern whites against the actions of the demonstrators eventually ending racial discrimination and segregation.

CORE received nationwide attention and



James Farmer

James Farmer became well-known as a civil rights leader.

When Farmer resigned as the leader of CORE in 1966, he continued to be active in a number of areas and was soon appointed the assistant secretary for administration of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare by President Nixon.

Over the years, Farmer taught and lectured at numerous institutions and became a history professor at Mary Washington College.

Peninsula Little League 2010

(Serving the Youth of Inner North & Northeast Portland ages 5-14)
visit our website at: www.eteamz.active.com/peninsulalittleleague
Registration available on-line beginning January 8, 2010
\$10 DISCOUNT TO BE OFFERED FOR EARLY ON-LINE REGISTRATION IF REGISTERED BY 1/31/10

Regular Sign-ups: \$64/T-Ball, \$74 All other levels
This fee includes the pepperoni fund raiser. Sell one bag of pepperoni and get \$24 off fee.
Each bag contains 24 sticks

THURSDAYS at Boys and Girls Club
5250 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd • February 4, and February 18 • 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm

SATURDAYS at Peninsula Park Community Center:
700 N Portland Blvd (Rosa Parks Way) • February 6, and February 13 • 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Registration forms can be completed in advance by downloading from our website:
www.eteamz.active.com/peninsulalittleleague

Softball Program		Baseball Program	
Level	Ages	Level	Ages
Minor	8 - 10	T-Ball	5 - 6
Major	10 - 12	Farm	7 - 8
Junior	13 - 14	Minor	8 - 10
		Major	10 - 12
		Junior	13 - 14

Questions contact:
Mark Washington ~ 503-288-0033
markw@portlandobserver.com

Questions contact:
Jjay Lincoln ~ jlincs@mail.com

Items to bring to sign-ups: Birth Certificate; Proof of Address; Doctor/Insurance Information; Player Fee

Little League Baseball, Incorporated does not limit participation in its activities on the basis of disability, race, creed, color, national origin, gender, sexual preference or religious preference.