

Black United Front investigates police brutality

The Black United Front has charged the Portland Police Bureau with racism and will hold a public meeting Thursday evening, November 8th, to discuss methods of addressing the problem of police brutality.

Stating that the organization receives more and more complaints each week, Ronnie Herndon, BUF co-chairman, said racism in the Police Bureau has been well documented.

"In 1971 the city signed a consent decree in U.S. District Court that was designed to curb overt acts of racism by Portland Police; during the six month period between October 1974 and April 1975 four Black

men were killed by Portland Police; a 1978 report by the city's own Office of Justice Programs showed when Portland Police officers had the discretion of arresting a citizen or giving them a citation, a much higher percentage of Black citizens were arrested than white citizens; perhaps the most devastating statistic is according to our unofficial figures since 1970, 58% of all people killed by Portland Police have been Black even though we make up only 5% of the city population."

Emphasizing that BUF plans are not related to and not an expression of lack of confidence in Police Commissioner Charles Jordan's efforts to investigate charges of

brutality, Herndon said, "Commissioner Jordan is not the issue -- police brutality is the issue. The Commissioner is working inside the system, using City policies within the City Charter. We still have to do something in response to the complaints we receive from citizens."

Stating that the problems appear to be getting progressively worse, Herndon explained, "Women are being pulled out of their cars; teenagers are brutalized. We are devising a way to receive and document these complaints. We will use all appropriate means to stop these actions." Stating that several attorneys have volunteered to assist, he indicated that methods might in-

clude contempt of court proceedings against the city, civil suits, a federal class action suit, and possibly a request to the U.S. Attorney for a federal investigation of the Police Department.

The Front will also distribute fliers to inform citizens what to do if stopped, harassed or arrested, and what to do if they witness improper police behavior.

Herndon revealed that Charles Merton, attorney who successfully sued the City for Robert Probasco, wrote the City Commissioners and others on March 2nd, reminding them of the agreement signed in federal court in 1971. Merton advised that he had been informed that

City records of the case had been destroyed and police officers not informed about the restrictions imposed on them by the Consent Decree. He had read about young Blacks' accusations of police brutality and assaults.

Reminding the City officials that Judge Belloni retains the right to determine whether certain police officers should be removed from duty in the Black community, Merton advised that if reports of beatings, harassment and racial slurs continue, steps will be taken to find appropriate officials in contempt of court and to bar offending police officers from duty in the Black community.

Commissioner Jordan met with a group of Albina business people on Tuesday morning and a number of leaders of community organizations Tuesday evening to hear their concerns and suggestions. The general tenor of both meetings was in reporting to the Commissioner that many allegations of police brutality are being made by responsible citizens and that a serious situation exists.

Jordan has said that he will prosecute any police officer charged with brutality or abuse if enough information is provided to build a case.

The BUF community meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. at King Neighborhood Facility.

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Ms. June Young took time out from her busy schedule to visit with children at the Black Educational Center. The children were very interested in her experiences during her trip to Arica. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

American State goes downtown

V.F. Booker, president of American State Bank, announced that the bank will open a branch in downtown Portland by mid-November. "Ten years ago many people doomed us to an early death. Now we are opening our third branch, this one downtown."

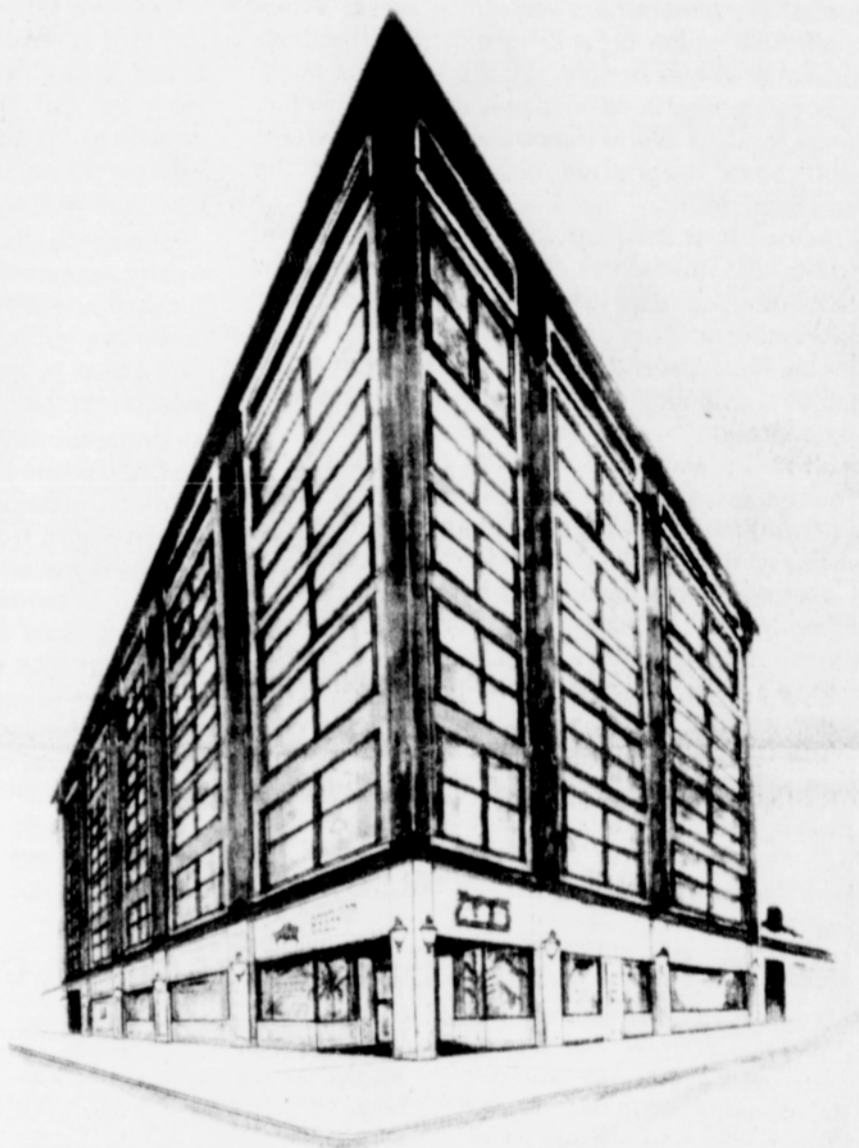
Booker emphasized that few Black banks have been established downtown, most restricted to the Black community. The three downtown Black banks are San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and Richland, Virginia. Also, few Black banks have branched -- none on the West Coast. No Black bank -- even the older, well established banks -- has more than six per cent of the Black depositors.

Following a philosophy that a bank should provide convenience to its customers by going where they are, the bank opened a branch in Southeast Portland three years ago that is targeted toward family rather than commercial accounts. The Second and Yamhill Branch will provide full services to commercial, industrial and personal accounts. The Head Office will remain on Union Avenue.

"There are many downtown companies who have indicated that they would like to do business with us if we were located downtown," Booker explained. The new branch is located in the designated historic area and will eventually involve some restoration of the building. Because of the extensive remodeling, the Grand Opening will not be held until after the first of the year.

Application for a fourth branch will be filed during the next year.

American State Bank is one of the leading minority banks in growth, expanding in ten years from less than \$1 million to more than \$14 million



Architectural drawing of new American State Bank branch at Second and Yamhill, Downtown.

in deposits. ASB was listed in *Black Enterprise* as ranking 28th in assets among the 49 Black banks.

Booker was recently re-elected President of the Western Region of

the National Bankers Association, and Vice President of the national organization, which includes the nation's ninety-one minority and woman owned banks.

Young pushes 'Year of the Child'

By Stephanie L. Michael

Former U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young has been recognized as the African-American minister from Georgia, in essence "a man for all seasons." In taking a comparative look at his counterpart, his wife, Jean Childs Young, she too is "a woman of all seasons."

Mrs. Young, who heads the U.S. National Commission on the International Year of the Child (IYC), was in Portland on Friday, touring the city's educational centers and lecturing. Her visit was sponsored by the Metropolitan Family Service.

Mrs. Young, the mother of four children, is an educator, a specialist in child development as well as an ac-

tivist in the movement for civil rights and social change. Over the years, she has made a lifelong commitment to children as a teacher and a mother. As head of the IYC, she is working in a total volunteer capacity when at her office at the U.S. Mission in New York or while out on the road.

"My job is to supervise efforts to encourage and coordinate national projects and events that benefit children. I have to educate persons to what their social responsibility is to development and educational facilities. The public school system must get involved if we are truly serious about solving some of these problems. For instance, urban

areas get quite a bit of aid, but it still doesn't service all needy children. The services provided are still not pervasive enough, centers keep primarily serving those isolated needs and still meeting very small groups. The waiting list at Providence Child Center indicates a need for a more extensive service. There needs to be a doubling of their faculty and facility to help more children in the Portland area. But I must say that the center, the faculty and the work they have performed, is beautiful!"

Stating the International Year of the Child should be a continuing effort in the framework of our society, Mrs. Young says when the concerns (Please turn to page 9 col. 2)

CODA abandons King location

By Donald Fuller

CODA Director, Jim Robbins, has apparently taken steps to meet the concerns of the King Improvement Association. "CODA is definitely committed to meeting (the drug abuse needs) of the N.E. Community."

Robbins indicated that release from the leased building near the corner of Union and Killingsworth is being investigated, an assignment of the liaison of CODA staff and review of the proposed program is in process at this time.

Robbins explained that central staff offices were in the process of change from the downtown offices on S.W. Fourth to the new offices

near N.E. 21st Avenue, but that move did not constitute the program for N.E. Portland. "That money has been set aside except for two staff positions." No new money will be made available this year, however, and the N.E. program will be worked out, but will not locate in the King neighborhood.

Analysis

The drug-free stipulation of the King Improvement Association was "too difficult to change" according to Association Chairperson Anna Madden. "We were told that a letter was in the mail last week. The letter

dated October 5, 1979 was 'received' November 1, 1979."

While the response was "not timely," this represents improvement in the CODA effort at effective community relations. Of course, that would not take much, considering...but then the letter goes on to say that CODA will not appeal the vote against the methadone clinic. The reason? It seems that it is too difficult to make the program acceptable to the alert King Community, so now the plan is to use the Coalition of Northeast Neighborhoods to make a decision for some other neighborhood through the active push of Ed Leek as Chairman of that body. As an advocate of (Please turn to page 2 col. 6)

Kevin Berry files Bar complaint

The Oregon Bar Association is investigating charges filed by Kevin Berry, who alleges that two attorneys failed to act in his best interest. Will Aitchison was retained by Berry and his family to defend him against charges of disorderly conduct and interfering with a police officer, and to file a police brutality suit against the City.

Berry and three other young people were arrested on January 17, 1979, on Union and Shaver after the police stopped to break up a suspected fight. The young people state that they were not fighting and that they were brutalized by the police during their arrest.

Mrs. Mary Berry, Kevin's mother, took the other young people and their parents, as well as Kevin, to Mr. Aitchison's office to discuss the case and "he advised that we had a good case and should sue the police department."

In his complaint to the Bar Association, Berry alleges that at some time prior to his August 17 trial date, and without his knowledge, the case was transferred to a former law partner, Burton Bennett. District Court files show that the transfer was made in June.

Kevin also alleges that he was not informed of the trial date until the day prior and that there had been no discussion of the case with the new attorney. Mrs. Mary Berry, Kevin's

mother, states that since they had never discussed the case with Bennett and had not retained him, they did not want him to represent Kevin. She says that Bennett told her he had gone over the police records and would talk to them in his office before the trial.

"In our meeting with him the following morning he went over the police reports, pointing out discrepancies, and said he could put on a good defense." Mrs. Berry also questioned the fact that none of the witnesses had been called to testify and says that she was told none would be needed.

Mrs. Berry states that they went to the Court House directly from the attorney's office, expecting a jury trial. After leaving them alone for awhile, their attorney returned and said he had made arrangements. He then advised Kevin to plea "no contest".

Berry alleges that his attorney advised him that he would not have a chance with the police officers' word against his and that he might end up with a \$250 fine and a year in jail.

In his reply to the Oregon Bar Association, Bennett wrote that in January, when the incident occurred, he and Aitchison were representing Mrs. Berry in another case and that they were asked to represent Kevin in connection with his arrest. Because Aitchison was handling the other case, it was thought appropriate that

he handle Kevin's case.

Regarding the facts of the case, Bennett wrote "despite extensive investigation and inquiry" they were "not able to develop any evidence which would in any way controvert the allegations contained in the police report."

Stating that he has discussed the matter thoroughly with Kevin, his parents and his older brother, Bennett advised the Oregon Bar Association that he based his advice on the police report which accused Berry of fighting, jumping at police officers, screaming at the police, disobeying their orders, and refusing at least ten chances to disperse.

"I believe that under the circumstances, a plea of no contest to the disorderly conduct was completely proper and in the best interest of Mr. Kevin D. Berry. I do believe that Judge Walker was lenient in imposing no jail term, no fine and requiring two years bench warrant only."

Mr. Aitchison asked for an extension of time in replying to the charge because he is representing one of the young men arrested with Berry and cannot release confidential information until after his trial. Mrs. Berry states that his explanation to her was that he transferred the case because his representing both Kevin and the other man would be a complete turn to page 2 col. 1)