

PASSAGES bridges Africa/US gap

By Nyewusi Askari

There exists a tremendous gulf of knowledge, understanding, and communication between the people of America and those of Africa. The gulf is similar between Black people on both these continents. Alex Haley's *Roots* stirred some interest and clarified some of the old myths about the very life connection that Black Americans have with their ancestors. And Black history courses in the schools have for the last decade washed some of the caked on falsehoods about the great Black civilizations of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. But, how much contact, information, and love does Black people have - and how frequently? It is generally accepted that increased contact with a different culture creates respect and appreciation for those little differences that the inhabitants of the world permit to divide them.

Here in Portland, a dedicated group of Black artists are working to bridge the gap between Africa, Portland and all points in between. The artists, under the direction of Bruce Smith, Chonitia Henderson Smith and Bobby Foucher, have formed a project called PASSAGES. PASSAGES is a West African/Pacific Northwest Cultural Sharing Project whose objective is

to better understand cultural relationships and choreographic usage of the ethnic dance forms of Senegal, The Gambia, and Guinea, West Africa.

PASSAGES intends to bring to Portland, the culture of the peoples of West Africa. The founders of the project see this great void and are proposing to fill it using the arts as a bridge to get from one side of emptiness to the other. To accomplish this purpose, the artists are seeking statewide financial support, which, if forthcoming, would enable them to participate in the 1981 Annual African Dance and Music Workshop held in West Africa, July 30th through August 29th. Sponsored by Air Afrique, and coordinated by Art Safari, Inc., of New York, the artists would be exposed to in-depth and on-site participation. Workshops will be held in studio settings and in villages, taught by Black people who live the tradition. The total project cost is \$8492.

According to Chonitia, the importance of the project cannot be over emphasized. "Even if all member artists are unable to make the trip, we want to be able to send at least one artist, so that the Northwest will be represented in Africa. At this point, Africa is allowing more artists from America to come

in and learn many of the traditional forms of African culture," she explained.

Each of the PASSAGE proponents is an accomplished artist in their field: Chonitia Henderson Smith, in Textile Art and Fashions; Bobby Foucher, as a painter; and Bruce Smith, a renowned percussionist and a member of the Portland based group, Pleasure. Through the PASSAGE project, they plan to bring knowledge in the areas of Dance, Music, and Textile art back to the Northwest for the consumption of young and old alike, but particularly to those young people in the schools. Passages will connect its idea with the African Art Safari which leaves from New York on the first of August each year. It will be a first for this area and is way overdue.

Bobby Foucher is particularly interested in bringing this type of program to Portland, especially after having worked professionally in the Pacific Northwest for several years. "Our dedication and work has been to create cultural understanding through music, dance and the visual arts, especially with youth in programs such as Artists-in-the-Schools, and the Jefferson Performing Arts Magnet Program. We are affiliated with the Opening Night

Society, a non-profit organization. We feel that this trip is important for our continued work in the Northwest area school and communities," he said.

Michael Grice, whose organizational and promotional skills help make Thara Memory's "Time-sound" Civic Auditorium concert a reality, and who is also working with PASSAGES, says, "When Chuck Davis came to Portland schools this year and involved over two hundred middle school students in African dance which culminated with a great concert through the Jefferson High Performing Arts program, everyone was amazed and impressed with the beauty and depth of cultures which had been a mystery to them. Bruce Smith worked with Odo Addy and The Chuck Davis Dancers out of New York as a lead percussionist and received much inspiration for this venture. The artists involved in the project are well qualified to represent the Northwest, so, we want community/city and state residents to support them," he elaborated.

For more information call Bruce Smith at 285-3861 or by mailing a donation in any amount to PASSAGES, P.O. Box 11143, Portland, OR 97211.

Community Calendar

PSU film: Wargame, directed by Peter Watkins, 47 min., B/W Produced for BBC-TV. A scrupulous attempt - based on information supplied by experts in nuclear defense, economics, and medicine - to show what would happen to Britain in the event of nuclear attack. The images have the authentic quality of a newsreel and an impact more forceful than any book or lecture.

Hiroshima - Nagasaki: August 1945: A compilation made from original Japanese footage shot in the immediate aftermath of the bombings, this film offers an unblinkingly frank look at the human cost of nuclear war - July 8, 1981, 7:30 P.M. Portland State University Room 435 SMC Phone: 229-4454.

Firehouse Theatre: Summer Classes July 11 - August 22. Day and evening Theatre and Dance classes and workshops for ages 6 - Senior Adults. Classes include: Puppetry, Stage, Movement, Aerobics, Jazz and Ballet (ages 7 - adult), Voice and Diction, auditioning, improvisation, Drama Day Camp (10-15), Introduction to Theater (6-9) Adult Theater classes and Theater for Senior Adults. Registration July 6 - 11. Students may register by stopping by the theater or by calling for class brochure. For further information call, 248-4737 - 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. The Firehouse Theater is located at 1436 S.W. Montgomery.

Unique Day Camp: A chance to experience, study and enjoy the natural environment will be available to Portland area students in a day camp offered by the Western Forestry Center this summer. The camp, called Nature Ventures is open to students in grades five through seven. Three sessions of the five-day camp will be offered in August. Campers in the program will meet at the Forestry Center and travel to field study sites in the vicinity of Portland. These include Sauvie Island, Magness Memorial Tree Farm, the Columbia River Gorge, Mt. Hood, and Tryon Creek State Park. For more information call 228-1367.

Summer Children's Programs: Albina Branch Library, 3605 NE 15th Ave. Puppet Show: "One Fine Day" plus: "Make a Puppet!" July 14, 3:00 P.M. - "Funny Bone Party" July 22, 3:00 P.M., Free films Saturdays, 3:00 P.M. For more information call 287-7147.

Veterans --- Need help on getting a job? Contact the National Alliance of Business and find out about their free Veterans Employment Seminar Program. Call 226-4063.

Job Seminar: A veterans Employment Seminar sponsored by the National Alliance of Business will be held on Friday, August 7th from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Public Service Building, 2nd floor auditorium, at 920 S.W. 6th Ave.

Cell Talk

By Asmar Abdul Seifullah
Aka Joe West

Since the last installment of *Cell Talk*, I've had a chance to converse with Mr. Walt Everetts, Hospital Manager at Oregon State Penitentiary. Mr. Everetts was interested in knowing, or so it seemed, how valid my complaint was against technician Ron Beriault. I informed Mr. Everetts that on June 20th, Ron Beriault withheld prescribed medication from me at a very crucial point in my illness, that his denial to administer medication had no valid medical foundation and that it constituted a racist act of retaliation for my exercising my first amendment rights in an article I had written about the hospital department.

I informed Mr. Everetts that I had been forewarned about the treatment I would receive in the hospital department. However, I can't reveal my source of information at this time because the usefulness and safety as witnesses of my source would be destroyed. Mr. Everetts wanted me to believe that I was over reacting to the situation. He acknowledged that Ron Beriault had a bad attitude but that he wasn't racist. At one point Mr. Everetts suggested that perhaps my attitude created the problem, and that he had talked to Ron Beriault and could find no evidence of discrimination or medical misconduct. However, Mr. Everetts failed to question any of the witnesses I submitted to the incident. It was a pure case of the slave master supporting the overseer against the pains of the slave.

Never did I expect Mr. Everetts to act fairly in my complaint. I only talked to him to reaffirm the fact that the problems that exist in the medical department ran from top to bottom. When departmental heads

actively endorse racist acts by their underlings the only solution to the problem is to cut off the head. "Kill the head and the body will die." If Walt Everetts sanctioned this overt act of racism, he therefore must be condemned as a racist. If the prison administration supports Mr. Everetts then, it too is racist for allowing further spread of a infectious disease. There is no excuse for what happened to me. I was denied medical treatment because I'm Black and vocal but there are brothers in this institution who are denied treatment for a lot less reasons.

This isn't an isolated incident - Black prisoners are seldom patients in the hospital. You can't tell me that Blacks don't get sick in Oregon State Penitentiary. But a brother has to be damn near dead before he is admitted to the hospital. There is a double standard for Black and white prisoners in the medical department. "Most brothers would rather be sick in their cell than seek medical help in Oregon State Penitentiary. Why?"

One other incident took place when I was denied medical attention. On June 13, 1981, I was sent to the hospital by Assistant Superintendent Larry Roach. Mr. Roach called the hospital and ordered technician Richard Frye to give me medication for my respiratory problem. He informed Mr. Frye that he personally knew I had a problem and that if necessary he (Mr. Frye) should call Salem Memorial Hospital and get a doctor's order for some medication. When I arrived, technician Frye totally disregarded Mr. Roach's instruction. The man wouldn't even listen to my chest; he didn't come from behind his window. The of-

ficer present, Mr. Leja, was so surprised that he called Mr. Roach and told him that Frye treated me pretty badly and that he too felt I should have been given medication. I suffered the rest of the weekend and was admitted to the hospital on the 15th. On the 20th, the incident with Mr. Beriault took place and I'm suppose to believe that is all coincidental.

At the time of the writing of this article, I am once again a hospital patient. The medication I've been receiving isn't accomplishing much. I have no faith in this department but my request for outside treatment has not been acted on. Medication has been withheld; it has arrived late, which is detrimental in itself. I have called these things to the attention of the administration. Inmates and staff will bear witness to the way I've been treated and still I'm placed in a hostile environment

possible treatment.

Please bear in mind that at the writing of this article I am in the lion's den. I don't put anything past these people. They have proved how beastly they can be. I shall focus all future articles on a much broader base because this medical department is racist and it is used against all minority prisoners. If these people are allowed to administer treatment to whomever they please, as they please, when they please, then Black life behind these walls is on the verge of extinction.

We pray Allah that a full investigation of the medical department at Oregon State Penitentiary is conducted in the near future. Prisoner's Legal Services has been notified of the situation. Legal action will be taken in the near future but any outside support is welcomed.

County positions available

Multnomah County Executive Don Clark announces that vacancies exist on two citizen boards and commissions - the Community Health Council and the Adult and Family Services Review Board.

The Community Health Council has five vacancies for consumers of any of Multnomah County's health programs who reside in either the North, Northeast or Southeast areas of Portland, or East Multnomah County. The Council advises the Community Health Division on the programs and services provided by federal grants, including the Primary Care Center, the Southeast Urban Health Initiative, Family Planning clinics, and the programs for Women, Infants, and Children

(WIC).

The Adult and Family Services Review Board has one vacancy for someone who is interested in the state assistance program and in helping clients understand it. The Board advises the Regional Office of the State Division of Adult and Family Services on its programs, and serves as a liaison between clients and the Division.

Citizens interested in serving on either of these boards are encouraged on contact Maggie Pendleton at the Office of the County Executive Room 136 Multnomah County Courthouse, 1021 SW 4th, Portland, OR. 97204. Ms. Pendleton may also be reached between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm at 248-3308.

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"In my job I do a lot of home rehabilitation work and many of my clients were converting to gas, and I was persuaded to look into it for our home."

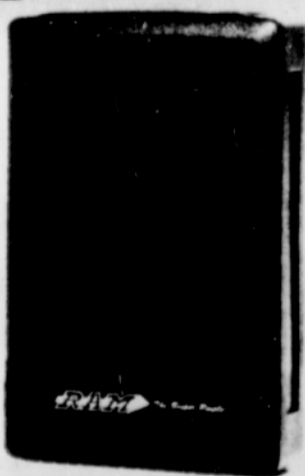
"I computed it out, and based on what we paid for oil last year, I know it's going to mean savings for us."

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