



LEN FRANKLIN

Making it happen

(Editor's Note: Len Franklin, Manager/co-owner of "The House of Sound," located at 3606 N. Williams Avenue, is a very candid, sincere, sensitive and aspiring Black man. In an interview with Nyewusi Askari, of the *Observer*, he talks about the Black community, some aspects of his career and Black children.)

Q. How/when did you become interested in the record business?

A. I got started in the record business at the age of 18, at Jefferson High School. When I was about to graduate in the year of 71, Jefferson got a radio station. Reggie Harris was student body President at Jefferson at the time, and since we were very good friends, we worked very close in the development of the station. We had music piped into the cafeteria. It was here that I established my roots.

Q. How involved were you with the station?

A. Before I get into that, let me give you some brief background of the station. The radio station came into being after the people at Jefferson went out and bought some broadcasting equipment. After three months, they bought TV equipment. Thus, after solving some of the basic equipment problems, I got my own sports program on the TV program. Every morning around 8:30, we had a home room, so after 15 minutes I had about a 5 minute show. I interviewed people like Woodrow Green and many of the local sports figures. We talked about what they were good at outside of sports, what they weren't good at, and that's where and how I got started.

Q. Were you involved in any phase of music at Jeff?

A. No, except I was Drum Major in my last year. I marched up and down the street at the Rose Festival and that was one of the things I was really good at. Thara Memory, (one of the brother's who really hot in Jazz right now) had his own orchestra, and he took time out to teach me all the different steps of being a good Drum Major. We received a lot of recognition in the City of Portland.

Q. What College did you attend and what did you major in?

A. I went to San Francisco State and majored in Communications. I graduated from there with a degree in Communications. But before I went to California to go to college, I attended PCC (Sylvania). They had a good communication's program and an excellent radio program.

Q. What type of activities in radio were you involved in at PCC?

A. I was a disc jockey at Sylvania. I worked with Harold Johnson, who use to work at Channel 12. Harold was my idol at the time. He was doing news reporting and I always wanted to be like him.

Q. Lets switch up a bit. Tell me about Len Franklin, Black man...some of his personal philosophy, who is he and what he is trying to accomplish.

A. First of all, I am very optimistic about the future of Black people in Portland. I am a believer in Black people's ability to survive against the odds. As a Black man, I am very concerned about the kind

of Male image I project to Black kids, so, I spend a lot of time working with Black children whenever I can. For example, right now there is a young Black I'm working with. He is trying to get a job at KEX radio, in sales and broadcasting. He put me down as a reference, stating that I got him started in the business. I work with many young people who are trying to get into communications or who are trying to learn about communications. I try to show them the things that others won't show them. There are many people with skills who refuse to sit down with our young and show them the ropes, the in's and outs of the game. Not just the record business, but business that fall into the line of communications. If you don't communicate with everyone, you can't communicate with anyone.

"I am basically a doer. My philosophy is, 'Don't do as I say do, but do as I do.'" If I am able to show the young, through doing, how to get a foot hold, then it eliminates a lot of conversation or empty talk. I am striving very hard to be a good role model for young brothers. We need positive Black male role models in the City of Portland. As Len Franklin the Black man, I personally believe the Black community needs more Black men involved with the everyday business of the Black community.

"Politically, I see the Black community moving in many positive directions. To fight for "Quality Education" for our children is the best thing that could have happened. This fight is broad and far reaching. The Black community is not only fighting for the Quality Education of Black children, but Quality Education for all of the children trapped in the vacuum created by those incapable of developing educational programs important to the positive development of our children.

"As a Black man operating a Black business in the Black community, I feel very good. Black people of this community have supported "The House of Sound." Black people, white people, all kinds of people come and spend their money with us, and that's important. It speaks to the positive nature of what I am trying to do. It speaks to the type of atmosphere people find when they come here, even if its just to look around. The House of Sound is the peoples place and I'm trying very hard to keep it that way.

"The people of this community

will support Black businesses if Black businesses support the community. This is why I try to be visible in the community, always trying to help out when and where I can. As Black businessmen, we cannot expect the community to support us, if we are merely going to announce that we are here, yet refuse to go out into the community and contribute to its' growth. Its very important that the Black businessmen of this community, develop a positive working relationship with the community, for it is through the community that we will either survive or perish.

"Len Franklin feels very good about life, feels very good about being a Black man, and feels very good about the future of the community. Len Franklin is a Black man first, and its important to me that I work very hard to develop my Blackness, which means I must work to develop my mind. This is what I try to communicate to young people. Develop your mind, and in doing so you will develop your Blackness. I believe that culture is very important to the development of the young mind, but if the young mind is receiving bogus information, then it is subject to go into a phase I call, non-development."

Q. What has been the community's response to you, during these last four years at The House of Sound?

A. Great! I enjoy the community, I enjoy working with Black people. I was raised in this neighborhood right around the corner of Failing and Cleveland, so this community has been my roots. I enjoy dealing with the young kids and helping with different community functions like churches. A month or so ago, I did a function with Mt. Calvary and we put on the first fashion show to be presented in a church. The community is the foundation of my inspiration, motivation and goal-setting. Without the community I wouldn't be Len Franklin Black man. And thats the bottom line.

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