



OBSERVATIONS

FROM THE SIDELINES
by Kathryn Hall Bogle

As the summer wanes and fall approaches most families savor the last of the free-wheeling vacation days.

Not so with those persons involved with the formal education of the young — they have been hard at work for weeks before the opening of school.

The Black Education Center in Northeast Portland will see the ending of its summer program just a few days before September 13, when it opens again for the regular school year.

Joyce Braden Harris, director of BEC, held open house at the school on Sunday, August 29, for a score of parents of prospective students who plan to enter this independent Portland Black institution. They

our problems together.

4. Cooperative economics: to build and maintain our own institutions, and to profit from them together. Cooperative means to work together in peace and harmony.

5. Purpose: to make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

6. Creativity: to discover and use our creative energies to build for our people.

7. Faith: to believe with all our heart in our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The BEC occupies a renovated building at 4919 N.E. 17th Ave., formerly the Vernon library. One of



Obo Addy and guitarist (above) sound off and Michelle Mariana (below) makes up for performance of Bamm for benefit of House of Exodus at Jefferson High School on August 25.



Jamila Harris, 4 yrs. shows tie and dye she helped to process to Treenette Allen, Summer School Aide from CETA.

came to learn the particulars of this "different" school.

"We are proud of our record," says Harris. "We have been operating our program successfully for eight years in its full-time elementary school curriculum.

"Our students may come to us at age four or five and go through our kindergarten. We are prepared to teach them through fourth grade. They are taught mathematics, reading, language, science and, of course, Black history.

"This year we are pleased to announce that Janice Scroggins, the well-known pianist and composer, will join us to teach music. Ms. Scroggins is responsible for the music for Herb Cawthorne's next production, and we are fortunate to have her talents.

"Throughout its 12 years of existence," Joyce Harris continued, "the BEC has touched the lives of many hundreds of Black students, parents and community people. In

its several teachers is Damari Wakhungu, of Kenya, who teaches also at Portland State University in the Black Studies department. Wakhungu brought first-hand knowledge of the history and customs of her native country to BEC students attending summer classes. She plans to teach Swahili in the fall.

Tie-dye, in its simplest form, involved even the youngest child in the art. They learned to make their own dye from plants they themselves found (with teacher-help). They learned that walnuts soaked overnight yielded a usable brown color; that onion skin, boiled, produced a good yellow; that certain blossoms made a lovely shade of pink; and that to use an aluminum kettle in dyeing causes a process called oxidation. The children made masks and shields of different African countries, selecting those that appealed to them. Later they identified and learned about the countries on the maps.



Teacher Damari Wakhungu of Kenya shows 6-year-old Kalenn Wesson how to separate sisal for basket weaving.

May, 1970, Ron Herndon, Frank Wilson and I decided to create an institution controlled by Black people that would function in the best interest of Black folk.

"The BEC is based on the philosophy that we are *Afrikan* people and, no matter where we are in the world, we are inseparably linked by our common struggle for self-determination and freedom.

"We have Seven Principles which form the basis of our organization. They are listed in our booklet describing BEC."

Harris handed a copy of the BEC philosophy to the *Observer* writer and we share the seven principles with readers:

1. Unity: the state of being one; singleness: to strive for and maintain constancy of purpose or action; continuity.

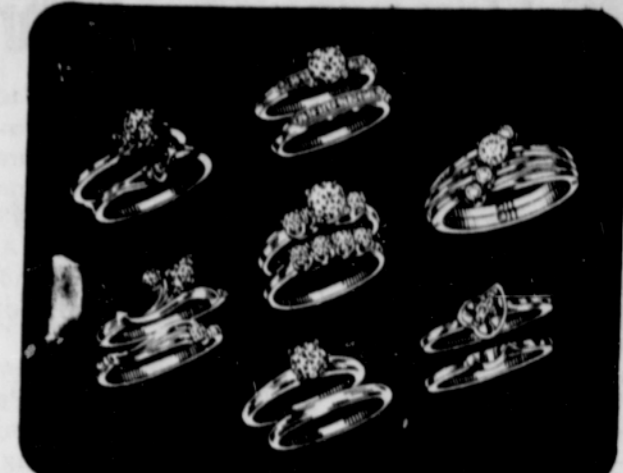
2. Self-determination: to define ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.

3. Collective work and responsibility: to build and maintain our community together and to solve

BEC teachers say, "We found that art as a medium for teaching is a very effective way of helping children to retain information about their culture. Our institution receives partial support from the Metropolitan Arts Commission. Ken Berry and Isaac Shamsud-Din are BEC board members."

Joyce Harris herself holds a bachelor's degree from Reed College in American Studies and another from Oregon State University in Elementary Education. Her masters degree in education was earned from Portland State. Periodically Harris is employed by the Portland Public Schools as a consultant for its multicultural education program. She conducts staff training meetings in this capacity. Her forte is in the areas of science, mathematics and Black literature. She has also written components used for teaching teachers how to teach Black youngsters in a public school setting.

Persons may call regarding enrollment in this innovative school by contacting BEC at 284-9552.



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