

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## "On the move"

The chairman of the Portland Public Schools Title VII advisory committee told his members at their first meeting this school year, "Title VII is on the move."

If Title VII had been on the move, much of the current turmoil over desegregation would be unnecessary. The Title VII committee has the responsibility of writing the proposal for the District's federal desegregation grant, overseeing the use of the funds and advising the Title VII staff and the District.

An alert Title VII committee would have discovered the abusive busing practices which led to the threat of a school boycott. They would have realized that Black children are widely scattered throughout the District's white schools on a hit and miss basis not designed to enhance the educational opportunities of Black children or of any children. This information was brought to the public by the community Coalition for School Integration, not by the Title VII committee.

An involved Title VII committee would have known the District's discipline policies discriminated against bused Black children long before HEW came in and found the District in non-compliance. They would know that many of their "Title VII" schools still discipline Black children in a much more harsh manner than they do whites, that the ratio of Black suspensions in some of the schools they supervise is beyond justification.

An active Title VII committee would have realized that Black children were standing in the rain, not allowed to go into some school buildings to wait for their buses. They would have known that the students receiving Title VII compensatory education are progressing at a rate slower than that of the average District student.

A curious Title VII committee would have recognized the problems identified by the Black United Front and the Coalition long before they read about them in the press. The chairman praised the committee for meeting during the summer to respond to the BUF demands — supporting the BUF goals and many of its demands. To its credit the committee also approved many of the Coalition recommendations. The problem is that this committee, not the BUF or the Coalition, should have brought these

concerns and others to the parents and the public.

The Title VII committee is an appointed citizens committee composed of representatives of organizations, parents and teachers. Several members have served for many years. In fairness, the time available to members is limited and judging from the frustration suffered by other committees, its access to information also is limited. We do not question the interest or the sincerity of the members of the committee, but it is there by federal regulation to protect the rights of Black children and other children and it is time that "Title VII is on the move."

## Protecting our rights

While the courts, the Justice Department and the nation's press contemplated the meaning of the First Amendment, the "Press Connection" took the bull by the horns and printed a letter telling how to build a hydrogen bomb.

"The Progressive" magazine and a University of California student newspaper were under court injunction ordering them not to print similar material.

Throughout this debate over whether the government has the right of "prior restraint", the right to prevent the publication of material, the major press organizations remained silent. Many feared that if "The Progressive" ignored the court order and insisted on its constitutional right to publish, that would lead to further restraints on the press.

"The Progressive" editors maintained that all of the information contained in their article was public and had been gained through public sources. Furthermore, nothing in the article could enable a nation to build the bomb. This could be accomplished only by the highly advanced nations and if they want the technology they have it.

The real question is government secrecy and whether the people have the right to know not only about the bomb but about the technology and economy that support it and the dangers thereof.

Our congratulations to "The Press Connection" and "The Progressive". Only through the bold action of a few will the constitutional rights of all Americans be protected.



## Agostinho Neto 1923-1979

by N. Fungai Kumbula

A friend and I were talking this past Sunday about the death last week of President Agostinho Neto of Angola. I had decided the fact that this death was so untimely and my pal responded with the question: "When is a death ever timely?" That certainly was a true statement: death is never timely but in Neto's case I find myself thinking it was more untimely than usual.

Born in rural Angola in 1923 to a father who was a Methodist preacher and a mother molded into the perennial role of housewife that most African mothers in colonial Africa find themselves strapped in, Neto demonstrated high intellect from an early age. So much so that, after completing his education in Angola, he won a scholarship to go and study medicine in Portugal. Angola was then a Portuguese colony. While studying in Portugal, he first became involved in politics and was jailed for his political activities.

He returned to Angola where he practiced medicine for a while before he was again arrested for political activism but, he managed to escape from jail and became the leader of the then fledgling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). The Portuguese had exploited Angola (along with Mozambique and Guinea Bissau) for almost 500 years and, even though colonialism was being overthrown throughout Africa, the Portuguese demonstrated no such willingness to give up Angola, Mozambique or Guinea Bissau. In 1959 therefore, the MPLA launched its long and bitter war of liberation which culminated in the defeat of the Portuguese in 1975.

This African victory over the Portuguese signaled an important turning point in Africa's long and bitter battle against colonialism. The victory was, however, soon clouded by an equally bitter internecine struggle pitting Neto's MPLA against Jonas Savimbi's UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) and Holden Roberto's FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola). While fighting the Portuguese, the three groups had often clashed whenever they met even though FNLA was based in the north close to the Zaire border, UNITA to the south on the Namibian border while the MPLA was concentrated mostly in central Angola and around the capital of Luanda.

The MPLA has always been very closely allied with Moscow and follows a socialist path. UNITA and FNLA naturally sought allies in the West. During the civil war, the CIA funneled money to the two groups through Zaire. The U.S. Senate had just passed the Clark amendment which forbade the use of American troops in any war which the U.S. was not formally at war. South Africa, which was very anxious to prevent an MPLA government from coming to power in Angola because the MPLA had always been working very closely with SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement, invaded Angola to aid UNITA. The MPLA had, by this time, called on Cuba for help and the Cubans sent several hundred men to help Neto out. In the battle that followed, the South Africans were routed and forced to retreat back across the border into Namibia. This was a very embarrassing and humiliating setback for South Africa. To date, her involvement in the destabilization of the MPLA government has been restricted to training, equipping, financing, transporting and occasionally rescuing UNITA terrorists who still make raids into Angola.

With the South African-CIA sponsored civil war over, Neto turned to the more urgent task of trying to rebuild a nation out of the ruins left by the two wars. He offered an olive branch to former UNITA and FNLA supporters who agreed to lay down their arms and come join in the reconstruction of Angola. Though both head terrorists, Savimbi and Roberto, tried to make a tribal issue of Angol's political "differences," Neto's nation building program has been largely successful and today, UNITA and FNLA are all but dead. It is only South African money that has kept UNITA afloat. Since the rapprochement between Angola and Zaire, FNLA finds itself without any bases or sizable material or moral support.

The economy has proved to be a

very tough cookie though, but then, who isn't experiencing the pinch in these lean days? What Neto inherited from the Portuguese was not an economy at all it was a shambles. The MPLA's coffers were just about exhausted by the 12 year war. Just about all industry had ground to a halt and most of the Portuguese who had been running almost all essential services had fled the country. Foreign investment all but dried up. The United States led a Western boycott of the new government, thus effectively shutting off any international assistance. All these pressures were designed to force Neto to abandon his Marxist policies and pursue a pro-West approach. The demands went so far as to tell him to include his two arch enemies, Savimbi and Roberto in the government if he wants Western aid. Neto, however, stubbornly refused to compromise the revolution for which so many of his countrymen had given their lives. Instead, he pressed on with what he had, cutting corners but pressing right on.

The Angolans understood and put up with the inevitable shortages. In time, investors began to come back. One of the most widely publicized was Gulf, a company that had left a few years before because it could not deal with an avowedly socialist regime. Neto took a few "jabs" for letting Gulf return, given her long history of association with the colonial oppressor but, he explained that this was pure pragmatism. Angola needed Gulf to pump that oil until such a time as Angolans can do it themselves. In the meantime, he would swallow his pride in the interests of feeding a hungry nation. As an African proverb goes: "Only a fool would let his family starve just to protect his pride." Besides, argued Neto, Gulf was coming back under the terms laid down by the government of Angola.

To this day, the U.S. still refuses to recognize the government of Angola even though Angola is now a member of the OAU, the United Nations, is recognized by all of Africa, most of Latin America, the

Caribbean, Europe, the Middle East, the Far East and Australia. The Carter administration says it will not recognize the Angola government as long as Cuban troops remain in Angola and Angola counters by saying that as long as South Africa continues to pose a threat on its southern border, Angola will retain her Cuban allies to help defend her territory. This claim is not without foundation: in recent years South Africa has made a number of raids into Angola and in 1978, bombed the Cassinga refugee camp, killing over 800 women and children. This year alone, Angola claims to have shot down eight South African planes sent into Angola on bombing raids.

Under Neto's leadership, Angola had assumed a major role in the continuing talks aimed at ending the stalemate in Namibia. Angola is also one of the five Front Line states working to find a solution to the Rhodesian dilemma. In the three short years since independence, Angola had become one of the most important countries in Africa and, along with Mozambique, often leads the 'radical' wing of intra-African organizations. Angola has provided both SWAPO of Namibia and ZAPU (Zimbabwe African Peoples Union) of Zimbabwe and the ANC of South Africa with bases, training facilities, financial support sometimes and plenty of moral support.

With Neto gone—he died of cancer in Moscow last week, he also had cirrhosis of the liver and hepatitis—the major question is: "Whither now, Angola?" Indications at the moment are it is unlikely there will be that much change in Angola's foreign or domestic policies. He had built the MPLA into such a strong organization, with specific objectives and, it is safe to say that, these will be carried through by his successor(s).

His touch will, of course, be missing; his exuberance, enthusiasm, eloquence, determination and his unique leadership capabilities but, the legacy he has left will cushion these losses somewhat.

"Son of Africa, we salute you!"



## For Colored Girls...

by Herb L. Cawthorne

I went to see the local production of *For Colored Girls*... and I was all primed to get my defenses up, to have my stomach tied up in little knots, and to walk away with my critical tongue lashing its author without mercy, as so many commentators have done across the nation.

I came away not defensive, but puzzled by all the advance complaints about the show. I was not knotted up in the stomach, but felt calm and relaxed. Words of praise were freely used to describe the evening's entertainment.

Frankly, I can't understand what all the complaining has been about. It is not a negative play. There has been too much fuss over too little for too long.

Produced by the Black Repertory Theater under the tasteful direction of Rosemary Allen, and running at the fine Cautin Gabel Center for the Performing Arts, *For Colored Girls*... is an enjoyable production which has given us the energetic insights of Black women who talk with stark reality about love and sex, feelings, relationships, and aspirations. In carefully coordinated movements of dance and lighting changes, short

crisp poems are spoken with sensitive wisdom. The players were engaging, although at times there was a missed inflection or an idea poorly interpreted. In all, it was a warming experience, which advanced the understanding of the audience.

The controversy over Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls*... is very hollow. I can say now with firsthand knowledge. Tony Brown ripped Ms. Shange up on his television show; Vernon Jordan blasted the play in his column; and Robert Staples defamed her personality in a recent issue of the *Black Scholar*.

As I watched the show, I felt increasingly uneasy in that my perspective had been molded with negative thoughts. I accept these negative ideas too quickly. I had failed to apply the lesson which Malcolm X taught best of all: "...never accept the images that have been created for you by someone else. It is always better to form the habit of learning how to see things for yourself, listen for yourself, and think for yourself, then you are in better position to judge for yourself."

Carolyn Easterly, one of the players whose performance adds

maturity and depth to a young cast, says: "Instead of people getting all up-tight about what is being said, they should focus on the oppression, the racism that has brought about the negative reactions we have toward one another. Black women and Black men need to check themselves out and there is more than meets the eye."

The artistry of *For Colored Girls*... is the expression of Ntozake Shange's poetic conception. As the whirl of criticism mounted around her, perhaps she found solace in Langston Hughes' timeless manifesto, printed in 1926: "We younger Negro artist who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. If the white folks seem pleased, we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful. Ugly too. The Tom-Tom cries and the Tom-Tom laughs. If colored people are pleased, we are glad. If they are not, their displeasure doesn't matter either. We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know them, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves."

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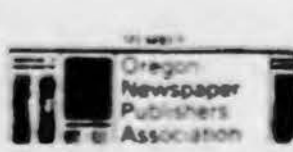
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