

OPINION

Spend a Morning with a City Worker

We need these vital services and the jobs

BY JERRY JOHNSON

As a sewer utility worker with the City of Portland's maintenance bureau for 22 years, I wake at the crack of dawn to start my day. Because I'm dealing with the pain of a spinal cord injury from a traumatic fall in July 2011, I need extra time to shower, stretch, and loosen up for the day ahead.

As I grab my keys to head out the door, I say goodbye to my wife Angel, and hug my children Yazmen and J'lynn tight, wishing them a good day at school. In the car I notice that because of the night's heavy rain all the street drains are clogged. But as I head up the street, my eyes locate our city vactor truck (a massive sewer cleaning system on wheels) and I wave to the crews



City of Portland sewer maintenance worker Jerry "JJ" Johnson uses a bullhorn at a rally to spread the word about the impact of city budget cuts on the community.

heading toward the clogged drains. I'm sure they were called in before shift to handle the flooding catch basins.

As I turn onto Willamette Boulevard, I notice a two man paving crew

pouring hot asphalt mix in several of the holes I hit last night on the way home. This crew is responding to a call, helping drivers avoid accidents before the morning rush hour.

As I approach North Vancouver

Avenue, heading north toward the maintenance bureau, I watch beautiful autumn leaves fall to the ground with the rain. Then I see the convoy of flashing lights and heavy machinery sweeping and collecting slippery leaves that were causing problems for the bicyclists and pedestrians.

As I pull into work, I watch our traffic electrical crew hanging tethers for signals that were damaged in a car accident in the early morning hours.

This morning I am filled with pride as I see the workers of the City of Portland doing their best to maintain the infrastructure of the city.

We get up in the early morning to respond to emergency calls no matter where or why. I really appreciate our dedication to maintaining the livability and quality of life in the City of Portland. From street cleaning, to paving and traffic signals, the employees of the City of Roses respond, repair, and maintain the

infrastructure that keeps the city moving.

Unfortunately, the work we do is threatened.

City Council is planning to cut our budget and layoff many of the workers who maintain the streets and parks of Portland. But we will not stand by and let City Hall throw in the towel on our services. We are on your side, fighting to protect Portland's future.

Because of my injury, I am dealing with serious pain and mobility issues, but I refuse to give up on myself, just as I refuse to give up on Portland.

As a husband and father I have to fight for a full recovery, and I have to fight for my job and the services my coworkers provide to the community. Please join me. Join my coworkers. We are your neighbors. Let City Council know we need solutions, not cuts.

Jerry "JJ" Johnson of Portland is a member of Laborers' Local 483.

Fooling Some of the People All of the Time

Especially if they want to be fooled

BY LEE A. DANIELS

Naturally, the lion's share of commentary about the Republican primaries last week has focused on divining the meaning of Rick Santorum's unexpected defeat of both Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney in Alabama and Mississippi.

But I've been struck by the one response of likely Republican voters in the two states to one question on the Public Policy Polling survey that was released the day before the vote.

The response underscored the wisdom of an observation that, as a child, I heard my mother say from time to time. You can fool some of the people all of the time, she would quietly exclaim. In time I came to realize there was an unspoken coda to this observation: especially if they want to be fooled.

In that regard, Barack Obama's presidency continues to re-affirm what's been proven to me many times in the past: Mom was a wise woman.

So, for all those Americans who've shown these past four years their hunger to be fooled all the time, I want you to look at the accompanying photo (right).

This photo proves that Barack Obama, our current Chief Executive, and his immediate predecessor,



George W. Bush, have been allies in a decades-old conspiracy to ...

I know you can fill in the rest, because you're the kind of people who can believe - or disbelieve - anything.

The latest confirmation that hardcore Obama-haters will disbelieve any facts that cast him as a normal American and believe any claim, no matter how preposterous, that casts him as "un-American" is right there in Question 22, respectively, of the separately-conducted public policy surveys. It asks: "Do you think Barack Obama is a Christian, or a Muslim, or are you not sure?"

The results: nearly half of the states' Republican voters, 45 percent in Alabama, 52 percent in Mississippi, say they believe Barack Obama is a Muslim.

It gets worse. Of the remaining GOP voters, only 14 percent of Alabama Republicans and 12 percent of Mississippi Republicans believe Obama is, as he has said repeatedly he is, a Christian. In Alabama 41 percent of Republicans say they don't know what Obama's religion is; in Mississippi, it's 36 percent.

Perhaps one shouldn't be surprised. After all, as a group, Alabama and Mississippi white voters are among the most conservative in the country. In both states, nearly half of those answering the polling survey described themselves as "very" conservative, and another quarter to a third said they were "somewhat" conservative.

Both states were the most racist of the Old Confederacy during the Jim Crow era and the most resistant to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 2008 voting totals showed that less than 15 percent of white voters in either state cast their ballots for Obama.

Nonetheless, on one level, it is astonishing that, after all the vetting of candidate Obama's background during the two-year-long marathon to the November 2008 election, and all the further discussion of his background since,

some small but significant number of whites either insists that Obama is a Muslim, or declares they "don't know" if he is or not.

Both of these groups of voters are grasping at straws. Or, rather, figments: the figments of a racist imagination.

Believing that Barack Obama is a Muslim, or "not knowing" whether he's a Christian are acts of extreme self-deception, of not wanting to know the truth. It's the modern-day equivalent of the segregationist cry of the Jim Crow era that blacks who pushed for civil rights were "communists" themselves or dupes of white communists. As that twisted reasoning had it, their Negroes just wouldn't think of upsetting the peaceful relations that existed between southern blacks and whites by demanding racial equality. That had to be the work of outside agitators.

Thus, one witnessed the absurdity of segregationists, who were forever declaring white Southerners the "most patriotic" of all Americans, labeling the great movement to expand democracy for all a communist plot.

In other words, bizarre conspiracy theories and implicit or explicit assertions that black Americans aren't really American citizens are an old tradition in American life. Now, as before, some whites are trying to hold on to their racist precepts by imagining blacks as they'd

like them to be. That these whites in Alabama and Mississippi, and elsewhere, would, I'm sure, vigorously claim their feelings are sincere in no way undermines the reality that they're absurd.

Then, of course, there are the cynical Obama-haters, the ones who've tried one ploy after another to appeal to the worst instincts of white conservative voters.

The latest new tawdry conspiracy theory comes from the media factory of deceit once ruled by the now-dead Andrew Breitbart.

Breitbart's successor recently charged that the late Derrick Bell, one of the most discerning analysts of post-World War Two America, was a racist, and that Obama is, too. The evidence: Bell was a professor at Harvard Law School while Obama was a student there, and Obama praised Bell and briefly hugged him while introducing him at a student rally supporting Bell's protest against the absence of black women faculty members at the law school.

That profoundly absurdist claim was quickly seconded by that master of logical thinking and speech, Sarah Palin, who added that "What Obama seems to want to do is go back before [the Civil War] when we were in different classes based on income, based on color of skin."

In short, Palin declared that the nation's first black President of mixed

continued ▼ on page 18

