

Black Studies hosts professors



Dr. Wayne Williams & Melaku Lakew visiting State University. (Photo: Richard J. Brown) professors to the Black Studies Dept. at Portland

by Nathaniel Scott

The Black Studies Department at Portland State University, for the summer quarter, has been enhanced tenfold by three visiting professors.

From the University of Washington, Wayne Williams, with a Ph.D. in Linguistics and African Studies, is teaching Linguistics and Afro-American Communication. Dr. Williams is Director of the Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Washington.

Steven Millner, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Southern Studies — "a center for the study of southern culture" — from the University of Mississippi — "Ole Miss" — is teaching Racism and Afro-American Film. Professor Millner is also writing a book about Martin

Luther King's involvement in the bus boycott at Montgomery, Alabama.

Melaku Lakew, with a Ph.D. in Economics, is no stranger to Portland or to PSU. Before accepting a teaching position at Stockton State University in New Jersey last fall, he taught Economics and Black Studies at PSU in 1981 and 1982. Aside from teaching, Dr. Lakew is writing several papers.

Dr. Williams said Afro-American communication is the language of the black community. Sometimes called "black dialogue."

"One of the things I teach in the class room," he said, "is that language is not just communication. It's culture."

It's "extremely" important to keep the black dialogue, because if

the language goes, the culture goes, he said. "The black dialogue is a systematic language like any other language... It has rules of grammar and rules of pronunciation. It is historically derived from a large number of African levels of the educational process. Adding that, "Language is not only a culture identity, it's a tool of the white power structure."

One of Dr. Williams' goals is to establish a national language policy for black people. His rationale is that there are bilingual programs for other people. For instance, Spanish. "We need to teach black kids to separate standard English from the African American language (black dialect)," he said. "Brothers and sisters don't be working together unless they know who they is," is an

example of black language.

Professor Millner, brother of Darrell Millner, head of PSU's Black Studies department, examines "racism in its classic forms: slave era, sharecropping era, ghetto era, and the new forms of racism as they appear in the media, as they function in the government, and other social institutions."

He contends that we have to recognize the "new forms" of racism. "The forms of racism in the media," he said, "is in many cases a rerun of what appeared as early as 1915." Citing a study done at Michigan State University, he said, "Black kids watch TV 20 percent more than white kids of comparable ages." Adding that, "we have to spend more time with our kids and if we can't, we have to offer them alternatives; not basketball, that's also a dead end," he said. "There is a daily struggle to maintain one's sense of dignity in a Deep South state like Mississippi."

Concerning his book about the late Martin Luther King's involvement in the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott, he said, he wants to "be realistic and objective." Maintaining that "no social movement is based on one personality."

"The myth," he said, "is that Martin Luther King, Jr. was the principal and early leader (of the bus boycott). The reality is that a group of grassroots leaders: E.D. Nixon, Jo Ann Robinson and Reverend J.H. Cherry were the real leaders in the boycott. They had been working for change in Montgomery for decades before King arrived on the scene," he said. "King's contribution was important but it was just one part of an elaborate process."

Dr. Lakew's visit brings bitter-sweet memories. "I miss this area and old friends but," he said, as he recalled that it was the fear of losing his position to budget cuts which prompted him to seek employment elsewhere. Well-versed in the field of Economics, he is teaching Comparative Economics, Marxian Economics and African Economic History.

Reagan boosts aid to Africa

The Reagan administration has quietly moved to double its military aid to sub-Saharan African countries. Assistant Secretary of State Chester A. Crocker, head of the African Bureau, said military aid now makes up about 20 percent of the aid to the area.

In 1980, military aid to the nations of the sub-Saharan totaled \$78 million compared to an administration request for \$201 million for 1984. Economic aid increased from \$694 million to \$965 million.

The administration is selective with its aid. The greatest benefactors have been big pro-Western nations such as Sudan, Kenya, Somalia and Liberia. In addition, the U.S. has tripled economic aid to Zimbabwe from \$24.7 million in 1980 to \$75 million in 1984. However, aid to Tanzania, headed by Julius Nyerere, has fallen from \$28 million to \$14 million.

The stated reason for the military build-up is "Soviet Union, Cuban and Libyan involvement in the region." There are an estimated 20,000 Cuban troops in Angola, where they are helping protect that government from South African in-

ursion, and Cuban military personnel in Ethiopia, where they have been since the 1970's. Libya supports the recently overthrown government of Chad, now represented by a guerrilla movement, and the Polisario independence movement which claims western Sahara against Morocco.

The Congressional Black Caucus has criticized the "militarization of our approach to African assistance" but its main concern is the administration's policy in South Africa.

The administration policy — called "constructive engagement" — has brought closer diplomatic ties with South Africa. It is based on the idea that a closer relationship with the U.S. will inspire South Africa to reform its apartheid policy, cease harassment of neighbor states, and end its occupation of Namibia.

Reagan has increased the number of U.S. military attaches in South Africa; provided visas to South African military and intelligence personnel to visit this country; permitted sale of a computer that has potential for nuclear-related equipment; and allows U.S. companies to broker sale of nuclear fuel, and

loosened controls on sales of police-related items such as electric-shock batons. The U.S. also used its veto to block United Nations resolutions condemning South Africa.

The administration is fighting a bill that is to come before the House of Representatives in July that would bar the U.S. from voting in favor of a \$1 billion International Monetary Fund loan to South Africa.

Namibia continues to be the main source of conflict. The U.S. and South Africa are thwarting the United Nations resolution that South Africa withdraw and allow Namibia to become an independent nation. At U.S. suggestion, South Africa has refused to withdraw unless Cuban troops leave Angola. Angola's rejection of this option is supported by the Organization of African Unity and other African nations and organizations.

Failing in its attempt to force Angola to give up Cuban aid in the face of repeated South African invasions and a South African supported rebel movement, the U.S. is arming its allies.

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