

**AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN HISTORY**

# Saint Martin de Porres

by Gwen Walker

Martin was born in Lima, Peru, December 9, 1579. His father was Don Juan de Porres, a Spanish knight, his mother was a black woman, Anna Velazquez, a native of Panama. Don Juan, an adventurer, after the birth of daughter, Jane, Martin Junior, left the hapless mother and children to fend for themselves. Despite Martin's unhappy childhood, he showed himself as an exceptional child. He was exceptionally generous to those poorer than himself. When his mother would send him to the market, he would often return empty handed, giving all his basket of provisions to those dying of hunger and neglect. His mother punished him for giving away their food, and often beat him. That would not stop him.

When he was eight, his father returned to Lima and having heard remarkable reports of his saintly son. He decided to do something for Martin. He took little Martin to Guayaquil and gave him two years of schooling, but then he apprenticed him, at the age of twelve, to a barber-surgeon in Lima. Martin was delighted to learn the art of medicine as it was practiced in those days. Now he could give them the benefit of his knowledge without any fee.

At the age of fifteen, Martin felt that he was called to a higher life. He knocked at the door of the Dominican convent of the Holy Rosary and asked to be admitted as a helper. Nine years later Martin was ordered to become a regular lay brother, with his heart on fire with love and sympathy for mankind.

Martin was a pioneer social worker. His heart was deeply moved by the sufferings of the underprivileged of his country as well as other countries. If he had any fault, it was that he could not resist the urge to undertake any good work which presented itself as capable of accomplishment. He understood clearly the deeply rooted causes of the social evils of his times. It was the charity of Christ stirring within his soul that moved him to exhaust every possible effort to relieve the poor, the suffering, the sinful and the ignorant. Martin died November 3, 1639 at the age of sixty, and declared a servant by Pope Gregory XVI in 1837.

**REPORT CALLS FOR MAJOR POLICY SHIFTS, NATIONAL CRIME COMMISSION**

## U.S. NOW HAS WORLD'S HIGHEST INCARCERATION RATE, SAYS NEW STUDY; — AND LOCKS UP BLACK MALES AT FOUR TIMES RATE OF SOUTH AFRICA

Washington, D.C. — The U.S. now has the highest recorded rate of imprisonment of any nation in the world, according to a new report by The Sentencing Project. With over one million inmates in prison and jail, the U.S. surpasses both South Africa and the Soviet Union, the previous leaders.

The study also found that black males in the U.S. are imprisoned at the rate four times that of black males in South Africa. 3,109 out of every 100,000, as compared to 729.

The annual cost of incarceration for the U.S. was estimated at \$16 billion, and for the estimated 454,724 black male prisoners, almost \$7 billion.

"Despite all the claims, the same policies that have helped make us a world leader in incarceration have clearly failed to make us a safer nation," stated Marc Mauer, Assistant Director of The Sentencing Project and author of the report. "We need a fundamental change of direction, towards proven programs and policies that work to reduce both imprisonment and crime."

The study, "Americans Behind Bars: A Comparison of Inter-

national Rates of Incarceration," found that per 100,000 population, the U.S. incarcerates 426 people, South Africa 333, and the Soviet Union 268. A doubling of the U.S. prison and jail populations in the last decade has moved this country into the leading position. The report contends that U.S. criminal justice policies have unnecessarily contributed to the world-record imprisonment rates.

Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) stated: "This report illustrates the long term effect of the draconian criminal justice policies the United States has been

implementing over the past decade, and is indicative of policies that have failed our people."

The Sentencing Project report calls for Congress to establish a national commission on crime to explore why American incarceration rates are so high and to recommend programs to reduce the number of prisoners without affecting public safety. The study also proposes:

- redirecting resources in the "war on drugs" to emphasize that drug abuse is primarily a public health problem, not a criminal justice problem
- repealing mandatory sen-

tencing laws;

- establishing nationwide community and crime prevention programs, with special efforts focused on black males;

- expanding the development and support of proven alternatives to incarceration; and other recommendations.

The Sentencing Project is a national, nonprofit organization which promotes sentencing reform and alternative sentencing. Copies of "Americans Behind Bars" are available from The Sentencing Project, 918 F St., N.W. Washington, D.C. 20004 for \$5.00.

## HOT RHYTHM & BLUES AT WINCHESTER

Winchester Community Center, 3130 S. McLeod, is presenting in concert Denver rhythm and blues singer Mollie O'Brien with the Blue Tips on January 26 at 8:00 p.m. O'Brien's voice has been likened to vocalist Bonnie Raitt, Reba McEntire, Aretha Franklin, and Ella Fitzgerald. Her performance credits include Garrison Keillor's American Radio Company of the Air, National Public Radio's Mountain Stage, and and numerous

blues and folk festivals across the United States. The Washington Post reviewed O'Brien as "the possessor of a richly lucid voice" and the Rocky Mountain News wrote that O'Brien's "hot rhythm and blues band is a

dancing delight." Tickets for this one show only concert are \$4.00. The program is sponsored by the Clark County Parks and Recreation Department — Cultural Affairs. For more information call 455-7340.

## 1990 KOOL

(continued from Page 16) include The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc.; National Business League; National Newspaper Publishers Association; National Urban League; Opportunities Industrialization Centers of America; and league of United Latin American Citizens.



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