



Portland's Tri-Met Mall - a good place to hang out?

(Photo By: Richard Brown)

Hanging out on the Tri-Met Mall

Grassroot News, N.W. - As the development of downtown continues, one completed project, the Tri-Met Bus Mall, is being used by a minute section of Portland's youth. A good percentage of the youth involved are Black, therefore, this report will examine this usage from the point of view of the Black community.

After the tiny storm of transit users have drifted to their desired locations, observations have shown that there is an increasing and consistent number of youth who have designated the Bus Mall on 5th and 6th, as their own sanctuary, engaging in less than honorable deeds. Since Black people in Portland are viewed as a group by the authorities, the misactions of a few "youngbloods," will have overtones affecting the Black community.

According to a vendor of Judy's Hot Dog stands, stationed on the back of M&F, on 6th, states that he has seen a little bit of everything, "dope, fights and fencing merchandise." A librarian said after witnessing a verbal assault, "seems like they just come downtown and just go crazy." This reporter observed the following: An elderly woman at a bus stop momentarily forgot her shopping bag, turning only to find a young Black man walking away

with it. Her aged voice squeaked out a "stop you!" which drew attention to her plight and a passerby interjected himself into the scene, forcing the young man to return the shopping bag. The ironic thing is, the young man then sat next to the lady at the bus stop. She questioned him about his taking of other people's things, by asking him if he did it often. His reply: "Every chance I get."

After summing up the behavior of these youths, the following discoveries were made:

A) Many of the youths are drop-outs or skipping class.

B) There is always the same group hanging out.

C) The chance of them being detected by the regulatory authorities or a relative or peer is deluted because of distance.

D) All con games that are operated by these youths are economically motivated, and as the recession continues, so will this type of preying.

One practice observed, known as bulldogging, is a process whereby through verbal or physical intimidation, a party receives an item without paying. The possibility of a race rumble is heightened if the youth is Black or visa versa, especially if the youth retreats to gather reinforcements.

The majority of the young men who are hanging downtown, are doing what is normal for any age, under this type of situation. As one young man put it, "I come downtown to scope out the young ladies." But if the tiny fraction continue to do what they are doing now, even the young Black men who are students or downtown on business, will fall under the label of suspect; for example, "Is he really waiting on a bus or trying to sell dope?"

Since Blacks are judged as a group, this scrutiny is quite possible when the powers that be decide to check this trend. Apathy among transit users have indirectly supported the behavior. It was reported that three young men were assaulting someone at a bus stop during rush hour, and the reaction of the small crowd was either to walk away or do nothing but stare. What is sad, is the wasted intelligence of these young men who engage in these activities. These connoisseurs of the streets possess the coping skills which make it possible for them to reap a harvest from individuals and events. Even having the skill to squeeze money from a turnip maneuvers situations to their favor, but the activities present a picture of a thoughtless group that doesn't care who they hurt, or the consequences of their

actions.

Among the many conversations pimping is common. This reminds one of the words of Iceberg Slim, well known hustler, pimp, and now respected author of more than 10 books: "I had to spend more than half a life time in a worthless, dangerous profession. Now here I was, slick, but not smart, in a cell. I was past forty with counterfeit glory in my past, and no marketable training, no future. I had been a bigger sucker than a square Mack. All he loses is scratch. I had joined a club that suckered me behind bars five times."

Journalist joins Kaiser board

Nancy Hicks of Oakland, a prominent journalist and the president of the Institute for Journalism Education, is one of five newly elected members of the Board of Directors of Kaiser Foundation Hospitals and Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Inc.

Ms. Hicks spent nine years, the last three of them in Washington, D.C., as a reporter with the *New York Times*, covering health,

education, and social policy issues. In the past four years, Ms. Hicks has been actively fostering the work of the Institute for Journalism Education, a nonprofit organization for training minorities in journalism and helping them find employment with the nation's press.

Ms. Hicks also was elected to the boards of Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Colorado, Kaiser Foundation Health Plan of Oregon, Kaiser

Foundation Health Plan of Ohio, and Kaiser-Permanente Advisory Services, a nonprofit and charitable corporation that encourages and assists in the development of health care delivery systems based on the Kaiser-Permanente model.

The Institute for Journalism Education has in recent years successfully trained or placed 200 minority journalists. Apart from her responsibilities as president of the Institute, Ms. Hicks pursues an active career as a writer of newspaper and magazine articles and has been a regular panelist on *Washington Week in Review*, a national weekly television news program.



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