

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Suit opens Pandora's box

A civil rights suit against the Portland School District by board member Herb Cawthorne is long overdue and would have far reaching effects.

In its various findings of "non-compliance" against the Portland district by the office of education, there has never been a legal decision on whether the Portland district ever discriminated against Black children as a matter of policy.

Of course it is clear that discrimination has been the policy of the Portland School District at least since the 1950s. The district segregated Black children into certain schools and refused to even acknowledge this until 1964. But Eliot and Humboldt were built in areas that would result in segregation over the protests of the community. The remedies until a year ago consisted of moving Black children out of their schools and into white schools, with no attention to what happened to them.

The various methods of dispersal are now well known: removing grades from neighborhood schools; enticing and forcing children to other schools; denying access to neighborhood schools; replacement of pre-school and elementary children with white children

forcing Blacks out; etc.

Only when threatened by a boycott did the School Board agree to allow students to remain in their own neighborhoods. Other agreed upon remedies have been slow and inadequate. Now, a year later, the Board has closed Washington/Monroe (41 percent minority) and plan to close Adams (35 percent minority) in direct violation of its own policy.

Thus, the same children who have been scattered and scorned throughout their school career will be forced to move again. Pleas to morality and sensibility have failed - all that remains is a federal suit.

A suit would have additional benefits. A judge could order that additional resources be used to compensate for past injury; he could order the hiring and promotion of Black staff. A court order could result in a monitoring group responsible to the court, not to school district staff.

A law suit and a court order would be the best solution. The seating of a new School Board and the behavior of some of the old members indicate that little has been learned over the past three years. Those who finally said: "We did it and we're sorry," are preparing to do it again.

## The fruits of victory

The Reapportionment Conference Committee -- appointed to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of reapportionment has voted to retain the new District 18 designed by the House, which creates a new "inner northeast" district with 44 per cent Black population.

We take this opportunity to thank Rep. Glen Whallon, who brought his House Committee to King Facility to hear the opinions of the citizens, and who responded to those opinions, and to the members of his committee. We also thank those Representatives and Senators who endorsed and supported this plan.

It has come to our attention that Robert Phillips, who currently works in the Governor's affirmative action office, has come under personal attack for his participation in the process and that his participation is being interpreted as the Governor's "intervention".

Phillips was asked by the Observer to present the plan developed by Legislative Research as being the district including the highest percentage of Black residents and still closely following natural neighborhood boundaries, to the forum held at King Facility.

The plan was one of four presented. The plan came to be called the "Phillips plan" as opposed the "Mason Plan", the OABA Plan" and the "Bauman Plan" -- each named after it's presented. Phillips continued to be the spokesperson for the plan throughout the House hearings and committee meetings. Following the adoption of that plan, with some variations, Phillips was "muzzled" by the Governor's office in response to angry protests by some Democratic members of the Legislature who opposed the plan.

We thank Robert Phillips for his participation on behalf of his community at risk of his employment. He has demonstrated, as always, his deep commitment and responsibility.

We also thank the Governor. We realize that his support for Phillips and his continuing neutrality in the face of angry accusation has been difficult.

The citizens and the organizations that took the time to study the issues and to come out and express their opinions are the ones responsible for what is truly a great political victory and they will be the benefactors.



## Farewell fine friends from fellow fighter Fungai

By Fungai Kumbula

Twenty-seven years ago today, in a quiet little village in sunny and far-off Zimbabwe, a chubby, shy little fellow born to a humble couple by name: Mandinema and Sengerwe Kumbula. Nineteen years later, he left Zimbabwe to go join older brother, Tendayi, who was studying in Los Angeles but, Los Angeles proved to be too big, too noisy, too fast, too crazy and not too conducive to serious scholarship (at least for one Fungai Kumbula).

So Fungai decided to run away to rainy, sleepy and quieter Oregon. September 1976, he left L.A., loaded with his few belongings in a rickety old jalopy that threatened to fall apart at every pothole and surreptitiously slipped into the Rose City. Not knowing a single soul, he did not see anything "rosy" about the Rose City and actually saw red when he read the paper, the Oregon Journal to be exact. In this Oregon "Hallmark" was an editorial by a former Hollywood actor named Ronald Reagan which was extolling the virtues of none other than former dictator, Ian Smith. What the actor from Death Valley Days and Bonzo Goes to Washington was saying in essence was that Smith was a blessing to the Africans of Zimbabwe because, by oppressing them, he was keeping the tribes from annihilating one another!

I nearly had a coronary, wondering whether I had stumbled back into the Dark Ages. So as one can see, my introduction to Portland was less than auspicious. To say I was disappointed would be the understatement of the year: I saw red (literally!) and I fired my own counter-editorial which the Journal published the following week and that was the start of the beginning of my "Notoriety." Soon a number of individuals came knocking on my door, asking me to get involved in this or that political happening and I found myself working with the American Friends Service Committee, Portland Citizens Against Racism, the Association of African Students, Black Student Union and I was requested by none other than The Portland Observer to write a weekly column on African Affairs.

Would you believe I initially declined the invitation because I did not think I would have enough material to write about week after week after week? How wrong I was and how "naive" can one get? In time I was introduced to the Black Educational Center and the Talking Drum Bookstore and, ultimately the Black United Front. Here it seemed I had at last found a home; no longer did I feel like an outsider looking in. Involvement in the African Liberation Day activities and other community concerns combined to make Portland home at last.

Meantime, contact with the Portland State University's Black Studies Department had led to another and most unexpected honour: an invitation to teach a class on Southern African politics. For two years I played the dual role of student and instructor and that helped broaden my horizons immensely. In between I was squeezing in speaking engagements at almost all the local high schools and colleges as well as community gathering and church groups.

The Portland Public School system decided to put up a play based on the life of the late South African civil rights leader, Steve Biko, and I was asked to work with the Oral History Committee which was charged with the task of putting the play together. To better inform Portland of the happenings on the continent, Fungai was asked to be a guest commentator on a public TV program called TCB and this continued until the notorious budget cuts yanked it off the air. From time to time, however, guest appearances on the same station (KOAP) on World Press In Review have continued at least for the time being. The latest one will be this Saturday, June 20, at 7:30 p.m.

Last Sunday, June 7th, Fungai finally graduated from Portland State University getting a degree in Medical Biology and Biochemistry with minors in Environmental Sciences and Public Health. The task for which Fungai came to Oregon - getting an education - is now completed and he must bid you all adieu. That is the purpose of this whole reminiscing: I am now looking back on what my stay in Portland has meant to me. It has turned out to be quite an exciting stay because of all the wonderful people I have met, made friends with, worked with, argued with,

played with, laughed with, anguished with, reminisced with, kidded with, dined with, stayed with, taught, learned from; these are people who have made my stay not only bearable but actually quite exciting.

It could probably be said that I have done a lot of things while I have been studying over the past five years but I believe in giving credit where credit is due: it was possible for me to do what I did because so many people reached out to me and placed enough trust and confidence in me. That confidence and that trust are what inspired me to go on and do all that is mentioned above and more. I can honestly say I have grown mentally and am now more mature, wiser and happier person than the innocent young man who slipped into town so long ago. Everyone I have worked with I have learned from; I have made so many friends over the past half decade that as I prepare to leave Portland, I have the shadow of a tear because some of these friends I may never see again.

I am almost certain I have made my fair share of enemies too and I would hope when next we meet we will be speaking the same language. Life would not be complete without at least some mention of the trials and tribulations of sweet-bitter love and I, too, have had my moments of heartbreak and my moments of ecstasy. I go away with memories of Portland hoping that someday all these different people will once again cross my path and we can talk about the good old days.

I have deliberately refrained from mentioning any names because if I had to list all the people who have contributed to my growth and made my stay that much more meaningful and exciting, I probably would need another page as long as this. To all these people, I now say, in the revered ancient African tradition: "I am glad I took the time out to break bread with you."

Will I be back? Will I continue to write for The Observer? What am I going to be doing once I leave here and get back home to civilization? For answers to these questions and more, tune in next week. P.S. Happy Birthday dear Fungai. He is 27 years young today!

## Letters to the Editor

### New School Board members make mockery of process

To the Editor  
After hours of detailed research, arduous deliberation and lengthy testimony, the Portland Public School Board voted to close Washington/Monroe High School and plans have been made to locate its programs at the Adams High School facility.

This decision was not easily obtained, and the logistical challenges of relocation are in the process of being addressed. The Metropolitan Human Relations Commission Education Committee, however, believes that the product of these actions will benefit all of our children.

Consequently, it is with great consternation that the Education Committee responds herewith to the

well publicized statements of the Chairpersons of the board and two board members-elect regarding their intent to close the Adams facility once the two new board members are seated.

The MHRC Education Committee feels that these statements are inappropriate and that the intent of the "new" board is objectionable. The eminent board's intent to close Adams in July, scans a public mandate to do so, makes mockery of the citizen input process and diminishes the public's perception of the board's commitment and leadership.

Given the fiscal temper of the times and the educational crisis before us, the public looks to the school board for leadership, sen-

sitivity and commitment. There is no room for capriciousness, intransigence or game playing when the future of our children -- and through them, our own -- hangs in the balance.

The Metropolitan Human Relations Commission Education Committee urges each member of the board to dispense with all ruminations and develop firm commitments to citizen participation and quality education for the general good.

Respectfully,  
Sho G. Dozono, Chairperson  
Education Committee  
Metropolitan Human Relations Commission

### Organizations share housing costs

To the Editor  
This letter is in regard to an article printed in your 6/11/81 issue, page 11, titled "Eliot holds Open House."

There is a need to correct erroneous/incomplete information provided to you for the article.

While it is a fact that "the Prince Hall Masonic Temple is being used by ENDA... for a minimal fee of \$361.11 a month"; it was not indicated that the Urban League Community Services Project will, in all likely hood, be the source of that \$361.11.

The statement that "Because the Urban League's Senior Citizens Project has not materialized... ENDA sees and (sic) urgent need for a project where youth and senior citizens are working together," is incorrect. The Urban League Senior Center is located in the King Facility

and has been in existence since 1975. The "lack of an Urban League's Senior Citizens building (sic) has not hindered it in providing various, consistently high quality, activities for N.E. area seniors.

Thank you for your coverage of important community activities/services. We look forward to a resolution of this matter and a continuing working relationship.

Sincerely,  
Joyce Owens-Smith  
Director, Community Services Project, Urban League of Pld.

(Editor's Note: We have been informed that the Prince Hall Masons and the Urban League Senior Citizens' Project will share the housing costs.)

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Bruce Broussard  
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### Portland Observer

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The Portland Observer was founded in October of 1970 by Alfred Lee Henderson.

The Portland Observer is a champion of justice, equality and liberation, an alert guard against social evils; a thorough analyst and critic of discriminatory practices and policies; a sentinel to warn of impending and existing racist trends and practices; and a defender against persecution and oppression.

The real problems of the minority population will be viewed and presented from the perspective of their causality: unrestrained and chronically entrenched racism. National and international arrangements that prolong and increase the oppression of Third World peoples shall be considered in the context of their exploitation and manipulation by the colonial nations, including the United States, and their relationship to this nation's historical treatment of its Black population.

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