

by Bob Lothian

"The Color Purple" portrays the heroic struggles of an oppressed black woman to find her identity and free herself, and it does not deserve the criticism it is getting, according to PSU professor Primus St. John.

St. John, a poet and Associate Professor of English and Black Studies at PSU, analyzed the movie and book during a talk at the Albina branch library.

St. John said some of the criticism directed against the movie is coming from men who feel threatened by it.

The portrayal of black men in the film, for example Mister, the violent and troubled husband of Celie, the main character, has been criticized as racist stereotyping.

Tony Brown has nothing good to say

To The Portland Public

The Board of Directors of the North Portland Nurse Practitioner Community Health Clinic (NPCHC) regretfully announces that the Clinic will have to close its doors on May 15, 1986 unless it has on hand at that time a minimum required \$8,000 to enable it to continue through June 1986. The Clinic is a non-profit tax exempt corporation of the State of Oregon, and is the only Black American run pediatric clinic in the state. Since 1980, it has provided primary pediatric care to young people in the Portland Metropolitan Area regardless of their ability to pay.



Myriah Taylor

This distasteful action has been made necessary because 95 percent of the patients presently served by the Clinic are from needy families that cannot afford to pay the cost of the medical attention they receive. Two years ago welfare recipients made up 95 percent of the patient load. However, the state's Medical Cost Containment Law, which went into effect at that time, did not continue to recognize Nurse Practitioner clinics as medical care providers. Consequently, the Clinic's welfare recipients were transferred to the eight big medical organizations to whom such recognition was extended.

Since that time, the Clinic has been funded by monies from foundations, grants, charities, and its own fundraising efforts. It is now essentially "between" grants. But, there is every reason to believe that its financial condition will stabilize when it is accepted as a member of the Portland Community Clinic Network, becomes a United Way organization, and finds a willing sponsor. Until that time, we have to rely on IMMEDIATE CONTRIBUTIONS from groups, foundations, and individuals to help us keep its doors open.

The Clinic has a clientele of over 575 cases drawn from every racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious background to be found in the State of Oregon. Some of the Clinic's strengths are its sympathetic awareness of and willingness to work within the cultural sensitivities of the patients it serves, and its ability to serve as a terrific role model for all ethnic minorities.

A measure of the Clinic's value lies in the fact that hospitals and other institutions rush to send their doctors and nurses in training to work in the Clinic to gain the valuable association with minority patients which the Clinic is so uniquely capable of providing.

If you believe, as we do, that the Clinic provides a service the Portland area cannot afford to be without, please send your tax exempt contributions to arrive before May 15, 1986. Please make checks payable to "North Portland NPCHC" and mail them to:

Nurse Practitioner Community Health Clinic
5311 N. Vancouver Ave.
Portland, OR 97217
Attn: Mariah A. Taylor, RN, CPNP (Director)

We urge you to call Mariah at (503) 284-5239 for answers to your questions and to offer her your spoken support. Thank you for supporting Portland's population of indigent families.

Respectfully
The NPCHC Board of Directors

Primus St. John on "The Color Purple"

about the film. He called it the most racist movie since D.W. Griffith's "Birth of a Nation," which included a scene on the Ku Klux Klan. Black characters in both films are portrayed as "darkies," according to Brown.

"Black male rage at this film was legitimate," he said about "The Color Purple."

Such criticism, St. John suggested, perhaps derives from "Color Purple" author Alice Walker treating a difficult and sensitive subject — a black woman's struggle for identity and freedom within her culture.

"I think the movie was threatening. I think we're dealing with a certain insecurity," St. John said.

The insecurity is perhaps most apparent in the criticism of the lesbian love

scene with Celie and Sug, the nightclub singer.

"I think that sexual love between women is very threatening to men," he said.

He described Walker's educational method as "shocking the audience into listening to something they haven't been listening to."

"Alice Walker is a very significant change agent. Alice Walker is a contrary, and a contrary through and through... she is able to pursue her seeing at all costs. She appears to be very wise."

St. John said he liked the film, and that he would like to see more like it.

"I found it a very moving experience. I found it powerful," he said.

Music and subtle use of color contri-



Primus St. John speaks on "Color Purple".

Photo by Richard J. Brown

buted to the movie's power, according to St. John.

The music was that important to the Afro-American experience — blues, work songs and church music.

"The music helped tell the story," he said.

As the story progressed, as Celie struggled in epic fashion to overcome the things holding her down, colors brightened, observed St. John.

That was true in the scene where Celie's children, who had been taken from her at an early age, return from Africa strong and beautiful. And as Mister leads a horse across the glowing, waving field of grass, perhaps signifying that he too, has grown.

St. John said he saw the movie "two or three times."

"At one time I saw the movie with a

number of black people in the audience, and I found it a very great experience at that time." During the scene where Celie threatens Mister with a razor, "I had the feeling that people were ready to run up on the screen and 'do' Mister right there," he said.

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