

# A look at Portland's Black educators

A review of some of the educational leaders in the Portland School District by Lanita Duke, *Grassroot News, N.W.*, with photography by Richard J. Brown.

## Herman Washington

Herman Washington is the conductor of the educational experience at Harriet Tubman Middle School. Currently housed on the Monroe campus site, Harriet Tubman was founded in 1981 as part of the District's desegregation efforts which called for a middle school in Northeast Portland to serve the Black community.

"We are a magnet middle school with a dual purpose," Washington explained. "To provide an excellent educational opportunity as well as fostering integration."

Washington said his aims are "to

provide students with a good foundation to go on to high school. We start with students at their ability level and offer them as much and as varied a curriculum as a student requests and has a need for."

As a magnet school, Tubman has a variety of informal and formal educational offerings. "An education should help every person to be the best person he or she can be. You move in the world according to your education and we prepare our students' minds to give them access to their goals," Washington added.

What course has Washington plotted to lead his students to the promised land of quality education? "We gather the best teachers to work with students to develop their unique potentials. Students are people who have all sorts of abilities which need help in shaping, developing and refining. We teach them to love and respect themselves and to know who they are and where they come from. We teach our students this: We serve ourselves best when we serve others," Washington concluded.



HERMAN WASHINGTON



PATRICIA RYAN

## Patricia Ryan

Patricia Ryan is principal of Lane Elementary School, located in outer Southeast Portland. "It's an older neighborhood, but unlike other older neighborhoods, there is no rallying point where the community can congregate."

Ryan said residents of Lane are between a rock and a hard place. "The large park next door is not cared for by the City or Multnomah County. Also, many of the services you take for granted in the city do not exist here. So, in a lot of ways, residents of Lane are just as disfranchised as those in Albina."

Ryan has served as a principal for eight years in every part of the city except Northwest. Wherever she goes, Ryan carries this educational philosophy: "Given the opportunity, all children can learn," she explains.

She said the trick is to find the right balance between curriculum knowledge and non-curriculum kinds of problems. "In the city we have a large number of students with non-curricular kinds of needs and we as a school are supposed to concentrate on the curricular."

She advises teachers not to lower their expectations because of the non-curricular events that affect children. "Aim for getting children at grade level or beyond."

## Nathan Jones

A student of Jefferson High School has returned as principal. Nathan Jones is entering his third year as principal and in three short years, Jefferson's image has improved and their student body is growing.

Jones said his goal is to provide students with a foundation to either pursue a higher education or to go off into the world of work. "When they finish here we want to have them ready."

Jones indicated that his education approach instills in the student a desire to learn. "The desire for education comes from within. If a student does not want to learn, then he or she can't be taught."

Through a variety of programs, Jefferson is developing an outstanding reputation in performing arts. This reputation has built the school up in the eyes of the students, community and parents.

Jones wants students at Jefferson motivated to achieve even after they finish high school. One element of this motivation is Project Pride. "It started with the freshman class as an image awareness program, and later it was suggested that this same positiveness spread throughout the school. Other than providing an education we want to motivate kids to build positive images for themselves and other students. Those ingredients are just as important as a formal education. You can't have one without the other," Jones concluded.



NATHAN JONES

## Pioneer to Poverty



Matthew Alexander Henson

The story of Columbus, who made the ambitious crossing of the Atlantic to the West Indies and yet died a poor man, unrecognized, is no less sad than that of Mathew Alexander Henson.

He was the first person to reach the North Pole on the Arctic Continent. He was a member of the Peary mission — the last polar expedition in 1909 — and was sent ahead of the main party, reaching the North Pole some 45 minutes ahead of Peary.

The two explorers planted the symbolic flags together and celebrated the historic moment. Some 46 years later when Henson died he was living in Harlem on a pension of \$1,020 a year.

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