

with little regard for the consequences.

JAMES OPIE

Portland, Ore., March 9, 1995

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## Blues Belong to Us All

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To the Editor:

Re "Down at the Crossroads, There's a Devil of a Debate (Week in Review, March 5): There can be no denying that blues was invented by African-Americans in the first half of this century and the latter part of the previous one. Combined with ancestral African music and the folk musics that surrounded them, it was born of the pain and suffering they experienced. For example, Hawaiian music, introduced to America in the 1890's, influenced the mournful slide guitar heard so often in blues.

Blues is timeless and healing and satisfying (whistle some bluesy riffs to experience this). To capsule blues or place it under glass does it and its listeners a disservice. Blues must evolve to live on.

There are blues societies, festivals, radio shows, magazines and new recordings. For whatever reason, most performers and audiences of blues today are white.

Leontyne Price sang opera. Charley Pride sings country and western. Branford and Wynton Marsalis perform classical music. Are their accomplishments diminished because they are not descended from white Europeans? Can they not understand these musics while interpreting them in their own voice?

Soul does not recognize boundaries or limitations. The mind does that. And that is racism, pure and simple.

MARK NOMAD

Northampton, Mass., March 9, 1995  
*The writer is a blues musician.*