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Corinto Mayor enjoys his Portland visit



Dr. Edward Ward, Portland dentist, is introduced to Corinto Mayor Francisco Tapia Mata by Reymundo Marin at a reception held Friday at the Urban League. Tapia Mata practiced dentistry in Corinto

prior to the Revolution, at which time he became the Mayor of Corinto. He thought the job of Mayor was only for one year; that was six years ago.

Photo: Richard Brown

by Robert Lothian

Mayor Francisco Tapia Mata of Corinto, Nicaragua finished his whirlwind tour of Portland on a high note.

At an Urban League reception Friday at Urban Plaza, Tapia Mata extended warm greetings from Portland's Nicaraguan sister city to members of the Black, Native American and Latin communities. He described Nicaragua's autonomy program for minorities, he discussed Corinto's urban problems, and he made friends by responding with composure to some difficult questions.

It was the mayor's last public appearance in a tour which gave him a good introduction to Portland. His packed schedule included meetings with students, members of the Latin community, city officials, the City Club, news interviews, visits to port facilities, Baloney Joe's, the Black Educational Center, and a scenic tour

up the Columbia Gorge.

At the Urban League gathering, Tapia Mata spoke of the problems, but also of the liberty that minorities have in the U.S. "That same liberty is what we demand from the U.S.," he said. Tapia Mata repeated his primary message to Portlanders: The main way they can help Nicaragua is to pressure the U.S. government to cut off aid to the contras.

The CIA-backed counterrevolutionaries would fail immediately without that support, according to Tapia Mata. He said that people-to-people programs like the Sister City Project "will give the answers that politics has been unable to find."

The mayor received loud applause with his answer to a question about South Africa. "We are in complete solidarity with the struggle of the people of South Africa," he said. The Reagan administration continues to support South Africa's government

because of the exploitative interests of U.S. corporations in gold, diamonds and uranium, said Tapia Mata. "Some of you have felt this in your own flesh," he said.

Native American poet Ed Edmo asked the mayor whether Indians in Nicaragua are free to "dance and sing" and keep their culture alive. Tapia Mata responded affirmatively by explaining Nicaragua's new autonomy law, being considered now, which guarantees minority rights. He said some Moskitu Indians had been moved away from the war zones to special camps for their own protection. Those who want to return to their homes can now do so with government assistance, he said.

Maria Marin of Mujeres de Oregon asked if women's lives had improved in Nicaragua. The mayor answered by describing AMNLAE, the Nicaraguan national women's organization, which is involved in all

aspects of life and which sends representatives to the National Council.

The mayor received loud applause again when he reported that health care and education from the first grade through college are free.

Corinto has almost solved its malaria problem, the city is installing a new sewage system, and families that live close to oil tanks that could be attacked are being relocated, he said. The town's prostitution problem he added, is being reduced through a West German-funded project to provide education and jobs for the prostitutes. "The main reason prostitution exists is an economic one," said Tapia Mata.

As mayor of Nicaragua's major port, which he described as the country's "throat," Tapia Mata said he is concerned with building up foreign trade that could bring jobs to the city. The U.S. trade embargo has hurt the port, it has caused increases in the prices of basic goods which are now scarce, and it keeps alive fears of invasion, he said.

Asked about what he thought of Portland, the mayor replied: "The best impressions I've had have been through contact with people such as yourselves." Tapia Mata spoke of the "happy moments" he shared with the group.

Urban League president Herb Cawthorne, on business in New York left a message with presidential assistant Pam Smith. "Please be assured that your visit is deeply appreciated. In many ways our missions are the same," Cawthorne said. "I can only hope that [the war] will end in the near future as people like you continue your courageous mission for peace."

The reception concluded with the presentation of a blanket with Native American patterns to the mayor by Faith Mayhew. Others present included Avel Gordley, Reymundo Marin and Nilak Butler. Translators were Gail High Pine and Roberto Berger.



RON HERNDON

Photo: Richard Brown

Hearndon will not run for Governor

by Jerry Garner

Ron Herndon, co-founder of the Portland Chapter Black United Front, will not run for Governor of Oregon. Herndon made the announcement last Friday during a press conference at King Neighborhood Center.

The reason for not entering the race was due to the lack of funding. Herndon stated that he has not been able to identify funding sources which would enable him to run a creditable campaign. It would take \$15,000 just to get a campaign started, said Herndon.

When asked what candidate will he support for governor, Herndon replied, "It is too early to endorse any candidate because the issues haven't been debated."

Herndon said the primary motive for his candidacy was to raise issues and put forth programs that would address the very serious problems facing thousands of Oregonians. These problems include unemployment, inadequate health care, lack of concern for small businesses, no commitment to child care, and the

virtual abandonment of the elderly and poor.

"My candidacy, above all, would have offered the conviction that everyday Oregonians working together could creatively develop common sense approaches to address these problems," said Herndon. Leaders in the State should focus their effort to promote small businesses in Oregon instead of businesses overseas stated Herndon.

The Rainbow Coalition will address the problems facing Oregonians by holding forums in communities all over the state, allowing citizens an opportunity to develop an agenda comprised of realistic programs and priorities.

"Until this agenda is developed, we are asking citizens not to support any candidate for governor," says Herndon. After citizens develop this agenda, support should only be given to the gubernatorial candidate willing to support it.

The Rainbow Coalition will have the first state-wide forum sometime in November to discuss these issues.

Tri-Met police officer protecting the public

by Jerry Garner

Tri-Met provides public transportation for three counties: Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah. With such a large area to serve, Tri-Met must provide security to insure the protection of its riders and property. This responsibility is the job of James E. Gray. Gray is one of the six transit police officers, and the only Black officer, on the Tri-Met police force.

Officer Gray has been working for the Transportation District for 11 years. Prior to joining Tri-Met, he worked as an Oregon State Trooper for five years, being the second Black trooper hired by the State of Oregon in 1969.

As a Transit Policeman, Gray is responsible for enforcing Tri-Met's police ordinances, which include responding to emergencies or general

complaints and routine bus riding assignments. Officer Gray must enforce state and local laws as they relate to Tri-Met property and facilities, which include responding to behavior that disrupts bus operations, personnel or customers and enforcement of the Oregon Traffic Code when appropriate.

Overall, Officer Gray has been in law enforcement for 15 years. When asked what is the most dangerous aspect of his job, Gray replied, it is when he responds to a domestic dispute between two spouses while on Tri-Met property, which may be on a bus or in the Transit Mall. Gray says that many such disputes occur on Tri-Met property. Such confrontations can become volatile unless the responding officers can calm down both parties. In most cases this can be accomplished by simply talking to the individuals, says Gray, and if this fails

the individuals must be arrested.

The most amusing incident Gray recalls is a time when he arrested a derelict for stealing a bus and driving it one block, and in the process wrecked six automobiles. Gray asked the suspect, "Why did you steal the bus." The man replied, "I just wanted to see if I could drive one of these damn things."

Gray enjoys his job as a law enforcement officer and encourages Blacks to apply for jobs in this field. Gray said that although Blacks have made gains in law enforcement, there is still discrimination against minorities in employment opportunities.

Blacks and other minorities who are interested in becoming a police officer should prepare themselves both mentally and physically for the job. Although the job can be stressful, it is rewarding when one is serving the public and providing a needed service.



Transit Officer James E. Gray

Photo: Richard Brown