

# METROPOLITAN

## Traditional African ballet tells story

by Lanita Duke

Grassroot News, N.W.—In a world of contrived, high-gloss choreography, enters the traditional talents of the Northwest Afrikan American Ballet.

Under the direction of master drummer Bruce Smith this fifteen-piece dance troupe is gearing up for a performance/celebration to mark its first anniversary.

Smith said their steps are more than movements. "The steps that we make are thousands of years old. They are gestures for a story."

One of the stories the N.W. Afrikan/American Ballet will perform is an all-male piece called "Lenjon." It is a traditional dance done by young men in West Africa to symbolize their strength after they are circumcised.

Smith added, "The dances we're doing are the popular dances people are doing in clubs and at parties. But we are doing the same dance in its original form—in the raw."

Smith said he believed the traditional dimension of the Afrikan/American Ballet gives the group a certain kind of freshness. "This



The Northwest Afrikan/American Ballet will perform traditional music and dances at Jefferson High next Saturday night. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

type of dance is unique, energetic and spiritual." He said he spearheaded the formation of the group to help build a major dance company in the Pacific Northwest.

"We want to destroy the stereo-

type that Afrikan music is just drums. We are incorporating local musicians who play traditional instruments like the wood flute and the balafon—the original xylophone. They both produce a warm,

rich sound."

Smith creates his rhythm on the D'jembe drum. "The very construction of the D'jembe drum is different from the Lagingo drums. The congo drum is made from the skin of a baby calf; it is thick and produces a different sound. The D'jembe drum is made from goat skins and is thinner. It produces a more transparent, high-pitched sound."

He called the beat created by the D'jembe drum "infectious."

The Northwest Afrikan/American Ballet will commemorate its first year by performing next Saturday, December 17th, at Jefferson High School. Smith wants the community to come and watch their musical history unfold on the stage.

"We are not just into music but staging as well. It is not just a theatrical thing. We are going behind the theatrical lighting. We will recreate the sun, moon, stars and sky. In Afrika we worship those elements and they are a strong part of our existence."

Smith is dedicating the performance to his father, Cleophus Smith, Sr., who died December 1st, 1983.

## NAACP to elect Board members

The Portland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will meet on the second Sunday of December instead of the third Sunday due to the holiday. The meeting will be held December 11th at 4:00 p.m., at the Allen Temple CME, 4326 N.E. 8th Avenue. The public is always welcome.

The annual election of Board Members for National NAACP will be on the agenda. The nominee for the West Coast Region NAACP is Nathaniel Colley, selected by the Regional Caucus at the Convention in New Orleans last summer. Colley is being challenged by a woman attorney from Los Angeles who is said to be a supporter of Margaret Bush Wilson. When Mrs. Wilson was elected in 1976 she defeated

Colley for the Chair by just one vote. The Branch will also vote for eight at-large members of the National Board.

Mrs. Wilson, who challenged Benjamin Hooks for leadership, and was defeated by the Board this summer, says she will run for the Board, but not for the Chairmanship. Recently she attributed her troubles to "sexism" on the part of the National Board. Some members say the reason that more women are not on the National Board is more likely the economy than discrimination, one of the Branch's long-time members believes. NAACP pays the way for Board members to only one National Board meeting—the annual meeting in January. All the rest must be paid for by the Board Member, or by their Branch if the Branch

can afford it, and not many Branches can. "As things go in the U.S., more men than women can afford this expense. In actuality, not many women run for the position, and economics is the probable reason."

The Branch has received its annual supply of Freedom Seals and the Grandmother-of-the-Year contest is under way. Mrs. Hazel G. Hays, President, has appointed Geri Ward as Seal Chairman. Mrs. Ward is First Vice President of the Branch. There will be awards of substantial worth awarded to the

top Grandmothers in seal sales. Seals may be obtained from any of the Grandmothers at the various churches. For information call the NAACP office—afternoons only—at 284-7722 or get in touch with either Mrs. Harrell Paris, Mount Olivet Baptist Church; Mrs. Ruthie Bryant, Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church; or Vivian Richardson, Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church.

Anyone who is over 17 is eligible to vote if they have been a branch member for 30 days prior to December 11th.

## Demos back bus strike

The Multnomah County Democratic Central Committee, at its December 1st meeting, voted to go on record in support of the nationwide Greyhound strike, involving 12,700 drivers, mechanics, ticket takers and other workers, members of the AFL-CIO Amalgamated Transit Union, and join the call by the national AFL-CIO for a boycott of Greyhound bus and parcel service.

Democrats are invited to join in Greyhound picketing in the name of the Multnomah County Democratic Central Committee.

In light of Greyhound's current employment practices, the Central Committee recommended that further consideration be given to the decision to use public funds for the construction of a new Greyhound terminal in Portland.

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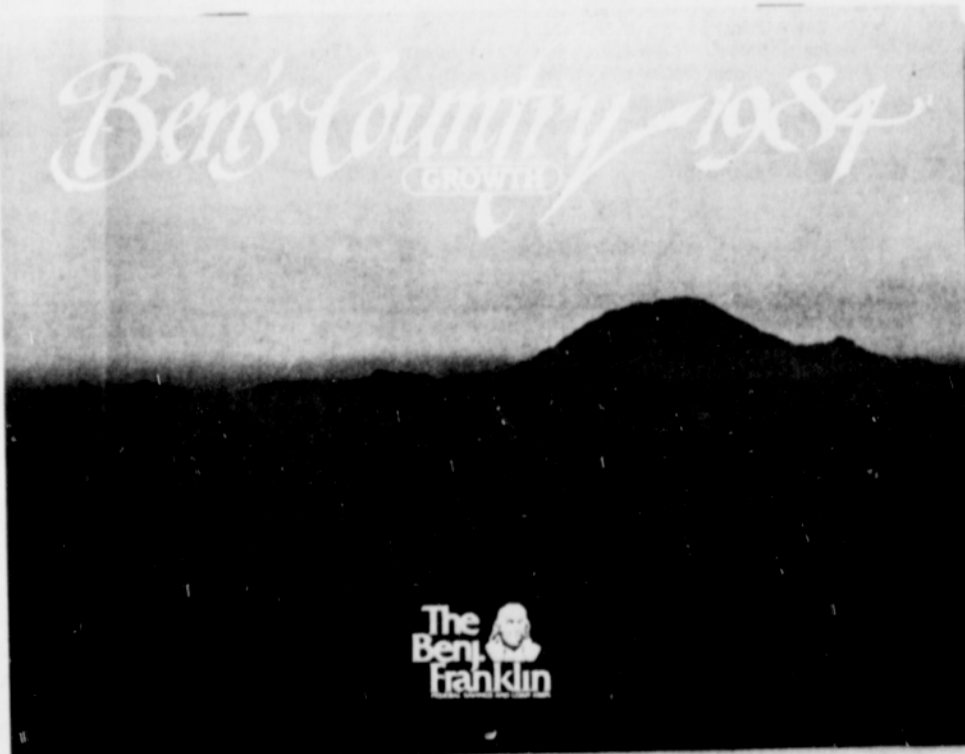
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### Low Income Energy Assistance Program

**Who is eligible:**

Eligibility varies depending on household income. You must apply and have proof of all household income. You must be within 125% of the poverty guidelines

Medical cost can be deducted before determining household income. Determining household income—example: A one-person household with an income under \$6,075 could be eligible. Another example would be a household of four would need to have an income under \$12,375 to be eligible.

**What do you need to apply for this help:**

You must provide proof of all household income during the last 90 days or 12 months. You must also provide a current electric bill and heating bill from your present address, and proof of paid medical insurance premiums and paid medical bills over the last 12 months. Proof of Social Security numbers for all members of household over 18 years of age.

**Who do I contact:**

For further information, contact Urban League Energy Assistance Project at one of the following locations:

<b>Urban League Senior Center</b> 4128 N.E. Union Portland, OR 97211 WEEKDAYS 288-8338	<b>Hollywood Senior Center</b> 1820 N.E. 40th Ave. Portland, OR 97212 WEEKDAYS 288-8303
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**Senior Citizens (age 60 or over only):**

<b>Urban League Field Office</b> 5329 N.E. Union, Room 218 Portland, OR 97211 (503) 249-5808	<b>State Community Service Program</b> 313 Public Service Bldg Salem, OR 97310
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**Appointment (not seniors):**

Scheduled appointments will be Monday thru Thursday, 9:15 to 11:30 a.m., and 1:15 to 3:45 p.m.