

PORTLAND OBSERVER

Volume XVII, Number 3

November 26, 1986

25¢

Alexander Says Cable Good For Community

by Jerry Garner

All too often the views and issues pertinent to Black Americans are not presented in the mass media system. Indeed, the mass media—radio, T.V. and newspapers—are often guilty of not focusing on the critical issues facing millions of African-Americans.

"This is why community cable T.V. access is a valuable instrument for Blacks in Portland. It's vital, because we (Blacks) don't have access to commercial television; because we aren't considered an influential portion of the market in this town," said Art Alexander.

Alexander is an assistant to Commissioner Mike Lindberg and has extensive experience in radio and T.V. communications. He worked for three-and-a-half years at Rogers Cable Systems doing mostly news and public affairs on Black community television, and three years as a radio and television producer at public station KOAP, Channel 10. Alexander can be heard on KBOO radio from midnight to three every other Saturday. His show is called Saturday Night Jamm.

Alexander said while at Channel 10 and Rogers he presented his news and programming from a Black perspective. "Anyone could look at the programs and see that they were from a Black viewpoint. Usually when the media talks about culture or civilization, they're speaking of European civilization."

Alexander said he considers himself a futurist and realizes while working at Rogers that community access cable would be the thing in the future for Blacks. "I saw cable as technology of the future, something that would allow Black people access to a part of the media which they have been shut out of for a long time."

He said community access cable allows Blacks to give their perspective about issues that affect them. "Cable allows us to do this anytime we want, and as often as we want."

Alexander was asked whether he felt that the Black print media in Portland was presenting the Black perspective. He replied, "I feel that the Black newspapers in Portland follow and present Black community issues. However, the newspapers are businesses. This is the main difference between them and community television. Given the constraints of commercial enterprise, I think both Black papers make good efforts to cover issues of concern to the Black community. But we all can do more."

Alexander said he hopes that people in the community would let Rogers know that they want Channel 23 to continue. He also said that the community should also utilize cable access at Portland Cable Access. "It's free. Anybody can go there, produce anything they want, and discuss anything they choose. The only thing a person must do is invest their time. The equipment is available for them."

Alexander, who is a native of Brooklyn, New York, and a graduate of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, said his move to Portland in 1977 was an enlightening experience culturally. "Coming to Portland was significant in that I had always considered myself politically aware. But I didn't consider myself as being a nationalist or a pan-Africanist. In the early part of my life, I considered myself primarily an American who happened to be Black. When I came to Portland, I met a brother named Oscar Murray. He started to challenge my perspective on my position as a Black man in America."

"He introduced me to people at the Black Education Center, people like Joyce Harris and Ronnie Herndon."



Art Alexander

Photo by Richard J. Brown

"Within seven months after moving to Portland, my politics evolved. The new information I received enlarged my perspective on the world and Black people's position in the world. Before this awakening, I considered myself an American with African ancestors. I wasn't conscious of the Black Diaspora and the concept that we (Blacks) could be conceived as African people who are spread out all over the planet."

As a commissioner's assistant to Mike Lindberg, Alexander is responsible for a wide range of work. As a liaison, he is assigned to a number of bureaus or topic areas. Alexander must keep track of the events that occur

in those topic areas. His primary responsibility is to the bureaus to which Commissioner Lindberg is responsible. "I have a lot of Parks and Recreation responsibilities. I am also the liaison to the Bureau of Risk Management. These are the two bureaus for which I am directly responsible."

Although Alexander is responsible for issues pertinent to Parks and Recreation, and Risk Management, he must also keep track of other issues. This is because each commissioner must vote on issues that affect different bureaus. "Each commissioner must vote on issues that come before City Council. For example, if a police issue should come before City Council, although it may be Bud's (Mayor Clark's) bureau, Mike (Commissioner Lindberg) has to vote. I must keep Mike informed about any given issue coming before Council that deals with the police."

Alexander must also see that Commissioner Lindberg's policies are implemented by bureau managers, and on some occasions, he must write speeches for the Commissioner.

Alexander said he enjoys his job as a commissioner's assistant. "I like the job because on a given day there may be a variety of things you must deal with. You could be in one meeting where you spend an hour working on developing some youth projects, and the next meeting could be on re-writing the City Code on delinquent assessments and liens."

Alexander was asked whether he has any plans to run for elected office in the future. He replied, "I like being a liaison. There is nothing I see about running for public office that suggests that it's something a sane person would really want to do. It's a demeaning experience, because getting elected has nothing to do with serving. Getting elected is essentially no different than selling dog food. It has nothing to do with the truth or vision, it has to do with your ability to convince the people who will go to the polls to believe about you, so they will go into the booth and pull the lever with your name on it."

Alexander urges Blacks to prepare themselves for the future through education. "My parents were very serious about education. They used to say this about learning, 'No matter what you have in your brain, they cannot take it away from you. They can take away material things, but not your knowledge'."

He said education is a life-long process and that everybody should do all they can to read. "They should read a wide variety of material—especially on Black culture. We must be informed to have a thorough level of self-respect. And in the process of informing yourself, you must accept the good with the bad. Maya Angelo once said the worst thing you can do to a Black child is to fill their heads with the notions that everything is perfect in Africa; that everything African is good."

Alexander also said that the future of Blacks will ultimately be determined by our role as African people on this planet. "The highest goal we can have as a people is the unification of the continent. In the long run, I don't expect there to be much more of an improvement in the situation of Blacks in America. Throughout my study of civilization, I haven't come across a minority group, especially an easy identifiable minority group, that has ever achieved equal status with the majority population. It's not human nature to do that."

Alexander said this doesn't mean that people shouldn't try to work together. "It's important to understand that being pro-Black doesn't mean you have to be anti-anybody else."

Ezak Associates Seek Capital For Expansion

by Jerry Garner

Ezak Associates, Ltd., a Portland-based computer consulting firm and manufacturer, is seeking venture capital in an effort to market its Dataguard. "We are offering 3 percent shares for \$10,500," said Dr. Erasmus "Chuck" Ogbuobiri. Dr. Ogbuobiri is principal consultant for Ezak Associates.



Dr. Erasmus "Chuck" Ogbuobiri.

The Dataguard, a trademark of Ezak Associates, ensures that computer equipment is continuously protected from all types of power supply disturbances, as well as a guarantee that critical security and communication systems are not disabled by power outages. The power is always supplied by a battery, even when the main power is on.

Dr. Ogbuobiri said Ezak Associates have secured working capital to produce the Dataguard, but lack venture capital to market the device. "First Interstate Bank of Oregon will provide us with working capital when we receive a purchase order from a firm, but we cannot secure venture capital." Dr. Ogbuobiri said presently he is negotiating to sell the Dataguard in parts of Africa.

Dr. Ogbuobiri developed the Ezak Dataguard, which comes in three models. The firm also produces income tax and general business software. Other services offered by Ezak Associates include: consulting services to clients who are contemplating purchasing a computer for his or her business; assessment services on a turnkey basis; performance of analysis of emergency electric power supply needs of establishments; and individualized as well as small-group training and problem-solving workshops for executives and other professionals on a variety of productivity, cost-control, and planning-and-implementation topics.

Dr. Ogbuobiri said so far Ezak Associates has sold the Dataguard to Leonard and Associates; Interland Investors, of Tigard; American State Bank; a roofing company in Tualatin; and an accounting firm in Alaska. He said that the Dataguard is a good product.

"The Dataguard is designed for maintenance-free application. It works with regular deep-cycle 12-volt car batteries which can easily be obtained locally. The unit itself requires no owner-maintenance. Only occasional inspection of the external battery by the owner is necessary," said Dr. Ogbuobiri.

Furthermore, he said the Ezak Dataguard is designed for world-wide adaptability. This is made possible because the unit can be plugged directly into a 110-volt 50-60 Hz supply or to a 220-volt supply. The "Series A" models are for American equipment operated anywhere in the world. "Series B" models will power European-type equipment anywhere in the world.

Dr. Ogbuobiri was born in Alor, Nigeria. He has a Ph.D. from Cornell University College of Engineering. Dr. Ogbuobiri has vast experience in systems design and professional engineering. He serves as a consultant for Bonneville, and has developed advanced practical methods and automated procedures for long-range (20-30 yrs.) planning of high-voltage electrical power transmission networks. A version of his work has been adapted by the West German Electric Company in Essen for their long-range planning activity.

Dr. Ogbuobiri is a former high school teacher, a former computer designer for IBM, a former systems consultant to the City of Portland, a co-founder and former systems consultant for Nero and Associates, Inc., a former adjunct professor of systems science and engineering at Portland State University and the University of Portland. He has pioneered numerous applications of systems techniques to technological and human organi-

zational problems. His early application of social area analysis and computer mapping was the basis for the U.S. Department of Housing to sponsor workshops. Earlier this year, Dr. Ogbuobiri was the recipient of the Oregon Business League's Booker T. Washington Award. The award is given to an individual for their support of Black-owned businesses.

Have A Hassle-Free Holiday

When the days dwindle down, smart holiday shoppers know the tricks to saving time and money. Those that follow should make this season's shopping all the more enjoyable.

- Take all the help you can get. Read your local consumer columns and watch T.V. consumer reports for the best buys available in your area.

- Books and other guides to creative gifts can help you try your hand at making your own presents for the person who has everything.

- Use consumer loyalty programs to stretch your holiday dollars. For example, the AT&T Opportunity Calling program is available to everyone

When the days dwindle down, smart holiday shoppers know the tricks to saving time and money. Those that follow should make this season's shopping all the more enjoyable.

- Take all the help you can get. Read your local consumer columns and watch T.V. consumer reports for the best buys available in your area.

- Books and other guides to creative gifts can help you try your hand at making your own present for the person who has everything.

- Use consumer loyalty programs to stretch your holiday dollars. For example, the AT&T Opportunity Calling program is available to everyone and offers top name merchandise at great discounts, just call 1-800-992-0992.

- Shop as early as possible, not only to avoid the crowds, but also to find the best prices. Try to shop at "off peak" hours—avoid the Saturday rush.

- Look into those catalogs that have been filling up your mailbox. Merchandise can be ordered by phone and delivered right to your door or someone else's. It saves time and offers alternatives to the usual gifts.

- Having a hard time thinking of the right gift? Look around at everyday items for inspiration—a new phone or answering machine, for example, would be appreciated by any number of people, from teenagers to new home owners.

- If you're short on time as well as cash, spend a moment developing a gift list connecting names with gift ideas and price ranges.

- Don't wait any longer! The holiday season is almost here, and with a little planning it can be hassle free.