

Editor Poinsett laments idleness in Black Americans' quality of life

Journalist calls seventies decade of lost opportunity

By CAROLYN BEAVER
Of the Emerald

In relating the achievements of the American Black population in the last 10 years, Alex Poinsett, senior staff editor of Ebony Magazine, called this the "decade of lost opportunity."

Poinsett spoke to about 40 people Wednesday night in the EMU Forum Room as part of the Black Student Union-sponsored Black Arts Festival. He told the group that the "momentum to improve the quality of life in the ghettos of America has been allowed to falter and eventually disappear."

The journalist and author of several books compared the report of the Riot Commission which Pres. Lyndon Johnson authorized in 1968 and the "State of Black America in 1978" report issued by the National Urban League.

The Riot Commission warned that the nation was moving toward two separate societies, one white and one unequal black society, said Poinsett. "The momentary stirring of conscience 10 years ago," has not proven an effective solution to the problems of Black people in America, he said.

"Unfortunately, the Riot Commission's major recommendations have for the most part gone unresolved," said Poinsett. "Many Black lives are still lived out in deprivation," he continued.

Even though many people are "fond of boasting about the first Black this and the first Black that," said Poinsett, "the crucial test is not what's happened to a few Black individuals as what has happened to the Black masses."

Poinsett did not paint a cheerful picture of Blacks' accomplishments in economic conditions, education, politics or health. "The Black unemployment picture contrasts sharply with the white," he said. He cited several other figures showing the relative standstill of Black lower class economic improvement.

The Ebony editor discussed the large gap between Black and White college attendance and reverse discrimination in institutions, pointing at the Bakke case.

Poinsett said even though the number of American Black politicians is only one-half of 1 percent of the nation's elected office holders, "that number is nonetheless significant." He compared the percentage of Black government officials to playing chess; "there's value in taking a lower pawn. Checkmate is never going to come at once, at chess or at life."

In audience questions, Poinsett responded to a query about the Black population's role 10 years from now. He said he foresaw "a critical mass building up in this society. Unless policy makers seriously face this, the country is headed for a disastrous explosion in the next 10 years."

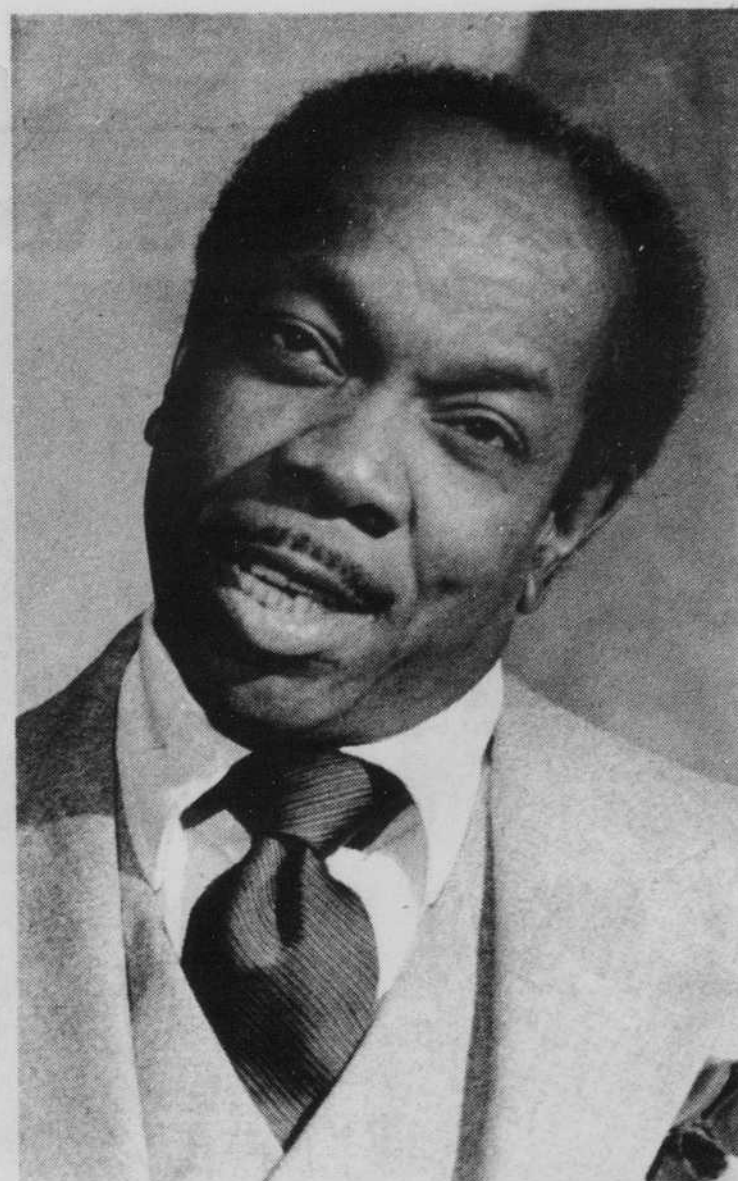


Photo by Adrienne Salinger

Alex Poinsett... 'The decade of lost opportunity.'

SUAB Grievance Center offers info, answers gripes

By NANCY MARSHALL
Of the Emerald

If you ever wanted an objective place to air your gripes, you need look no further than the Student University Affairs Board (SUAB) Information and Grievance Center, located in the EMU Lobby.

Students who work in the center offer help by answering questions and solving problems ranging from where to find a bathroom to how to cool a professor who's making advances.

The center also answers basic questions about where to vote, where to find something to eat on campus or in Eugene, where to get a newspaper, how to find a ride, how to find a roommate or where to find Room 101.

"Students shouldn't be expected to know where everything is," says Center Director Amy Tobias. "They have more important things to do than memorize rooms in the EMU. The center wants to be able to answer any question."

Occasionally the center handles grievances that are less common. One male student filed a complaint after his female profes-

sor made advances toward him.

Another student filed this grievance: "Why is it that the leaves are raked off the lawn before being raked off the sidewalks? How many squirrels are going to break their necks slipping on wet leaves?"

Another complained that he'd received a parking ticket at night. The center looked into the problem and discovered he parked in the only lot on campus that is checked until 9 p.m.

Other grievances include those against professors who fail to keep office hours, or complaints about recording language lab tapes that are labeled incorrectly and Oregon Hall and University Health Center hassles.

Tobias thinks the center is effective because "there's no other visible place for a student to go to complain. It's an outlet for students to use."

Sometimes just being able to complain is all the student may need. Tobias cites one example of a student who went to the booth with a complaint, filled out the grievance form and said, "but it

doesn't really matter that much."

Tobias sees two important problems with the center. One is that there is not enough exposure. As she says, "Students can't utilize it if they don't know it's there."

Available information concerns the community and the University. The information is for all students, visitors and professors to use.

She adds that grievances are an important part of the center, but that part is not used as much as information.

The second major problem Tobias sees is staffing the center. Right now, it is staffed by volunteers and each volunteer is responsible for the grievance brought forth.

Tobias says, "Volunteers working at the center get to know the system on campus and in the community very well. You learn more about it than you would ever

think there was to know, like who does what and where to go to get what done."

"Did you know," she adds, "that you can get discount theater tickets at the Main Desk in the EMU? Many students don't know this."

Tobias says anyone can work at the center, and "you don't have to know everything about the University or Eugene, because someone would work with you at first. You learn things fast. Some of the students working there now are undergraduates, grad students and SUAB members."

This summer Tobias will be attempting to get academic credit for volunteers.

"It's just an idea," she adds, "and it's hard to do."

Whatever question or complaint, Tobias says it keeps the volunteers busy. And if students use the information answering

and problem solving booth provided for them, it will keep the center even busier.

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