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In order to reduce the high number of minority students in special education programs, educators must change their attitudes, Asa

Hillard, Chief Desegregation Consultant for the District told the School District Board last week.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

DMAC Issues Report

by Jerry Garner

Last Thursday the Desegregation Monitoring Advisory Committee (DMAC) issued its end of the year report to the Portland School Board. The Committee reported that although the School District has made "meaningful effort" in meeting its goals for desegregation, the District must do more to increase the number of minority teachers and reduce the large numbers of minority group member students in special education programs.

"DMAC has identified an under-representation of ethnic teachers, administrators, and support staff in the special education area and would like to see the staff be more representative of the special education student population," said Halim Rahsaan.

Rahsaan, who is Chairman of DMAC Executive Committee, said there is a total of 426 special education teachers in the Portland School District; of that number, only 29 are ethnic teachers. Furthermore, he said there were only 12 ethnic administrators and support staff. The District has 193 special educa-

tion administrators and support staff.

Rahsaan told the Board that DMAC would like to see the District exercise "affirmative hiring" to increase the number of ethnic teachers, administrators, and support staff to work with the high percentage of children of color in the special education program.

Asa Hillard, Chief Desegregation Consultant for the District, recommended that the School Board restrict its recruitment efforts to the local area. This would place the resources thus saved into coaching and cognitive skills training for potential local teacher training candidates; and assist a locally identified group to move through teacher education programs in local teacher education institutions. Hillard said such efforts could be done on a collaborative basis with local teacher education institutions.

Hillard said that in order to reduce the high number of minority students in special education programs, educators must change their attitudes. "Traditionally, special

education is based on the assumption that learners' basic conditions are "permanent" (especially learning disabilities). A real solution to the problem requires a shift in thinking from the traditional pattern of special education to "something that is quite the opposite."

Hillard went on to say that if the goal of the District is to return the children to a regular category of competent academic performers, the District must provide special services. He recommended that the Board explore the concepts which he referred to as "diagnostic assessment" and "remedial teaching", to see which approach better benefits the needs of the students.

"The Special Education numbers DMAC also suggested to the Board to develop a mandate to close the achievement gap between Black students and majority students within the next year. The Advisory Committee recommended that Dr. Hillard continue to be used as the Chief Consultant for the Desegregation program.

can be reduced and the children who are returned to the regular classes can return with new cognitive thinking skills so that they are not a drain on the teachers, and will be able to match the regular coursework." Hillard said such an approach has been in operation in Israel for nearly three decades.

Besides DMAC's recommendation that the District hire more minority teachers and implement a new approach in teaching students with special needs, the Advisory Committee also urged School Board Members to expand its Supplementary Education for Elementary Disadvantaged (SEED) program.

Project SEED is a "pilot project" that consists of instructional programs that demonstrate the power of teaching to make dramatic changes in student achievement in math, self-concept, discipline, and in related school behavior. Hillard said students who have taken algebra instruction in Project SEED, make two years gain in arithmetic achievement for each year of algebra instruction.

Graduate Shies From Acclaim

Where An Thi Chau comes from, women shun the limelight, even when they have earned it. Thus, the June graduate of Portland Community College was reluctant to have her story distributed to the media, even though her mentors at PCC believe it is a rather remarkable one.

The soft-spoken, diminutive lady from Saigon agreed to an interview only when it was pointed out that by doing so she could encourage others, learning about her, to set ambitious goals of their own.

Chau, wife and mother of three, will receive an Associate of Science Degree in General Studies after completing the two-year Media/Library Assistant curriculum, one of PCC's educational paraprofessional programs at Cascade Campus. Although she started her studies at PCC with only rusty, high school-level English skills, Chau is graduating with a cumulative grade point average of 3.94 out of a possible 4.0.

Chau had worked as a legal assistant

at the Supreme Court of Vietnam in Saigon for 23 years before political unrest forced her to leave her job in 1975.

Four years later, her husband, Tra Tranh Nguyen, and the couple's three children came to the United States. Chau opted to stay behind with her aged mother until both could come to this country under the federal government's Orderly Departure Program.

The two women arrived in Portland in 1983. Six months later Chau started her studies at PCC's Sylvania Campus. She first took classes in English, eventually enrolling in English As a Non-Native Language, a curriculum designed for those who need advanced skills so they can handle college-level classes in their chosen fields. Chau plans to work as a legal library assistant.

She spent her "practicum" this year working in the library of the Portland law firm of Miller, Nash, Wiener, Hager and Carlsen. Chau enjoyed the experience so much she will continue there this summer as a volunteer, while

Schrunk Refuses to Re-Open Stevenson's Case

by Jerry Garner

Multnomah County District Attorney Michael D. Schrunk said his office could find no grounds to reopen the case involving the death of Lloyd D. Stevenson.

Stevenson, a Black security guard, was killed April 20, 1985 in front of a 7-11 convenience store, after police applied a choke hold on him. Stevenson was married and the father of five children.

An inquest jury ruled that Stevenson's death was the result of negligent homicide, but Schrunk's office couldn't get a grand jury indictment of any of the officers involved in Stevenson's death.

Schrunk's office was asked to reopen the Stevenson's case by the Black United Front, after it was revealed that officer Bruce M. Pantley, one of the policemen involved in Stevenson's death, had lied under oath while testifying in a case accusing him of using excessive force against another Black man.

Pantley, incidentally, pleaded no contest last week to two misdemeanor counts of false swearing; he is scheduled to be sentenced August 4 by Multnomah County Circuit Judge Donald H. Londer. Schrunk said although Pantley lied about his educational background, he could find no grounds to call a grand jury to reinvestigate the death of Stevenson. He said Pantley's educational background was a "collateral rather than material issue in the case."

Schrunk's decision to not reopen the Stevenson's case drew sharp criticism from members of Portland's Black community. "In the past, Michael Schrunk has exhibited that he isn't concerned with justice when the victim is Black," said one North-east resident interviewed by the Observer.

Herb Cawthorne, Executive Director of Portland Urban League, said that he was surprised that Schrunk decided not to reopen the Stevenson case, especially when Pantley's truthfulness has been questioned. "I would think legal and moral principals would lead him (Schrunk) to reinvestigate Stevenson's death."

In other related news, the City's Fire and Police Disability and Retirement Board denied officer Bruce Gary Harrington's request for full medical disability, based on job related stress. The Board voted 6-2 last Wednesday against Officer Harrington's claim of job-related stress disability.

Harrington, who is the husband of former Police Chief Penny E. Harrington, could not be reached for comment. The Observer contacted the Harrington's home in West Linn to get a reaction to the Board's decision and was told that both Officer Harrington and the former Chief were out of town and not due back for two weeks.

Jacob Tanzer, Gary Harrington's attorney, said he would appeal the Board's decision to Multnomah County Circuit Court.



An Thi Chau, brand new graduate of the Portland Community College Media/Library Assistant Program, hopes to find a job in the library of a local law firm. Chau worked in her native Saigon as a legal assistant in the Supreme Court of Vietnam. (PCC Photo)

looking for a paying job.

"I love it there. It is almost like living in Vietnam again, because I spend some of my time in the court, just as I did in Saigon." She said pursuing a life similar to the one she left behind "gives a comfortable feeling."

Meanwhile, Chau's husband is employed at Boeing of Portland, a division of the aircraft giant which makes airplane parts in a plant near Troutdale. Nguyen is a PCC graduate with an associate degree in Machine Shop Technology.

Chau looks back appreciatively upon her college experience. "PCC helped me grow into a new life. My teachers encouraged me and pushed me ahead. The school helps foreign students get rid of their shyness and lonely feeling."

PCC also helped in a material way. During her years at the college, Chau was the recipient of a PCC Foundation scholarship and an award from the Margaret Mary Galati Memorial Fund for Refugee Assistance.

As it turned out, scholarships run in

the family. Chau's 18-year-old daughter, Thao Thanh Phung Nguyen, won three upon her recent graduation, with highest honors, from Benson Polytechnic High School. The young woman will use the one conferred by the University of Notre Dame, where she hopes to work toward a career in medicine. Thao also won recognition for her high school work in science and French, and was granted honors at entrance by Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, and by the University of Portland.

Chau smilingly rebuffed a suggestion that the mother-daughter scholar team be photographed together. "That might make my daughter proud," she said. "In her medical career it will be important that she not be proud."

As for her own accomplishments, Chau was typically reticent. "Why should I be honored? There are many foreign students who have done just as well as I."

Perhaps not too many.