

OEPBS CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH

KOAP-10
MON. FEB. 16
The World of My America

Experience 200 years of black American history in a powerful one-woman show. Actress Paulene Myers creates over twenty-five diverse characters. Don't miss her stunning, moving performance.

Public TV Captivates.

10 PM



To Be Young, Gifted and Black

Feel the joy and pain of a black artist in America. Great Performances re-creates the story of "Raisin in the Sun" playwright, Lorraine Hansberry. Starring Ruby Dee and Claudia McNeil.

Public TV Inspires.

8 PM



Only The Ball Was White

Denied stardom because of their race, America's best Black baseball players formed their own Negro league. Paul Winfield narrates this documentary about the accomplishments of these outstanding athletes.

Public TV Remembers.

9:30 PM



The American Spirit With Ossie and Ruby

6:30 PM Our cultural heritage is reflected in our music, comedy, dance and drama. Join Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee and their guests—America's artists, writers and performers.
SUN. FEB. 15.
Public TV Entertains.



ON RADIO

Funk'n' Stuff

3 nights a week

Fri 10 PM to midnight
Sat 7 PM to midnight
Sun 8 PM to midnight

KOAP FM 91.5

THIS AD MADE POSSIBLE BY THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Today is ours - at last

By Ossie Davis



Our new public television series, "With Ossie & Ruby," is the natural culmination of 20 years of our lives. My wife, Ruby Dee, and I came along at a time when being Black was not yet fashionable, and there was very little in the professional theater for us to do except silver trays and announce that the grists wouldn't hold the heat. In our first year of marriage, Ruby and I together earned less than \$1,000. We were starving to death, and it was obvious to us there must be some other way to earn a living.

During the early 50s, in addition to being unemployed because we were Black, we also learned that we were unemployed because we were red. Some of our California friends had been kicked out of Hollywood because of the "McCarthyite" drive, and some of our New York friends like Paul Robeson, Canda Lee and John Henry Faulk were also targets of the witch hunts. Our association with them made us targets, also.

Yet, out of this dire circumstance came an opportunity that led directly to "With Ossie & Ruby." Some of the performers who were out of work found a way to pick up an extra buck by giving readings of literary material. So we went around to churches, schools, synagogues, and union halls, and we'd give dramatic interpretations of Dostoevsky and Yeats and other literary masters, for which we would be paid \$15 or \$20. Back then, that was a lot of money -- at least to us.

Through this experience, Ruby and I found there was a separate body of material we could perform that came out of our past experiences and out of our ethnic identification. It was then called Negro Literature and included the work of Langston Hughes, Phyllis Wheatley, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and others. Most Black folks, particularly those who came up from the south, knew this material very well. I knew it because I had come from Georgia, and each year during Negro History Week, we would study Black writers in great detail. So Ruby and I began to perform dramatic interpretations of this material in Black churches, at Black weddings and at Black funerals, and, somehow, we survived.

A quantitative change in our lives occurred which was based on three events. First of all, Ruby and I became involved with "A Raisin In The Sun," one of the first plays written by a Black and directed by a Black that was a smash on Broadway. Because of that play, our status, prestige and price went up. This led to the second major event -- writing my own play, "Purlie Victorious." It, too, became a talked about event, and it fixed our place as people of significance in the Black literary experience.

The third thing that happened, and I suppose the most important thing, was a direct result of the Supreme Court's decision in 1954 which determined that the civil rights battles of the 60s would largely be fought in the area of education. As a result of that decision, colleges and universities found themselves absolutely flatfooted when they were inclined or required by law to do something about Black studies. They needed people to take the material off the page and dramatize it so Black and white students alike would know what was meant by Black literature. As a result, we became very popular on college campuses throughout the country.

During this time, there began to be suggestions and proposals for Ruby and me to do our thing on records, radio and television. We met executives in offices, talked to studio heads, worked with agents, and they all said, "wouldn't it be marvelous if you could do that stuff you do on campuses on a television show?" In 1973, CBS gave us a special called "Today Is Ours," and Kraft Foods sponsored a weekly radio show on which Ruby and I read poetry and did interviews. The program was quite successful.

After the radio show ended, we continued our college tours, made motion pictures and appeared on television shows. On one occasion a few years ago, I was invited to public television station KERA in Dallas to serve as host for a six-program segment of the "Here's To Your Health" series. At KERA, I met a rather quiet young man, Bob Ray Sanders, Black like myself, who asked

Black specials on Channel 10

With Ossie & Ruby
Charlie Smith and the Fritter Tree
The World of My America
To Be Young, Gifted and Black
Only The Ball Was White...
The Black Dyad