

Voter turnout high in new Black district

by Lanita Duke

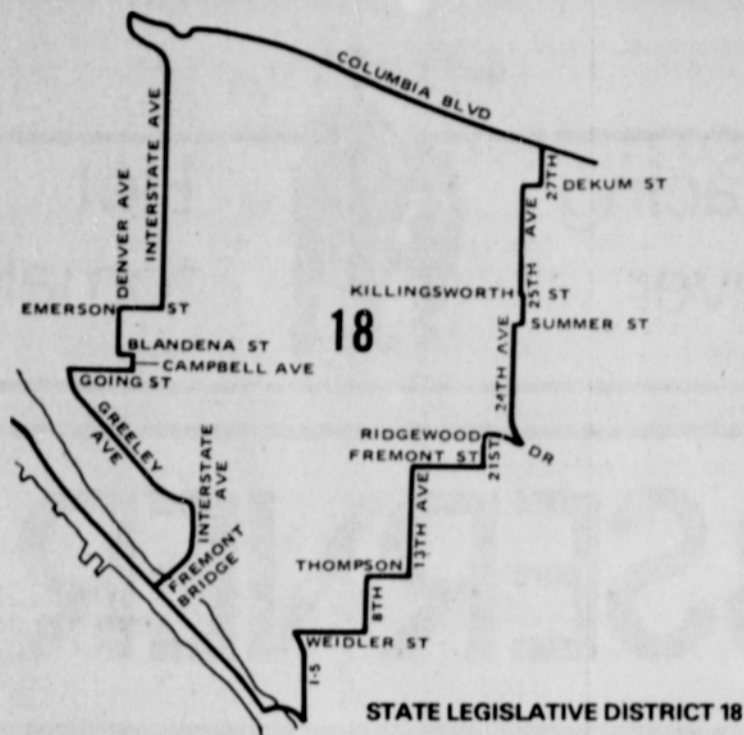
GRASSROOT NEWS, N.W.—A legislative district with one of the highest voter turnouts just happens to be one of Oregon's newest — District 18.

In the special election for City Commissioner, Postion 4, six out of 28 precincts went for candidate Dick Bogle. The rest voted for Herb Cawthorne. But city-wide, the majority of the precincts rallied behind Bogle. While the city-wide voter turnout edged toward 24 percent, 13 precincts in District 18 had voter turnout between 25 and 32 percent.

In the primary election (May 15, 1984) for mayor, Bud Clark won in all 28 precincts with voter turnout between 40 and 62 percent. Robert Phillips, president of the Black Social Workers of Oregon, designed and fought for the district.

"We made the difference in the mayoral race. We have come a long way and we are more active as voters. District 18 has received several visits by politicians who in the past ignored the district," he added.

Phillips said the purpose of drawing a district with a heavy concentration of Afro-American voters was to give them a voice in the legislature. "We wanted to ensure proper representation and accountability. In the past, this was not the case. Now,



STATE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT 18

it is difficult to find someone in District 18 who is not aware of who their representative is."

Ronnie Herndon, co-chair of the Black United Front and an unpledged delegate for Jesse Jackson, said prior to redistricting the Albina area had one of the lowest voter turnouts. "Now, we have one of the highest. It

shows a tremendous amount of political maturity."

Herndon questioned the selection of Dick Bogle as City Commissioner. "Most of Portland felt Jordan's seat was a Black one. The Black community (District 18) felt Cawthorne was more qualified. But the City made their decision based on television ex-

posure. And that is why Reagan is in the White House and Bogle is on the Council," he said.

Herndon also criticized Mayor Clark's staff composition. "There is no excuse in 1985 not to have an Afro-American on staff. He was elected because of Black support and on Jesse Jackson's coattails. In terms of hiring, we are getting the same message we got from Ivancie's administration."

Ross Danielson, a former precinct captain, said District 18 cannot be taken for granted because it has delivered the most votes. "We have good rank and file involvement with a unit of purpose," he added.

Gail Washington, a precinct person who observed the redistricting process, predicted the election of a white candidate in 1982 because too many Blacks ran for the seat. She added, "I'm delighted to know that trend was reversed. We are really and truly becoming politically aware. We are not helpless. People now understand that they can make change."

Margaret Carter will represent District 18 as the first Afro-American female in the Legislature. "The voting pattern in District 18 is behind people who are involved in the community. Voters want an elected official who will go to bat for them."

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Volunteers learn about South Africa

by Robert Lothian

Peace Corps veterans from the Portland area were filled in on South Africa Sunday.

Mark Cheatham, of Portlanders Organized for Southern Africa Freedom, addressed about 20 ex-Peace Corps volunteers at a meeting of Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Oregon. They were gathered at the Willamette Center downtown.

Marie Hermanson, founder and former chairwoman of the Peace

profit aid groups. "It was that kind of work which propelled me to join POSAF," he said.

Cheatham found "a resurgence of racism" in the U.S. when he returned. The racism was evident in racial stereotyping in TV and in attitudes of whites on the street, he said. One woman he tried to talk to recently outside the South African consulate in Portland, for instance, said Cheatham, told him that Africans "can't even feed themselves," let alone govern a coun-

try. When he offered other information, "I don't care" was all he got in response, he said.

"I think it's real important to break through the 'desire not to know' that people have," said Cheatham. "Racism in the U.S. and South Africa are two examples of the same phenomenon."

In South Africa, he told the Peace Corps veterans, Blacks representing over 80 percent of the population have been restricted to reservations that amount to about 13 percent of the total land, "land that is absolutely barren," he said. But whites who make

up only about 16 percent of the population own 86 percent of the land. "They control 10 percent of the economy — every productive resource is owned by whites. And white wages are five times that of Blacks."

"Everybody has servants among the whites. If you are white it's practically a crime to be poor. Whites reap tremendous benefits from this system," a system that is driven by the exploitation of Black labor, he said.

Another essential prop for the apartheid America is its backyard, so does South Africa consider the Black-ruled states of Mozambique, Botswana, Angola, and Zambia to be its backyard, not hesitating to invade across their borders in the interest of "national security."

Cheatham then outlined for the Peace Corps people the three main U.S. campaigns to pressure the South African government: divestment, removing South African consuls, and banning the sale of kruggerands. "It worries the South Africans greatly that Americans are talking about cutting economic ties with South Africa," he said.

One of the ex-Peace Corps volunteers listening was Stewart Bentley from Portland. He spent two years in Botswana developing solar energy projects. Botswana, an independent country the size of Texas with a population of one million, borders South Africa to the north. "There was always a possibility of South Africa coming across the border," under the guise of hunting down anti-apartheid guerrillas, said Bentley.

Botswana is dependent on South Africa economically and in other ways, he said. "Everything that was manufactured, fruits, vegetables, everything like that came out of South Africa."

Bentley said that bringing small solar hot water projects to rural villages and solar electric systems to health clinics left him with a sense of satisfaction, although the program he worked on had some bugs. "I liked working there," he said. "The people were very friendly toward Americans."



Mark Cheatham from Portlanders Organized for South African Freedom addresses a group of approximately 20 ex-Peace Corps volunteers. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Corps group, said about half of all Peace Corps veterans served in Africa, including about 200 from Portland. Hermanson, who has been picketing outside Portland's South African consulate on Wednesdays and Fridays, said the invitation to POSAF was extended so her group could become better informed. "Our primary purpose right now is to educate ourselves," she said. Hermanson served with the Peace Corps in the African country of Cameroon.

Although not a Peace Corps volunteer, Cheatham said he did spend five years in Kenya working with non-

profit aid groups. "It was that kind of work which propelled me to join POSAF," he said.

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Abdirahman A. Hassan, president of the Association of African Students at P.S.U.; Dr. William Little, P.S.U. professor and Omar Issahak (far right) are briefed by attorneys prior to their attempt to see Calvin Van Pelt, Honorary Consul to South Africa. As with previous attempts, the trio was arrested and cited for trespass. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

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