

Black Nicaraguan leader freed by contras

by Robert Lothian

Ray Hooker, a popular Black leader and candidate for Nicaragua's National Assembly, was freed earlier this month after two months as a captive of CIA-backed contras.

Hooker, who is the government's liaison to the health and education ministries from Zelaya Province, has been instrumental in improving conditions for the Black and Indian minorities who live in the province's Atlantic Coast region.

Contras kidnapped Hooker Sept. 5th when he was on a campaign trip

to a remote area. Elections officials and candidates were targeted by contras trying to disrupt Nicaragua's elections. Observers say Hooker was kidnapped because of his ability to negotiate between minorities and the Sandinistas.

Hooker received a Master's in history from Ohio University. He taught at the American School in Managua and was the first director of the Nicaraguan Institute for the Atlantic Coast.

A nationwide campaign in the U.S. to pressure Congress for

Hooker's release included Jesse Jackson, who was accompanied by Hooker during his tour of Nicaragua in July. "I call on the Reagan Administration to investigate this act and to insist on the bringing to justice of those responsible," said Jackson on Sept. 10th. "Ultimately, the U.S. must bear some responsibility for this action, as these forces could not exist without our support. We cannot maintain our moral self-respect while we allow and even support such groups that engage in such actions. We must allow the Nicaraguan people to choose their own course."

A Northeast Portland social worker, Nancy Webster, talked with Hooker in July during a visit to Bluefields, the largest town on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast.

She described a soft-spoken man with a perfect command of English. Hooker was a Sandinista supporter, said Webster, and he was working hard against almost insurmountable odds to make sure that the benefits of the revolution came to the poorest and most exploited segment of Nicaragua's population.

Over 70,000 Indians and 30,000 Black Creoles live in the coast region, which is characterized by extreme poverty, bad water, sickness, lack of education, and few newspapers or telephones. A large part of the Indian population has had to relocate due to the contra war.

Webster quoted Hooker in saying that "With the revolution, for the first time people had a government that cared for their needs, whose goal was to provide education, health care and food." There were only private schools before the re-

olution, accessible to peasants only through hard-to-obtain scholarships, according to Hooker. Now education and health care are free and accessible to all, he said.

They talked about his ideas for a Black cultural center, including the desperate need for more books written in English, the language brought to the coast by English colonialists. "He also mentioned how Atlanta, Georgia, had talked about setting up a sister-city project," said Webster.

Hooker told her that the Nicaraguans were able to drive the contras back, but that the war was exacting a high price in the Sandinista government's ability to deliver social services. "With tears in his eyes, he described a teacher friend in a rural area who was killed by the contras," she said.

The Atlantic Coast has a long history of racist neglect. Blacks first came to the region in the 1600s as slaves or escapees from slavery. Some migrated later from Jamaica to work for colonial companies.

Blacks and Indians have distrusted whatever government ruled from Managua, and that distrust carried over into their feelings for the Sandinistas, who came in after the revolution with a maximum of zeal and a minimum of sensitivity.

Ray Hooker can mediate, according to Webster. "He was able to say that mistakes had been made, but that the Sandinistas were able to change and work with what was happening," she said.

"What impressed me about Ray Hooker," said Webster, "was that he was working to insure that the needs of the community were met. This man was really working to improve the quality of life for poor people."

Portland NAACP nominates candidates for office

At its general meeting Sunday, November 18, at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, the Portland Branch NAACP received the report of its Nominating Committee and elected a Supervisory Committee for the Branch biennial election on December 9 at Hughes Memorial Church, 111 N.E. Failing.

Mr. Thomas R. Vickers, chairman of the nominating committee, announced the following nominees:

Ora L. Nunley is the Branch nominee for President. Mrs. Nunley has been active for many years with the Branch Youth Group, and currently is Youth Group representative for the Pacific Northwest Area NAACP.

Harvey Rice is nominee for First Vice President; Bobbie Nunn, present Legal Redress Chair, for Secretary-C. C. McCorvey, present Treasurer, renominated. The nominating committee had not found a second vice-president by the time the meeting convened and three people were nominated from the floor. This will be the only contest this year. Nominees

for second vice president are Robert Phillips, Bobbie Gary and Dr. Clarence Pruitt. Nominees for the Branch Executive Committee are Carrie Cannon, U. P. Cannon, Janet Clemmer, L. C. Ellison, Hazel G. Hays, Lucious Hicks, John H. Jackson, Lorna Marple, Joy Hicks, Isaac Payne, Robert Phillips, Clarence Pruitt, Geri Ward, Harry Ward, Betty White, Gail Washington, Bobbie Gary, Thomas R. Vickers.

The Election Supervisory Committee of five were elected, and chose Lucious Hicks as Chair.

The Branch heard from City Commissioner Candidate Herbert L. Cawthorne and will hear from Richard Bogle, the other candidate for Commissioner at the Branch Annual meeting and election on December 9 at Hughes Memorial Church. The public is invited.

Please note that the Branch meeting in December has been set on the second Sunday, rather than the usual third Sunday.

DePriest hosts benefit for Black Education Center

The Third Annual Wine and Cheese Benefit for the Black Educational Center School will be hosted by Oregon Symphony Conductor James DePriest and Mrs. Ginette DePriest, and Mr. and Mrs. Wilson C. Walker. The benefit is scheduled for Friday, December 7, 1984 from 7 to 10 p.m. at 3832 N. Interstate Ave. Proceeds will help supply needed funds for the culturally unique learning center for children ages 5 to 9. The school is located at 4919 NE 17th Ave.

The Center was started on a part-time basis in May of 1970 and in September of 1974 the school began operating on a full time basis. The basic curriculum now includes: mathematics, computer, language, writing, history, reading, science, geography, foreign language, art, and creative

movement. Nutritional education and parental involvement are stressed, also. Students score remarkably well on achievement tests after completing the school's five year program.

For the past 14 years the Black Educational Center has been a resource center in the Northwest for students, parents, teachers and for citizens interested in the numerous achievements of African-Americans and the international African community.

Tickets for this event may be purchased for \$15.00 at the Talking Drum Bookstore, 1634 NE Alberta St., or from the school by calling 284-9552. Guests will have an opportunity to meet Mr. and Mrs. DePriest and the Center's current director and co-founder, Joyce Harris.

King Improvement Assn. seeks new officers

The King Improvement Association will be holding their election of officers for 1985 on Tuesday, November 27, 1984, at the Northeast Neighborhood Office, 4815 N.E. 7th Ave. The King Improvement Association is seeking interested citizens who would like to participate in their neighborhood association, either as a

member of the association or as an officer and/or member of the Executive Committee.

Nominations are open and will be taken from the floor at the meeting.

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