

# Officials emphasize vote responsibility

**Grassroot News, N.W.** — In Portland this weekend the Northwest Conference of Black Public Officials held their Spring conference. It brought together public officials from Spokane, Seattle, Oregon, Alaska and Denver. Norman Rice, Seattle City Councilmember, explained the purpose for the conference. "Our purpose is twofold. First, there is a formal agenda of trying to share current events and trends which are important to blacks. Secondly, we are creating an informal networking of ideas from public officials from across the region. We share concerns about what we need to do and how we can best go about it. We come out with a strengthening of purpose. This is a reeducation to our roots."

Rice views this administration's domestic policies impacting their constituency in a negative way. "The president ignores the heart of the black community. We are suffering from his decisions. He is inconsistent in spreading the pain. He has rewarded his friends and has forgotten about people who are economically deprived."

It is ironic that the conference was held under the shadow of the victory by Harold Washington. "Chicago reaffirms that the black vote counts," Rice replied. "This is something every black American had better understand. If you are not registered to vote, now is the time to get registered. There is no excuse anymore."

Facing the reality of Afro-Americans' political power, are black public officials fooling themselves? Dr. Bill Little believes to a degree

they are. "The only way they will have real political power is to organize a network and resources to direct the kind of potential power they have. However, it is important to try to come together to try and develop power on a broad and regional scale."

Little does not view Washington's election as a political accident like Jimmy Carter. "People have been working in Chicago for over 45 years trying to mobilize and develop a constituency in the black area. They laid the groundwork in so far as a commitment to developing a strong black base."

Locally, Dr. Little says the political situation is discouraging. "There is no meaningful communication among the black elite in terms of directing the resources they have at their disposal. Because of that you have a fragmentation of potential political power."

Calvin O. Henry, President of the Oregon Assembly of Black Affairs, accuses the District 18 embarrassment. "There were two major reasons why we were not successful in District 18. First and foremost black elected officials did not come forth publicly and push a candidate or candidates. They should have pushed one of those black individuals. Also, the churches didn't enlighten the people as to what was in their best interest."

Commissioner Charles Jordan, a possible mayoral candidate, answered a question regarding his ambitions. "I was considering running before the Chicago race took place. However, what occurred in Chicago does have some meaning: not that he won, but how he won."



New officers of the Black Public Officials are Barbara J. Daniels, recording secretary; Norm Rice, President; Mozell Brown, corresponding secretary. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

There are other factors which I have to decide on before I can throw my hat into the race. Money is one of those factors. It is difficult to compare Chicago to Portland. Chicago has an excess of over 40% black population. That is a nice base to start off with. But nationally, Washington was able to give people

hope. He showed that people can make a difference. We have people in Portland who feel they can make a difference. If we have a collation of purpose we can achieve our life-long goals. So, I'm testing the water to see what kinds of support are out there for me."

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