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Make Juneteenth Your Celebration

Portland's Juneteenth festival connects us to Americans across the country, as we all celebrate together the abolition of slavery. Scheduled this year for Saturday, June 18, it commemorates the date of June 19, 1865, the day when African Americans enslaved in Texas, first learned that they were free. Of course, that was two and half years after Abraham Lincoln delivered the Emancipation Proclamation. Why? Because until emancipation was enforced by the U.S. military, Southern slaveholders refused to tear down that evil institution.

Many Blacks toiled without pay for unrepentant slave-owners during those years, which is all the more reason to celebrate our freedom now. This is an important and historic anniversary for all of us.

Clara Mae Peoples started Portland's Juneteenth celebration in 1945 with an announcement over the loudspeaker in the Kaiser shipyards. A university graduate from Oklahoma, and a resident of Vanport, Peoples, now 84, drew praise May 30 at an event commemorating the Vanport Flood.

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Bernie Foster



Attendees said she took dozens of neighborhood children under her wing, feeding them when their parents were missing at the wheel. In 1972, Peoples and teacher Ora Lee Green organized a Juneteenth celebration in Holladay Park that soon added a parade and later moved to Jefferson High School. This year the parade will start from Bethel AME Church on Northeast 8th Ave. and Jarrett St., at 11 am. The party will run from noon to 6 p.m. at Jefferson High School.

In recent years the reputation of Portland's Juneteenth celebration took a blow for its association with James 'Lonnie' Yoakum, and Yam Yams Southern Cooking and Barbecue restaurant. Later he was

arrested for large-scale distribution of cocaine in 2009.

Since then new faces and new energy have infused a fresh sense of purpose and mission into the Juneteenth festival board. Juneteenth deserved this second chance and it deserves our support now.

To those who founded Portland's celebration we extend our deepest respect. To those who have worked to make it a success over the years we offer our gratitude.

What we do not accept is that any single individual can claim this historic day as their personal identity. Woody Broadnax, sir, we thank you for your service; now yield the floor. This festival is now under new management, with new leaders and fresh ideas. You are not Mr. Juneteenth. I repeat. You are not Mr. Juneteenth. If anybody has a right to claim Portland's Juneteenth it would be Ms. Clara Peoples. But Juneteenth is bigger than any one of us. Juneteenth belongs to all descendants of slaves in America.

So folks, please come out and enjoy this crucial day in our histo-



ry, this day of joy and unity for all Americans. As this year's grand marshal, I am delighted to be part of the 2011 celebration. We're going to have a wonderful time with our parade and at Jefferson High School. So come on over and make Juneteenth a great American holiday, as it was designed to be. Does Juneteenth belong to any one person, yes or no?

You can post your comments on www.theskanner.com



Mexicans 'Fed Up' With the War on Drugs

A new, citizen-driven nonviolent reality is emerging in the escalated war on drugs in Mexico. The international perception of present-day Mexico is one of disgust about the escalated violence, thousands of fatalities, mass graves and militarized approaches to fight the powerful drug cartels. Approximately 40,000 people have lost their lives since Mexican President Felipe Calderón declared the war on drugs in 2006. That is slightly less than the population of Dekalb, Illinois. For a nation with which we are so intrinsically linked it seems rather significant. In fact, we can speak about a social catastrophe.

When it comes to our role in the violent escalation in our neighboring nation, it seems like we are consciously avoiding confronting some important aspects of what is going on. First, the United States is the largest consumer of drugs produced in Mexico or smuggled along the routes where the cartels fight bloody territorial battles. Second, a perverted historical and present system of arms distribution through official and illegal channels allows authorities and criminals in Mexico to engage in an open-ended spiral of violence.

The U.S. government and businesses directly support all parties in Mexico's drug war. U.S. military aid to the Mexican government is a weak yet not surprising answer to a bi-national social problem. The obvious concentration of gun shops in the Southwestern United States border regions and the high-power rifles sold there certainly do not reflect the so highly valued Second Amendment of our constitution. In fact, the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms emphasized the need to monitor U.S. guns stores and their role in providing weapons to the cartels. Finally, the United States role in laundering

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Patrick T. Hiller

the profits of drug business is just another indicator for the utterly unethical conduct of many U.S. banks. How can we as citizens not see our role in the social catastrophe happening in Mexico?

The escalation of Mexico's war on drugs is blurry. Corruption, fear

hasta la madre", "We are fed up". Rank and file citizens – and finally the previously silent middle class - are mobilizing. They are mobilizing nonviolently from the bottom because the top-down approaches of fighting violence with violence are failing. They began by giving names to the 40,000 often unknown victims whose names were reduced to statistics. They took back the streets nonviolently when approximately

corruption and impunity; battle the economic roots and profits of crime; focus on the youth and create effective actions to restore the social fabric; enable participant democracy and democratization of mass media.

We should look south when the citizens of our neighboring nation are trying to re-create their social fabric. It is time to look at Mexico without thinking of illegal immigrants, border security, drugs and violence but of a nation with citizens who share the same fundamental needs. Even more so, once we understand that the United States is not only enabling but fueling the absurd and useless war on drugs. We don't know what the outcome of the mobilization will be. We do know, however, that we do well to support the nonviolent mobilization of our neighbors, listen to them, and learn what we can do.

By convening at the border in Juarez, Mexican civil society is rightfully bringing their problems to our doorstep. Our government should seize this unique opportunity to change its own course of supporting militarization and allowing the flow of weaponry into Mexico. It also should seize the opportunity to stand with the Mexican people – just like it did in the Arab Spring with Tunisians and Egyptians – to pressure the government to change their course and set the priorities right for the people. Let's be good neighbors and not inconvenient neighbors as poet and journalist Javier Sicilia depicts the United States' role.

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Corruption, fear and greed makes it impossible to identify good and bad

and greed makes it impossible to identify good and bad and more and more innocents are caught in the crossfire. An independent research group called Equipo Bourbaki conducted a thorough investigation with the title "The Human Costs of the War through the Construction of the Drug

500 citizens did a four-day march from Cuernavaca to Mexico City where more than 90,000 people joined in solidarity. Shouldn't that get our attention?

More than ever it is now time for us to look south to be inspired but also to see how we can change our role to transform the drug debacle

Our government should seize this unique opportunity to change its own course of supporting militarization and allowing the flow of weaponry into Mexico

Trafficking Monopoly in Mexico" (<http://equipobourbaki.blogspot.com/>). Among the many notable results, two findings stood out. First, organized crime and the government are highly interpenetrated on all levels. Second, governmental repression is directed more towards society than toward organized crime.

In recent weeks, however, a new escalation has been taking place – that of Mexican citizens sending the clear message of "Estamos

in Mexico. From June 4-10 a citizen caravan will travel through Mexico to maintain the mobilization and demonstrate the citizens' indignation with the existing impunity, violence, militarization and brutal public life in the nation. At the caravan's final destination in Ciudad Juarez, the epicenter of violence in Mexico, broad groups of different civil sectors will convene to sign a social pact. The demands to be signed are basic: truth and justice; end the war strategy to one of citizen safety; fight