

# Saturday School Report

by Nywusi Askari

A standing-room only crowd consisting of community, business and religious leaders, educators, activists, parents, children, and performing artists gathered at the King Neighborhood Facility last Thursday night, November 5, to show their support for the Black United Front's Saturday School.

The gathering evoked much excitement and anticipation. It began with the singing of the Black National Anthem, was later highlighted by a standing ovation for guest speaker Dr. Aaa Hilliard, and ended with endorsements by the Portland Chapter of the NAACP and the Oregon Alliance of Black School Educators.

After a definitive presentation by Ronnie Herndon, Joyce Harris, Director of The Black Educational Center, provided a vivid picture of the growing organizational structure of the Saturday School:

- To date, eight community churches have pledged to donate space: St. Andrews, Mallory Avenue, Piedmont, St. Paul's, Mt. Olivet, Ainsworth, Vancouver Avenue, and Maranatha.

- Teacher Training Classes: Persons who will provide instruction at the Saturday School will be required to take 16 hours of Teacher Training Classes. This requirement is designed to insure that teachers understand the classroom material, as well as gain an understanding of the students they will instruct.

- Classroom focus: African-American history, communications and African-American culture. The classroom focus will include two hours of instruction that will address the students' academic deficiencies, i.e., math and science.

- At least 500 lesson plans have been prepared and are now ready for use.

- The Saturday School will accept students in Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Richard Brown, one of the School's organizers, addressed the topic of community involvement: "The important task is to get people to do the jobs that have to be done. We need people to teach. We need people to be in the classrooms as aides. We need people to raise funds. We need people to donate supplies. If you work for a company that is about to throw away last year's letterhead paper, ask them to donate it to the school. We need people to go out and talk to more church congregations and preachers. We had a meeting with the AMA and received their total support, but we still need to get more facilities to house the classes. We expect a lot of youngsters to come out to the Saturday School."

"This summer we went to a Black United Front conference in Washington, D.C., and we left there with the idea that we were going to make education a priority in every city that had a Black United Front. And the example that was used was Portland. The Multi-Cultural Curriculum and the proposal for the Saturday School was applauded by everyone in attendance. People wanted to know why the curriculum was so popular throughout the United States but was still in the drawer in Portland. All over America, where people are talking about changing education to meet the special needs of African-American children, the model being looked at is the one we've developed right here in Portland.

"I grew up in New York City during a time when the Saturday School was our foundation for learning about ourselves: Black folks. We were taught about Black music and as much Black history as we could take in. So you see, the things we are doing here is nothing new."

The evening ended slowly . . . it seemed that no one wanted to let go of the good feelings that had been generated.

As I was departing, a Black father walked up to me and held out his hand. In it was a yellow pamphlet that read: "How to help your child in school." With a smile on his face, he handed it to me and said, "This is what this meeting was all about." On the front of the pamphlet was a picture of two African-American children sharing an ice-cream cone. Beneath their feet was a poem that read:

"I am the Black child. All the world waits my coming. All the earth watches with interest to see what I shall become. Civilization hangs in the balance. For what I am, the world of tomorrow will be.

"I am the Black child. You have brought me into this world about which I know nothing. You hold in your hand my destiny. You determine whether I shall succeed or fail.

Give me, I beg you, a world where I can walk tall and proud. Train me, as is your duty unto me, to love myself, my people and to build and maintain a great nation . . ."

Yes . . . This is what the meeting was all about.

Next Week: Dr. Hilliard's speech.

## Delta Mothers and Patroness Club Announce Their 23rd Annual Waffle Breakfast

Members of The Delta Mothers and Patroness Club join in inviting the public to their annual waffle breakfast on Saturday, November 14, from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m., at Mount Olivet Baptist Church, 116 Northeast Schuyler, Portland.

This dedicated group of women place a high value on youth and education. Over the past years the club has been able to donate the proceeds from the waffle breakfast to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority toward scholarships for outstanding scholars. It is because of functions such as this that the club has been able to continue their contributions toward education and to help handicapped children by donating equipment.

The first waffle breakfast was held in 1964. Come join the Mothers and Patroness Club in 23 years of good eating and a good cause.

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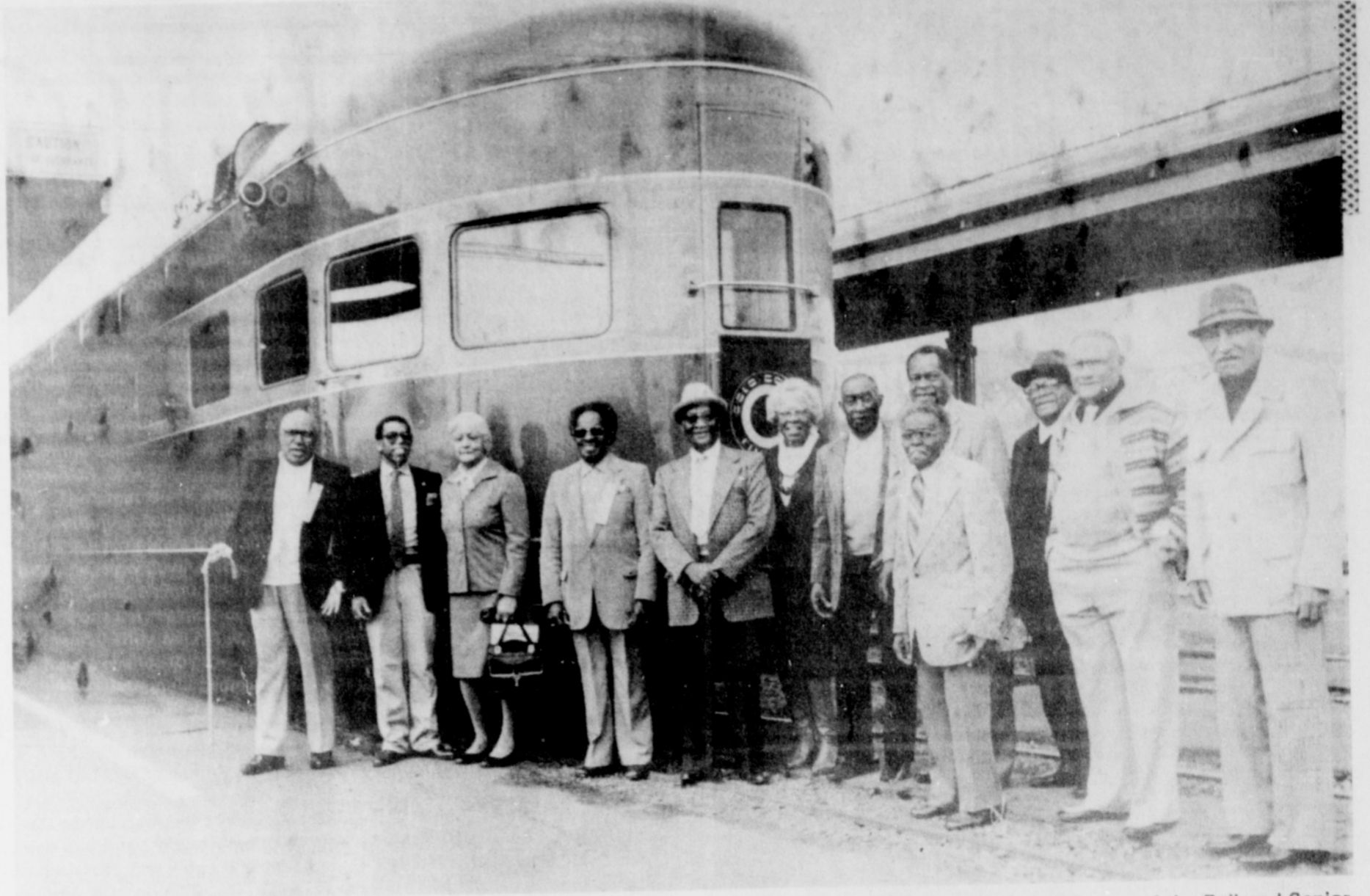
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As the throngs of people gather on the platform of Union Station Sunday for the Rail Fair, in a less crowded section of the station a small group of people gather for a reception. The event was hosted

by the Northwest Rail Museum for members of the Railroad Senior Citizens Ass'n. Photo by Richard J. Brown

## Black Community Schools Have Glorious Past

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and Experiences. Chicago, 1889) shares a similar experience:

"In Natchez, Louisiana, there were two schools taught by colored teachers. One of these was a slave woman who had taught a midnight school for a year. It was opened at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and closed at two o'clock a.m.

"Milla Granson, the teacher, learned to read and write from the children of her indulgent master in her old Kentucky home. Her number of scholars was twelve at a time, and when she taught these to read and write, she dismissed them, and again took her apostolic number and brought them up to the extent of her ability, until she had graduated hundreds. A number of them wrote their own passes and started for Canada.

"At length her night-school project leaked out, and was for a time suspended; but it was not known that seven of the twelve years subsequent to leaving Kentucky had been spent in this work. Much excitement over her night-school was produced. The subject was discussed in their legislature, and a bill was passed that it should not be held illegal for a slave to teach a slave. She not only reopened her night-school, but a Sabbath-school. Milla Granson used as good language as any of the white people."

According to historical documents, "Catherine Ferguson, a slave, purchased her freedom and in 1793 took 48 children, 20 of whom were white, from the almshouse and opened 'Kathy Ferguson's School for the Poor' in New York City."

The great Black educator, Mary McLeod Bethune, when asked why she continued to strive to provide education for Black children, answered, "This is a strenuous program. The doctor shakes his head and says, 'Mrs. Bethune, slow down a little. Relax! Take it just a little easier.' I promise to reform, but in an hour the promise is forgotten.

"For I am my mother's daughter, and the drums of Africa still beat in my heart. They will not let me rest while there is a single Negro boy or girl without a chance to prove his/her worth . . ."

Mrs. Bethune's dedication and ancestral perspective is reflected in the Black community's effort to establish a Saturday School. And like Mrs. Bethune, the community will not rest while there is a single Black child without a chance to prove his/her worth.

And . . . the tradition continues. For that, we all should be proud.

## In Search of Miss Oregon American Coed & Pre-Teen

Applications are now being accepted for girls who are interested in participating in the fifth annual Miss Oregon American Coed and Pre-Teen Pageants which will be held at the Portland Hilton Hotel on May 27, 28, and 29, 1988. Girls between the ages of 13 and 18, for the Coed Pageant, or 8 to 12 for the Pre-Teen Pageant, can apply to participate in the state pageant.

The winner of the Coed Pageant will be crowned Miss Oregon American Coed and receive a \$500 cash award, crown, banner, and trophy plus an all expense paid Dream Vacation to Hawaii. The winner of the Pre-Teen Pageant will receive a \$300 cash award, crown, banner, and a trophy plus an all expense paid vacation to Disneyworld in Florida to compete for the title of Miss American Pre-Teen.

For an application and further information write: Miss American Coed Pageant, 3775 Emma Lane, Vista, CA 92084.

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