

METROPOLITAN

Forum discusses mass media

by Lanita Duke

Grassroot News, N.W.—Portland's mass media was charged with insensitivity and creating negative images and they responded with an open door policy of "reach out and let us know."

This is the dialogue that occurred Saturday, January 21st, at the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs morning forum entitled, "Press: Both electronic and print coverage of political activities of Oregon's Black community."

The panelists represented the full circle of media—print, visual and radio. They were: William A. Hilliard, Executive Editor of *The Oregonian*; Jeb Blandine, Editor and Oregon Newspaper Publishing Association's Treasurer; Art Alexander, Black Channel Coordinator, Rogers Cable Systems; Ray Watson, General Manager, KXL Radio; Carolyn Leonard, OABA Vice-President; Martin Brantley, General Manager, KPTV-12; Paul Sands, News Manager, KGW-TV 8; and A.R. (Skip) Collier, Western Region Manager, Professional Training Systems.

Although the coverage of political activities in Oregon's Black community was advertised as a premise for discussion, the overriding concern



Forum on the media included: Lanita Duke, *News-Register*; Carolyn Leonard, OABA; Art Alexander, Rogers Cable Systems. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

of those present was the lack of knowledgeable reporters and Afro-American reporters, and the insensitive way the media used its image making power.

One observer said, "When I first

moved to Salem, one youngster expected my daughter to be illiterate, a prostitute, and for us [parents] to be on welfare. These were assumptions they developed because the only contact they had with Black people was what they saw on T.V. and read in the newspapers."

Leonard said, "People's perceptions of what you ought to be override what they see. The kinds of coverage we get in the media superimposes the value of the superstructure onto a given people."

The example Leonard gave was the belief that all Black people are on welfare. "If you do a story about welfare, you hunt out the first Black woman you see on the streets and ask her, 'How will this affect you?'"

Alexander wants a requirement written into a reporter's job description that they must know the history of Asian-, Afro- and Hispanic Americans.

He also stated, "There appears to be a revolving door among Black reporters. They seem to only rise so far and after a point they move on to another market."

Hilliard said his paper lost two Black reporters who left for financial reasons or wanted a bigger market. He also said he believed *The Oregonian* never would intentionally project a negative image of Blacks. "If you perceive that just let us know."

KXL's Watson said his station covers all press conferences called by the Black United Front. "KXL was at the forefront of the coverage of the 7-Up company refusing to hire Blacks. The fact that they planned to hire no Blacks was newsworthy and we got on and stayed on the story until it was resolved."

Collier urged the audience to write letters to the editors of various media, they, in turn, promised to respond.



Dr. Adolphus Turkson, professor of African and Afro-American music, and Professor Damari Wakungu, who teaches Swahili, discuss PSU Black Studies Program. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

PSU Black Studies faces new threats

by Nathaniel Scott

Portland State University's 15-member University committee, re-focusing recommendation to Joseph C. Blumel, president, according to Darrell Millner, Chairman of the Black Studies Department, "very thinly conceals the insinuation that the Department [Black Studies] should be dismantled."

The report, made public January 19th, recommends among other things that the Black Studies Department be studied for reorganization, "including possible incorporation into another administrative area."

What is the fate of the Black Studies Department? And is there an attempt to rid the state of Black Studies in the higher institutional setting?

Professor Damari Wakungu, Black Studies Department, is requesting "\$1,000 for Swahili language courses" at PSU.

Wakungu has been a faculty member since academic year 1978-79. She said during that time she has taught Swahili, sometimes on a voluntary basis, "with hopes the University would pick up the course." It didn't.

Millner said the Foreign Language Department never did pay for Swahili courses—Black Studies did, and when the budget crunch hit the Department last academic year, "Swahili was one of a number of programs we had to sacrifice."

Wakungu's frustration borders on anger. Why? In part, because she teaches Swahili at Tubman Middle School, and also, because of the natural progression of things. She said, "It [Swahili] should be offered in the University."

Budget cutting problems and the lack of funding by discipline area, coupled with "reorganization" rec-

ommendations, cast dark shadows over the strides being made by the Black Studies Department.

Dr. Adolphus Turkson provides an example of services the Black Studies Department is providing for the academic community.

Dr. Turkson has been a PSU faculty member since 1981. His main area of teaching is African and Afro-American Music. But of equal importance, it would seem, is his writing ability: music and academic papers.

Since coming to PSU, Dr. Turkson has presented in excess of six scholarly papers. His latest, a paper on the Cultural Element in Black Studies—what Black Studies stands for—will be presented to the Third Annual Conference of the National Council for Black Studies Pacific Northwest Region, February 2nd, 3rd and 4th, at Eastern Washington University, Cheney, Washington.

Dr. Turkson's musical compositions are of the classical variety. "Some have very strong African elements in their rhythm and melody elements," he said. Blacks must not neglect their culture; their music, drama and art. If Blacks neglect those elements, "there is nothing to say what Black Studies is all about." He added that Black art, drama and music should be the basis of all Black Studies. "Those elements one might consider the culture of people."

Regarding Black Studies at PSU, the next logical question is, what happens next? Darrell Millner's answer is to take it to the top. He said, "This report is to the president [Blumel] and doesn't represent University policy. Secondly, the report stopped short of making an explicit recommendation, but the language the report used to explain the study of the Department very thinly conceals the insinuation that the Department be dismantled."

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