

## Michelle Gerald: Reporting the news



Michelle Gerald, news reporter for KXL Radio, interviews Portland's new superintendent, Dr. Matthew Prophet. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

*Grassroot News, N.W.* — "I'm Michelle Gerald, in the KXL News Center," says one of the few Afro-American women in Portland who's involved in the delivery of the who, what, when, where and why.

"As a news reporter my duties are either to stay in the studio making phone calls to gather news, or I'll go out into the field to cover news." Ms. Gerald indicated that her preference is street reporting because it's more responsible.

She relies upon the assignment editor of radio station KXL for pinpointing stories, but keeps her ear to the ground, enabling her to cover stories that she assigns herself. "Recently I've reported on rape. I was taking a self-defense class and became enlightened. I wanted to share what I learned."

Reporters must report the news in an objective manner, she explained. "I present both sides; I won't say this is what happened—George says the City never called him but now they are taking his land, but the City says they did. When I go home I can talk to my friends and say what I

personally feel, but on the air it is just both sides."

Has her objectivity ever wavered? "In some respects, yes. You sometimes can't help but put some of your own personality into a story."

Keeping up with current events is the lifeblood of a news reporter. "I see stories about hard times coming over the wire all the time. The sawmill industry has over 50 per cent of the people unemployed. The other percentage is underemployed and I wonder what this is doing to their families. Today, I covered a story about the governor wanting additional cuts. The Board of Higher Education replied that they can't make any more cuts. In a two-week span I've talked with people who are no longer working. So, as a reporter I see first hand how harsh the economy is."

The stories she enjoys covering the most are ones that the general public is unaware of and events and issues that have not been unearthed in a while. "When I did the story on the Black Educational Center I knew that there were people out

there who knew very little about the center. When I cover stories of this kind it turns out to be a learning experience for me and our listeners."

The job of news reporting does not have a high percentage of Black women as role models. "No, there are not enough," Ms. Gerald replies. "I can see when I call someone up and later when I meet them to do an interview sometimes they are surprised. Also, if I happen to cover a story and the person I'm interviewing is of the same race, it's nice because that interview is not race related. It's like, Hi, how are you doing."

"What has bothered me is not coming back into the community with the skills that you've learned. Now that I'm in one of those positions I can see that it's not all that easy. It takes a lot of time and energy. You have to really want to do it." Ms. Gerald stated that she would like to come back into the community. "I feel at heart that I'm a teacher. I receive great pleasure in watching someone find out something new."

She believes that one day her coverage of various stories may lead her outside of Portland. Her long-term goals are to work in some capacity with Public Relations. She can be heard every hour on the half-hour reporting local news at 750 KXL AM.

### Study Kwanza

The Black community is invited to learn how to celebrate Kwanza, an Afrikan holiday, at a workshop to held on Saturday, December 12th from 4-6 pm at the Black Educational Center's Activity Room located at 1640 NE Alberta. Admission is free. For further information please call 282-9465 or 284-9552.

### Brutus time change

Due schedule changes, Dennis Brutus, S. African poet and activist, will speak on Friday, December 11th, at Portland State University's Cramer Hall, Room 71, at 6:00 pm instead of at 7:00 pm as reported in last week's *Observer*.

## Officials oppose service cuts

City and County representatives expressed their concerns about upcoming cuts in the State budget to meet an anticipated \$50 billion deficit.

Thomas Higgins, director of the Multnomah County Department of Human Services, explained that "it would be impossible for human services and health programs to absorb the planned cuts without destroying that which it has taken 50 years to build..."

"Perhaps most telling, the need will not go away. Those who are denied help will fill our streets, our neighborhoods and our jails. And whatever system they fall into, it is certain to be more costly, less efficient and more inhumane."

The State Legislature will meet in Special Session January 11th to reduce the state budget. Governor Atiyeh has requested that all agencies reduce their budgets by 20 per cent.

Erma Hepburn, director of the City of Portland's Human Resource Bureau, pointed out that the legislators should be informed that additional cuts in education, welfare, health and mental health, children's services, elderly services and other human services cannot and should not be supported.

Ms. Hepburn gave an example of the proposed cuts: The State Senior Services Division is recommending cuts totalling \$14 million, which includes cutting \$6.7 million from nursing home care and \$5.4 million from community based care. But also included is a 50 per cent reduction in Oregon Project Independence, a program that provides homemaker and other services designed to keep elderly persons out of nursing homes.

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"We cannot allow these programs to become a scapegoat and used as an easy solution for complex problems. Additional cuts would mean total elimination of some programs and substantial reduction in others. Also, it would be impossible to operate and provide services at an adequate level. It appears that we have forgotten why these programs were created."

She suggested that the Legislature explore other alternatives such as increasing revenue through taxes.

"I admonish you, where will it end? Have we become a society so insensitive and oblivious to the needs of the poor, socially and economically disadvantaged, that there is a lack of concern about the impact of cuts on human services...?"

Jean Babson, volunteer Child Welfare advocate, told how the proposed cuts will affect services to children: the 20 per cent reduction will badly cripple services to children in need of foster care, counseling, protective services, at a time of increasing unemployment and family disruption. Reduction in funding child care will result in loss of services and community resources. Preventive services such as homemakers will be reduced. The program for high risk teenage parents will be eliminated as will day care for migrant workers.

Cuts in the Health Division will result in more unwanted pregnancies. Medical care for mothers and children will be reduced at a time when more services are needed. Mental Health cuts will bring abandonment

of community care for mentally ill adults and children, eliminate outpatient care for 12,400 children and adults as well as community programs for mentally retarded children. Adolescents will no longer have separate wards at the State Hospitals.

Donald J. Ballinger, executive director of the Tri-County Community Council, said that if the choice is to eliminate human services, "then we must be prepared to deal with these problems immediately and welcome persons—who currently are not always visible because they are being cared for in our jails, nursing homes, and mental institutions—back into the community prematurely and without the assistance that is required to assure appropriate behavior and continued independence in their transition."

In related action, Presiding Officer of the Board of County Commissioners Gladys McCoy has called for a conference of the mayors of Portland, Gresham, Fairview, Troutdale, and Wood Village, the Multnomah County Executive, and the Multnomah County legislators to discuss the potential budget cuts. The meeting will be held on December 15, 1981, at 7:30 pm at the Multnomah County Courthouse.

### Watch crime

Captain Vern McCabe, commander of the Portland Police Bureau's North Precinct, reports an alarming increase in purse snatches and strong arm robberies near shopping centers. These crimes usually increase during the holiday season.

The most frequent victims are elderly citizens, walking alone. The perpetrators are usually men, ranging in age from teenagers to approximately thirty.

McCabe suggests the following safeguards:

- Women: Don't carry a purse! If you insist on carrying a purse, use a small "clutch" bag without straps to entangle you or the suspect to grab on to.
- Take only necessary I.D. cards and money. Put these items in pockets on the inside of your clothing.
- When possible, do your shopping or banking during the morning hours. These crimes occur more often in the afternoon than in the morning.
- Take a companion with you when going out. Remember, there's safety in numbers!
- Walk with confidence and stay alert to your surroundings. Don't be caught off guard!
- Those who are victims or witnesses to a crime can assist the police:
  - Stay calm; get a description of the suspect(s).
  - Note the direction they take or the vehicle they get into.
  - Notify the police immediately by dialing 9-1-1.

Persons having information regarding these types of crimes should call Officer Dennis Schmeling, Crime Analysis at North Precinct, 248-5720. For further information contact North Precinct's Crime Prevention Unit at 248-5709.

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