

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## NAACP faces crucial choice

The NAACP faces its most important election in a decade and the membership has a very clear choice.

Since the early 1970s the Portland Branch has been largely inactive. It has sold memberships, held fundraisers, hosted conventions, but has not been on the cutting edge of the struggle.

The NAACP did not participate in the Coalition for School Integration and did not lead the struggle to bring equity to Portland's black school children; the NAACP did not lead the fight to stop the dilution of black votes; the NAACP did not lead the fight against police brutality and to keep the police out of the schools.

The role of the NAACP, Portland Branch, for the past 10 years has been to remain silent or

to support other organizations who are taking the lead.

There is a great need for an NAACP in Portland. The work of the NAACP is far from over—quality education, fair housing, jobs, justice, voter education.

Hazel G. Hays has a history of activity. She has been on the picket line, in the boardrooms. She is aggressive, intelligent, articulate. She can negotiate and she can fight. She can work with other organizations such as the Black United Front or the Urban League. She can support and she can lead.

With Hazel Hays at the helm the NAACP will make news again. The NAACP will come to life and take its rightful place in the community—in the forefront of the civil rights/human rights movement.

## Require professionalism

Herman Washington, principal of Tubman Middle School, is under fire from his staff. High among their complaints is Washington's desire that teachers dress professionally, his opinion that jeans and tennis shoes have no place in the classroom.

We agree with Washington. Last spring the *Observer* was invited to make a presentation to a class. When we arrived in the early afternoon, their teacher was dressed in shorts, T-shirt and tennis shoes. He apologized to us for his appearance, saying he had gone jogging at noon. We wondered if he had apologized to the children.

The classroom was in complete chaos, with no discipline and no respect. We didn't wonder why.

Teachers are important role models for children; their job is to help pass on our culture to our children. A teacher's slovenly appearance tells the child a lot about that teachers opinion of himself and his profession, of the students and his community.

If they had any pride in their profession and any regard for the example they present to their students, teachers would act and dress professionally in the students' presence.

## Letters to the Editor

### Parents support Tubman principal

To the editor:

As parents of students at Harriet Tubman Middle School, we would like to voice our support of the school's principal, Herman Washington, and to protest the public attack made against him by a small group of teachers in last Sunday's *Oregonian*.

Mr. Washington has the support of most other parents as well as teachers, but none of those persons was interviewed by Kathy Durbin.

As parents, we have specifically requested that the principal tighten up the discipline in the classroom. It has been the contention of many parents that some teachers refer too many students to the office on the slightest provocation rather than learn to manage their classrooms effectively.

Mr. Washington also has the support of parents in demanding that the staff dress appropriately. It is the naive assumption on the part of many teachers, especially the young, inexperienced ones, that the way to relate to poor or minority students is to dress the way they perceive those children dressing. Nothing could be further from the truth.

We realize that Mr. Washington may be difficult to work for. He is idealistic, hard-working and cares foremost about the children under his care. But teachers, if they are professional, should learn to work under people who make demands on them.

It is unlikely that the complaints of a small group of employees in another school or in any business would warrant all the space and attention that was given to the Tubman story. Any institution has its

group of malcontents, who would love the attention and publicity that the Tubman group was accorded. They are seldom given that opportunity, however. The recent dismissals of principals of Catlin Gabel and Hillel, both private, upper-income, west-side schools, was given little or no attention. Other schools that have had similar internal problems are not given widespread, one-sided stories. Tubman does not need further negative publicity when so little is given to the positive things that are going on there.

Finally, the credibility and judgment of the teachers who would damage their school by cooperating in such a public attack on the person they work under must be scrutinized.

A concerned Tubman parent

### Herman Washington provides role model

To the editor:

In mid-September a friend had a child in foster care placed in her home. Because of my background in working with school aged children and developing multi-cultural, non-sexist programs, she asked me to find a good middle school to place the child in. As a mother who had vowed never to place my child in a public school I expressed my bias and checked out schools.

Based on information about the curriculum, the racial make-up of the staff, and recommendations from people I know in academia I chose Harriet Tubman Middle School.

On the day I enrolled the child I met with the counselor, the administrative assistant and the principal. After meeting with the three of them, I not only felt like I had made the right choice for the child of a friend, but hoped that when my child reached middle school age the three of them would still be at Tub-

man. What Will Fletcher identifies as a communication problem between the twenty white teachers and the principal in the article, "Rift Develops at Tubman Between Teachers and Principal," is a cultural difference, better known as racism.

Attitudes about black children like Ron Evans "Rewards should be provided to counteract stress, Tubman is a minority school which has more severe educational problems," is what makes me fearful of putting my black child in a public school. Other than his paycheck I can't imagine what other rewards Mr. Evans and those who support his attitude think they're entitled to, combat pay perhaps? I wonder if Mr. Evans were working in Beaverton he would expect additional "rewards."

Evans and the other white teachers at the school who oppose Mr. Washington's discipline policies, ideas about professionalism in how teachers dress, exemplifies their ignorance about black cultural histori-

cally relevant to effectively teaching black children.

The very attitudes and style they are opposed to in Mr. Washington's approach have been used to give people like Martin Luther King, Zora Neal Hurston, Roy Wilkins, Barbara Jordan, Malcolm X, Phyllis Wheatley and many other famous blacks who have made contributions to this country.

The *Oregonian* has a responsibility to its readers and the black community, to present what the black community feels about Mr. Washington's approach (after all Tubman was created for the black community) as well as the point of view of the staff members who don't agree with the other twenty (which Ms. Durbin neglected to include in her article).

The role model and image Mr. Washington portrays for black children is long overdue in Portland Public Schools.

Elizabeth A. Waters



## Music Maker

by Herb L. Cawthorne

Last weekend, I heard life coming out of a horn. The mind, body and spirit—all working in harmony for one purpose: to make music.

Thara Memory is a musical wonder. With every element of his being he plays. His trumpet seems a natural part of his anatomy. When you listen to him blow, you wonder if the soft breeze of a summer originates in the horn of Thara Memory. The cool wind wisely steps aside to a superior force when he makes that trumpet sing.

At Delevan's, the place where good jazz can be heard consistently, Memory produced his "sounds full of life." As the trumpet sang, you could see that his eyes actually wrote out the music. In the expression, you could tell that he was in love with the music he made. His love seemed consuming and private. All listeners were welcome, yet distant observers, free to enjoy whatever pleasure they could, but fully aware that they would never know the true intimacy of the bond between this man and his lady. We marveled at the love affair, even at a distance. If this man and his lady can make such powerful music, what difference does it make that we cannot know the inner workings of the relationship.

One wonders why such a talented musician remains in Portland, of all places, a dry desert of jazz appreciation. Here he's not respected nor rewarded for his artistry. Nickles here, dimes there, he can hardly keep body and soul together.

Maybe it's not important where he lives. All that matters is the lady he loves. Wherever they go, so long as they go together, they make music. And the music sustains them, together. We should all be so lucky!

As I watched him do his thing last Saturday night, I recalled that several months ago, Thara Memory did something that at first glance seemed out of character. He appeared before the Board of Education. The Board was meeting in a tiny secluded room upstairs in the Administration Building. Downstairs, members of the black community were occupying the regular Board meeting facility, loudly protesting the decision to reverse a former agreement on the location of Harriet Tubman Middle School. The atmosphere was a circus of confusion. It was tense, as the Board pretended that the disruption would not prevent it from conducting "business as usual." Still, Thara, like his music, seemed composed, confident in his own world.

Thara had come to argue for the Jazzmin Community Marching Band. "There are no Afro-American children in the symphony. With 7,500 students in the community and most of those in the public schools, there should be 400 or 500 in the music programs. Music is an important part of the Afro-American culture. If you take away the music, you have taken away a vital part of the community."

The questions from the Board

were insulting, demeaning and in questionable taste. The Board members did not necessarily intend to be mean and insulting, but they just couldn't help themselves. The blacks downstairs were creating havoc. The irritation showed, although the issue was completely unrelated.

The discussion proceeded like a cross-examination, as though Thara was on trial. Is it true that you criticize the District's music programs, he was asked. Do you tell black children to stay away from some music teachers? Is this program just for black students? Someone told us that you went into a classroom and wrote "this is crap" on the blackboard of one of the music teachers in the district, is this true? Thara remained cool, handling the questions as though each was simply the challenge of a difficult series of notes in a new tune.

In fact, he was outstanding: A teacher, weaving bits of cultural perspective, history, and advocacy for a program together like he weaves the notes of his horn into beautiful music. Finally the Board agreed to "loan" the Jazzmin Community Marching Band "surplus" instruments. Thanks to this effort, the young people could now get to work learning the techniques of the famous Southern Marching Bands. Thara Memory was now in a better position to pass his love on to the younger generation.

The moral of the story is simple: Love, true love, makes music. And Thara Memory is a music maker.

## Racists not needed at Tubman MS

To the editor:

It is very unfortunate that some teachers at Tubman are dissatisfied and ready to terminate their employment.

I as one parent want it made clear to you, when you want to be elsewhere it's probably best for everyone concerned that you are. Statements made to the press help to point up the problems we all face every day we live—racism. To the teacher who made the anonymous statements as to her feelings about the students ("The white students have no respect for Mr. Washington and the black students say man, 100 fights and no suspensions"), you're a racist and should go teach where you feel safe, secure, unchallenged and where everyone you see from morning to night is of a race you don't dislike. I as a parent resent your statement and hope surely you are one, along with Mr. Evans, who has resigned. A woman such yourself cannot be trusted to be fair with my beautiful daughter who is black, there to be educated and not judged by bigots upon seeing her face. Mr. Evans, I'm hoping you will find a school where teaching is easy. Judging from your statement to the press you should never have taken your position at Tubman which you knew had a high percentage of mi-

nority students. You feel stress because of it, you feel teaching black students should be rewarded above the usual. The severity of the educational problems are of course caused by minority students only and as the teacher who stated "white students have no respect for Mr. Washington and the black students say man, 100 fights and no suspensions," you must also feel white is right so please before taking your next job, make sure there are no minority students present or you'll have another excuse to cause havoc there also. I wish you well in some new job where hopefully your views will never have to touch another minority student.

Mrs. Koblitz, it is often stressful to deal with disciplinary situations in the class but where else should they be dealt with? Teachers who can't handle problems in their classes have for too long sent students to the office. This has resulted in students being branded and suspended for trivial matters and if you are honest, you'll admit it. I'm sorry to see you go but if it is as you say administrative matters branded as racism why did you not keep them administrative and out of the papers. I personally know of white principals whose staff did not like them, were happy as larks to see them leave the position but they

never did what you have done. You talk about being there for the students, not wanting to work in the community any longer because some say integration has not worked. But let's face it, Mrs. Koblitz, if things are not on your terms they're no good—that is wrong itself. Integration, of course, cannot work if white people who don't get their way are always willing to turn and run. Teachers have worked hard to make the school work. Teachers are not the only ones. I fought for Tubman eight years of my life. Other people, even longer. But you should know what I know: the principal runs the school, with the help of teachers, parents and students. Please don't take all your frustration out on Mr. Washington. Remember, there have been three other principals before him which helped to cause this dilemma at the school. If I have concerns, it is that the students have not helped to make school rules as they should have.

To those teachers who are staying, thank you—you are appreciated very much. It would also help if you who don't feel the school is horrible would speak up.

Sherrian Haggard-Warren

## Wants NAACP presidency

To the editor:

The purpose and aims of the Portland Branch of the NAACP shall be to improve the political, educational, social and economic status of minority groups; to eliminate racial prejudice; to keep the public aware of the adverse effects of racial discrimination; and to take a lawful action to secure its elimination, consistent with the efforts of the national organization and in conformity with the articles of incorporation of the Association, its constitution and by-laws and as directed by the national Board of Directors.

The national priorities, and there are many, here in Portland, under my leadership (if I'm elected), will focus on political action, economic development and membership. These are a few issues approved at our national convention this year in Boston.

I am seeking the office of the president of the Portland Branch of the NAACP.

At present I am employed as the Director of Civic Relations, Public Affairs Department, Portland Gen-

eral Electric Co. At present, I serve as a commission member of the State of Oregon's Juvenile Services Commission, vice-president of the Board of Directors, Tri-County Youth Services Consortium, member of the Urban League of Portland, coordinator for the Lou Rawls Parade of Stars (a fund-raising special) to benefit the United Negro College fund, member of the NAACP Board Committee on en-

ergy and economic development.

On Sunday, December 12, 1982 at 4 p.m. at Vancouver Ave. First Baptist Church, the Portland Branch, NAACP will hold its biennial election of officers. I seek the office of president to carry out the purposes and aims of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Bernard Richardson



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