



*We see the world  
through Black eyes*

## School Board error?

Confusion reigned in the board room Monday night and out of the chaos stepped Forrest Rieke, the new school board member.

The Board had an opportunity to select a man who would bring a new constituency to the Board. Bill Scott, the bright young former assistant to Neil Goldschmidt, had promised an in-depth look at the budget and the budgeting process and a genuine effort to seek out the concerns and ideas of citizens. Scott would have added another dimension to the Board and aided in the struggle for credibility.

But something went wrong, Jonathan Newman lost his cool and Scott lost the appointment.

Scott had always been favored to win but there were political realities to deal with. Gladys McCoy had a political ax to grind, opposing Scott because his group endorsed her opponent in the County Commission race. Phyllis Weiner owed Rieke her vote because of friendship and his assistance in her past political campaign. Beverly York favored Rieke but could switch to Scott.

For Scott were Wally Priestley, who stuck with him through the vote; Jonathan Newman, who supported and lobbied for him; and Frank McNamara.

The first vote went as expected, a 3-3 tie. This was followed with some good natured bantering and giggling about who would change their vote. Mrs. York, perhaps not wanting to switch too soon after all this chatter, stuck with Rieke through the second vote. But McNamara, voting last, made the surprising move of switching to the third candidate, Gordon Ranta. Though unexplained, some old political hands in the audience felt this was an effort by McNamara to loosen up the vote and allow Mrs. York to switch gracefully the next time around.

However, Jonathan Newman, the self-proclaimed leader of the Scott forces, in apparent confusion, switched to Rieke. Although McNamara switched back to Scott, it was all over. Rieke had been elected with a 4-2 vote.

If it weren't such a tragedy this comedy of errors would be humorous. The omnipotent school board, tangled its own feet, wound up caught in its own web.

## New leaders on deck

There are signs that a new era in Black leadership is developing in Portland. An example is the Urban League's recent reply to a school district request for participation in public hearings on the scheduled tax base election. (see page 1) Having received a questionnaire from the district, the Urban League objected to the form and the timing of the request. "The Urban League Board of Directors not only finds the nature of the questionnaire to be somewhat condescending, but we also think this is attributed to a temperance that is too tight to allow for full and open discussion."

Referring to the success of the Community Coalition for School Integration in involving the community, the Urban League advised that "if the school district wants the counsel of the community, a process of patient involvement of citizens is a good place to begin."

Only a few years ago the Urban League could have been expected to do whatever the school district asked. This response indicates not only a growing awareness of its rightful role -- one of questioning as well as supporting -- but the strength to stand up to those who once could depend on its submission.

The NAACP is still dormant in Portland, although it is currently planning for the National Convention which will be held the first week in July. A large number of people who are not ordinarily closely identified with the NAACP are working on convention committees. The hope for further growth and development of the NAACP branch -- and its involvement in the many serious issues that confront the Black community -- is that many of the younger, professional people will become involved in the Branch and provide the energy and enthusiasm it needs.

It would be unfortunate if the NAACP were to bring its national convention to Portland, then leave, and there be nothing changed.

Portland needs a viable, involved civil rights organization. It will be interesting to see whether the NAACP, which should fill that role, will be revived or whether the Urban League, traditionally a more conservative "social work" agency, will become the dominant civil rights organization in Portland. Much will depend on the NAACP's response after the convention is gone and on the new Executive Director soon to be selected by the Urban League Board.



## My Daughter's Teachers

# Pickett and Curry: A Love Combination

by Herb L. Cawthorne

*Learning anything worthwhile is difficult. Some people find it painful. Everyone finds it tiring. Few things will diminish the difficulty, the pain, and the fatigue like the kindness of a good teacher.*

Gilbert Highet,  
*The Art of Teaching*

In spite of all the criticism, teaching must be one of the most rewarding efforts a person can make. The society pays teachers very little, which reflects our willingness to hock the future for the pleasure of living well today. Complaints are heard daily: "Teachers are ineffective. They cry and moan and do nothing."

In spite of it all, teaching must be rewarding. What else can it be for those who do it well? Viewing my daughter's kindergarten teachers this year at Irvington School, there is no other conclusion to draw. They seem tireless, eternally patient, able to transform the gittery existence of a five year old into a sparkling vision of the future.

My daughter has been guided this last year by Naomi Pickett and Katherine Curry. Mrs. Pickett is the classroom teacher; Mrs. Curry the classroom aide. They are a team, with a deep sense of the atmosphere which helps learning.

"We want them to learn and feel happy," says Mrs. Pickett. "It's best when a child feels good about coming to school."

Mrs. Curry adds: "You can be firm, but you don't have to be a big bad wolf."

They understand the meaning of kindness in teaching. "We are firm but kind," stresses Mrs. Pickett. "We want them to do well but we don't drive them so hard that we have to holler or get mad. For example, we have quiet time. They know when quiet time comes and they react. We've taught them to react, but we never hit or scream."

The kindness they transmit give a sense of family. From what I have seen, this sense of family energizes the children. They feel at home. And they are eager to learn. This is no accident, as Mrs. Curry points out, "I feel I am their mother away from home. I am responsible for them, and I wouldn't do this kind of work if I didn't feel that way."

Mrs. Pickett, who has spent several years as a classroom assistant before

gaining her certification and assuming full responsibilities, wants her children to make no mistake about her feelings. "A teacher has to show love and care. There's no reason not to put your arms around a child and hug him. And a little praise goes a long way -- like a happy face on a math paper, or a sticker, or a star. It doesn't take a whole lot to make a child feel good and proud."

It may not take a "whole lot" to make children feel proud, but the efforts of Mrs. Pickett and Mrs. Curry are exceptional -- they go far beyond the minimum requirements of modern teaching.

Mrs. Curry, for example, had every child in groups of five come to her home for a slumber party. "I enjoy having them," she says, "It goes back to the way I feel about the children I teach. Also, a lot of children think their teacher's home is at school. It's good for them to see your life away from school."

A week ago the kindergarten classroom was turned into a restaurant, with clever placemats decorated by colorful drawings and bright tablecloths. Mrs. Curry and Mrs. Pickett had arranged a buffet breakfast for the parents of the children in their class. The sign in the back of the room said, "Thank you for the joy of teaching your child this year." The chance for the children was magnificent -- they all dressed up, greeted their parents with unusual excitement, proudly guided them into their classroom, helped them get eggs, ham and hash browns, then sat down for conversation and laughter. What a way to end a good year!

Naomi Pickett and Katherine Curry are a team. They are like the halves of a perfect wedding ring which fit together to make a flawless circle. I am only one of many who acknowledge this smooth combination. For instance, as concern developed over the possibility that Mrs. Curry might be moved to another classroom, a group of worried parents wrote the principal, Frank Haight, saying, "Although our children will no longer be working with these two fine teachers, we do urge you to consider what impact your action might have on children coming next year. Since many feel that the initial years are more crucial than others, we wanted you to know how pleased we have been with the combination of Mrs. Curry and Mrs. Pickett."

These two fine teachers are the

ultimate proof of the validity in the argument for more Black teachers in the Portland Public Schools. They are concerned, they work hard and they work well. They are innovative. As strong Black women, kind but firm, loving but demanding respect, they transmit a very important message to my child.

In an atmosphere of stinging criticism aimed at public teachers, Mrs. Curry stands unbothered in the warmth of a sound philosophy: "My appreciation comes from the students; how they feel toward me and how I feel toward them. If they progress toward the goals we set early in the year, I feel good. That's my appreciation."

Mrs. Pickett, on the other hand, acknowledges that the criticism is often discouraging, but she doesn't dwell on it. "We are pleased when we see the change in children," she says. "They begin to respect others, respect their teachers, and learn to respect the property of others -- this is our reward. You see a child progress; they begin to listen and work hard to do what is expected of them. This makes me feel it's all worthwhile."

My appreciation for the work of these two dedicated teachers stems from an understanding of the importance of young people to the improvement of our race and of our world. Katherine Curry told me, "I am never too busy to help a child. I am here to help them." The poem that follows is my way of saying why I think that attitude and the work which results are so very vital:

### Our Children

*Our children  
are the soul foundation of a new world.*

*Our children  
are the fresh dreams of a new future.*

*Our children  
are the continued progress of a struggle  
that is 400 years old.*

*Our children  
are the great wings upon which the  
dark race glides into a new relationship  
with tomorrow.*

*Our children.  
We must protect our children.*

## Letters to the Editor

### Affirmative action necessary

To the Editor:

Given the nation's history of racism and sexism and the critical role played by the law as their vehicle, affirmative action should be merely a question of simple justice. But of course too many people have forgotten or choose not to remember that racial minorities have been the victims of centuries of a unique American barbarism -- from slavery right down through modern jim crow. The Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American all bear the ugly scars of the group hatred that has been visited upon them. My great grandfather told me of a Black man who had his hand mutilated for learning to read, and during my own grandmother's day to teach a Black person to read was a criminal act. The latter fact is but one illustration of the many ways in which the law has been the device by which the generalized racism in the society has been made particular and converted into policies and standards of social control. It was through the law that slavery was institutionalized. It was through the law of the slave codes that Black people's lives were governed in oppressive detail before the Civil War, and it was through the law of the Black Codes that the same result was achieved after the Civil War. It was through the law that a monolith of American apartheid was erected, receiving judicial approval in Plessy and standing with no major cracks in its facade until the Supreme Court decision in Brown. It is the law which continues to this day as an instrument of state power keeping the non-caucasian on the bottom in a vertical caucasoid/non-caucasoid relationship.

The legal and social order has victimized racial minorities as a group. Though, of course, there are obvious and important differences, women too have been victimized as a group. There can be no fair-minded objection to providing group redress. The only in-

telligent societal response to these historic wrongs and group injuries is affirmative action to redress their results. Blindness to the racist and sexist past will only perpetuate that racism and that sexism.

Mr. Vern Cook, I believe, beyond any judicial fiat, affirmative action is a simple moral and political imperative with its justification deeply rooted in history. For a Black Leader to endorse anyone who was against affirmative action, would be worse than a crime, it would be a sin against the Holy Ghost. In the State of Oregon, minority workers are today kept out of many better paying occupations not overtly because of race but because they "lack qualifications." However, this "lack of qualifications" is the end result of a cycle of racial discrimination stretching back through the decades. Because their parents were discriminated against -- denied good jobs and housing in neighborhoods with adequate schools -- the present generation of Black workers largely lack the education and skills that would qualify them for the better paying jobs. Which means many of them will be forced to live in slums and send their kids to poor schools -- and the cycle will repeat itself.

If one builds a wall of legal segregation and discrimination around a group of people so that they do not have access to decent jobs, education and housing, then this group of people will have no social mobility, it will not be able to upgrade its education and skills. After a few generations the legal wall is no longer necessary to keep the group isolated and subordinated. All that is necessary is for all economic decisions to be based on formal qualifications and skills and the group will be automatically excluded. Indeed, institutional racism can co-exist with the rhetoric of formal equality. Black workers are today free to apply for any job -- that's what is meant by

equal opportunity -- but if they lack qualifications due to the cumulative effects of generations of past discrimination they will be excluded from the better paying jobs and occupations. Mr. Vern Cook, this is why affirmative action or preferential treatment is absolutely necessary in order to create the basis for actually achieving some degree of equality.

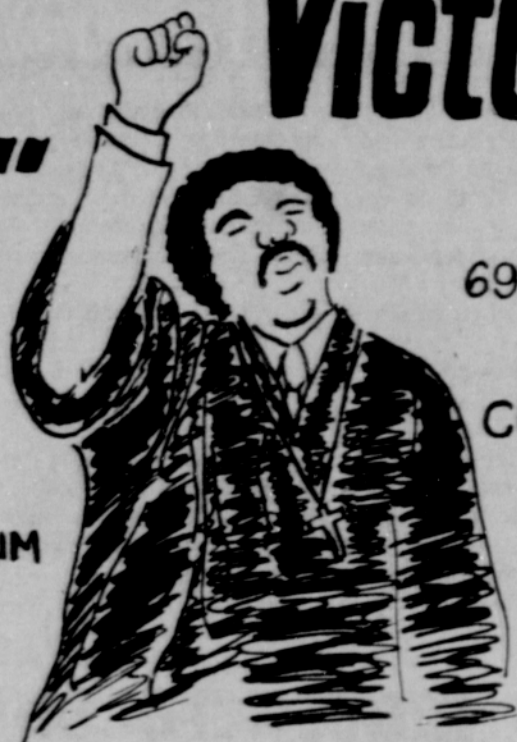
In my travels around the country, I have noticed. The racists have tried to label affirmative action as "reverse racism." This is simply a crude attempt to portray the victims of racism as the perpetrators of racism. Racism is a historically evolved structure of inequality aimed at stigmatizing, excluding and depriving certain groups. Essentially racism is a social mechanism for fostering and maintaining a reservoir of subordinated labor within the framework of capitalism. Racism enables employers to fill jobs that caucasoid workers seek to avoid and to fill these jobs with a work force whose wages can be kept at the lowest levels because this work force has no other options.

(CORE) believe, special admission and affirmative action are certainly worth defending, but the effectiveness and value of these reforms depends on the existence of a powerful movement for social change. The struggle against racism is the key to the struggle for a new social order in the United States, and now it is especially urgent to re-energize the struggle against racism and to place this struggle in the context of building toward a new social order in which labor is not a commodity to be exploited but is the essence of human growth and creativity.

Respectfully,  
Dr. Jamil Cherovee  
Field Director For (CORE)

*(Editor's Note: This is a response to Senator Cook's explanation of his views on affirmative action in the 6/8/78 Observer.)*

# "...Till is Won"



# Victory

69TH ANNUAL  
NAACP  
CONVENTION

July 3rd - 7th  
MEMORIAL COLISEUM



ALFRED L. HENDERSON  
Editor/Publisher

## Portland Observer

Published every Thursday by Exie Publishing Company, 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217. Mailing address: P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Telephone: 283-2486.

Subscriptions: \$7.50 per year in the Tri-County area, \$8.00 per year outside Portland.

Second Class Postage Paid at Portland, Oregon

The Portland Observer's official position is expressed only in its Publisher's column (We See The World Through Black Eyes). Any other material throughout the paper is the opinion of the individual writer or submitter and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Portland Observer.

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York

1st Place  
Community Service  
ONPA 1973

1st Place  
Best Ad Results  
ONPA 1973

5th Place  
Best Editorial  
NNPA 1973

Honorable Mention  
Herrick Editorial Award  
NNA 1973

2nd Place  
Best Editorial  
3rd Place  
Community Leadership  
ONPA 1975



\$7.50 in Tri-County Area

\$8.00 Other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Observer

Box 3137 97208