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OPINION

Stop the Attacks on Immigrant Children

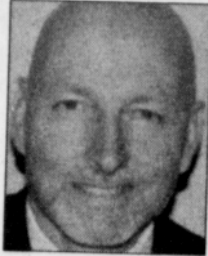
I am shocked and deeply dismayed

BY CARLTON FAGAN

"But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of Heaven,'" Matthew 19:14.

As little children come across our southern border seeking safety from the violence and deprivations of their home countries, I am shocked and deeply dismayed at the response of some in the media.

"Deport them by the thousands" (Laura Ingraham). "I'm telling you your safety is at risk and you are in danger." (Judge Jeanine). "They could be members of gangs for all we know." (Steve Doocy).



These same pundits are often the first ones to claim that "America is a Christian country".

And I never thought I would see the day when a U. S. Congressman would stand up on the floor of the House of Representative and suggest that we treat small children as an "invading force" and authorize military force against them. (Texas Rep. Louis Gohmert).

These are children - alone, hungry, and afraid - that they are talking about. What kind of people turn their backs on a lost child?

How did these children get here and why are they here? I don't know the answer but common sense tells me that they most likely did not walk the thousand miles from El Salvador and Guatemala through Mexico in a vast exodus to America.

They are probably the orphans and street children of those countries that have been displaced here

by their home countries to avoid the responsibility of caring for them. How should we react? We should look at this as a blessing. Yes, a blessing. The opportunity to save 50,000 children from a life of poverty, starvation, and untold depra-

fort them, and teach them. The last thing we should do is shout at them, frighten them, and turn them away.

We should act like compassionate Americans, not bullies. I am utterly shocked at the inhuman displays on television of people shout-

are refugees fleeing violence and terrorism in third world countries.

The next thing we should do is make our best efforts to identify the children, determine whether they have parents or families who can care for them and, if they do, return them to their families.

Given the circumstances, I doubt there are many of them who have a family who can care for them. For those who have no families to care for them, we should build a community for them, educate them, care for them, and make them available for adoption.

What we should never do is turn our backs to helpless children or send them back to third world countries to face lives of poverty and deprivation.

What would Jesus do?

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vation has been placed, literally, at our door.

What should we do? The first thing we should do is take them in, feed, them, and clothe them. We should give them medical care, com-

ing and screaming epithets at small children. We should hold in contempt those in the media and government who seek to demagogue a humanitarian crisis for their own political purposes. These children

Giving Back to Our Venerable Institutions

No free riders, please

BY MARCUS C. MUNDY

The lives of our African American non-profit entities are in jeopardy.

We have relied upon the toil, innovation, and countless good works of venerable institutions like the Urban League of Portland and Portland NAACP for years. Adding to their efforts are smart, issue-specific entities such as Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives (housing), Self Enhancement, Inc. (education and youth mentoring) and the Albina Ministerial Alliance (social justice/police reform); and even more recently, the bold and energetic Portland African American Leadership Forum which has stepped up to lead on issues ranging from community development to forging new activists in the crucible of their Leadership Academy.

But each of these organizations and many more community-focused groups in our region struggle to survive. Some may die because of the loss of funding. Others face a slow collapse of services until they become shells of the former dynamos.

For some, this process has already begun. And yet, ironically, every single person of color in Or-



gon - every Native American, every Hispanic, every Asian, every African American, and every immigrant - has benefited tremendously and directly as these organizations address inequity.

Further, and make no mistake, the successes of the LGBTQ community would not have been possible, without the precedent setting tactics, strategies and legislation (i.e., the "roadmap") that has been the cornerstone of the civil rights movement. You are welcome, all.

Every black man, woman or child alive in Oregon can ascribe some improved quality of life they are afforded today to the efforts of these local organizations and the brave and brilliant individuals leading them.

Every black Intel engineer, black Nike executive, black lawyer, black doctor, black Jefferson student or black Lincoln student or black Caitlin Gabel student, every black Irvington homeowner, every black cop or fireman: all of us, whether born and raised in Oregon or not, has benefited. We owe a debt that must be paid.

So why are these organizations in peril? We are experiencing a nightmarish manifestation of the "free rider problem." A free rider refers to one who benefits from resources, goods, or services without paying for the cost of the benefit. A free rider benefits from the sacrifice of others. Worse, free riders lower the morale and performance of high

performers with the free riders' lack of contribution.

In our small African American community, we risk becoming a population of free riders. We get jobs at companies that wouldn't previously hire us, we buy homes where we were previously redlined, we frequent hospitals and businesses that before refused us service, and our children attend school anywhere we wish or can afford.

The problem is we don't routinely give back to the very institutions that helped us bear this fruit. We do not give to our own entities. We have become falsely convinced that "others" (corporate sponsors, government entities, foundations, etc.) will support our institutions; therefore we need not continue to do so.

The majority community watches, waits, and declares "If they won't support their own institutions, then why should we continue to do so?" Our own community watches as well, but too often it waits for someone else to step in.

Every one of color has an obligation to support organizations whose purpose it is to serve our community.

Do we honestly believe that without the tireless organizing efforts of groups like the Urban League that legislation addressing our community's needs would have passed? Do we honestly believe that without the work of SEI, the children they serve would be doing

as well as they have? Do we honestly believe that without the work of the Albina Ministerial Alliance for Justice and Police Reform that the victims and families of several of those harmed or killed by the Portland Police Department would have received redress?

Do we honestly believe that without the PAALF raising sand that anybody would have stopped the development of the lot at the symbolic community intersection of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Alberta Street?

No, we don't honestly believe any of that would have happened without our representatives fighting those battles for us, and having to represent their "race" at every meeting they attend in addition to being organizational leaders, strategists, operations managers, community activists, fundraisers in chief, and black folks living in a Portland that maintains the patina of progressiveness but the reality of a city that wishes African Americans would just go gently into that good night.

So what can we do?

We can support our African American-led and focused organizations that show positive outcomes.

We can accept that not every entity needs to continue to exist, not even our own. We need to actively ferret out those bad organizations that suck resources away from the verifiably good institutions that

make our community stronger.

The biggest thing we can do to give our money and our time, our wisdom and expertise, and, above all, our grateful hearts to entities that have worked long and quietly and hard so that we might have a better life.

The power of the collective is strong. The Montgomery Bus Boycott showed that determination, a good plan, and an entire community's cooperation could end unfair practices and open opportunities. As far as I know, there was no big grant that funded their efforts. Rockefeller did not arrange all the rides for all the maids that had to get to work without a bus. The church where they met every night was not peopled with corporate sponsors who bought a table, but with the people that had everything at stake: Black people.

No, the power of the collective won the day, true self determination. A population that wanted change sacrificed for their goals. They didn't wait for someone else to pay the freight. They paid the price themselves to ride the bus where they wanted. They were not free riders.

African American Oregonians, save our institutions, and in so doing, you save yourself. Give. For us. By us. Right now. Give. No more free riders.

Marcus C. Mundy is a Portland consultant and former president of the Urban League of Portland.