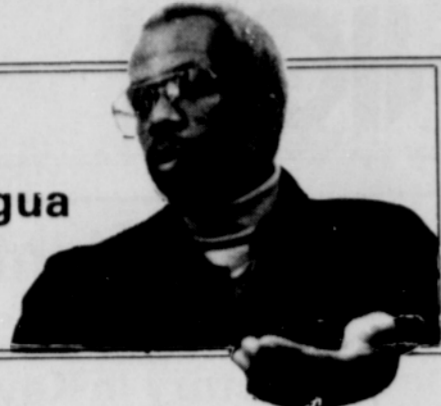


PC Peri
Back from Nicaragua

Page 4



... A Meet of Brilliant Performances

Page 8



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"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"

January 27, 1988

Public Forum on "Prostitution And The Law"

by Nyewusi Askari



Sharon McCormack was the moderator for the "Prostitution and the Law" forum held at Martin Luther King School. Participating on the forum were (L-R) Janet Johnson, ACLU; Judge Dorothy

Baker, District Court; Wayne Pearson, District Attorney's Office; and Capt. Tom Potter, North Precinct. Photo by Richard J. Brown

According to the laws relating to prostitution as stated in the State of Oregon Criminal Code and the City of Portland Code manual, prostitution is defined as "Engaging in, offering to engage in, or agreeing to engage in an act of sexual conduct or sexual contact for a fee." The law goes on to say: "It is unlawful for any person to loiter in or near any street or public place in a manner and under circumstances manifesting the purpose of inducing, enticing, soliciting or procuring another to commit an act of prostitution."

In an attempt to define "circumstances" the law becomes vague. It says: "Among the circumstances which may be considered in determining whether such purpose is manifested are that the person re-

peatedly beckons to, stops or attempts to stop motor vehicle operators by hailing them or gesturing to them."

In an effort to give citizens a clearer definition and understanding of such laws and other issues of concern, the Eliot/King Crime Prevention Committee sponsored a public forum, "Prostitution & The Law", in the Martin Luther King School cafeteria last Thursday night. Participating in the forum were representatives from the District Attorney's Office, the ACLU, Portland Police North Precinct, Neighborhoods Against Crime and Multnomah County District Court.

The tone of the meeting was set by moderator Sharon McCormack. "We join hands tonight in the most

organized way that we have with Inner Northeast people and other citizens of the City who are concerned about following the issue of prostitution to the end," she explained as she addressed the audience and the panel. "We've done the protests, the marches, and they have all been worth it. It meant that we got to know each other, it meant that we shared values that took us to this point. But the time has come for us to have a coordinated, more sophisticated plan in which not only are we venting our screams and expressing our righteous indignation about the problems, but getting answers," she said.

Concerning the current laws on prostitution activity, Judge Baker said, "We're limited with what we

have to work with. We're limited with the law, and we're also limited by some other things. We're limited by jail space, and we are not able to do some of the same things that we did a few years ago, as far as sentencing and keeping people in custody."

Judge Baker noted that when the Justice Center first opened, the lack of jail space wasn't nearly the problem it is now. "I am even faced with the problem that if I have a felon that I have in custody that's dangerous, that person is still going to get matrixed out," she explained. Citing the problems created by the lack of jail space, she said even if prostitutes are sentenced to lengthy jail terms, they would not spend much time in jail.

Judge Baker recently gained national attention when she ruled that a dangerous sex offender must post a "dangerous sex offender" sign on the outside of his place of residence. She recommended that citizens vote and work for more jail space, call for regular meetings at the Justice Center and the District Attorney's office, and organize a citizens' crime watch.

Wayne Pearson, District Attorney's Office, said that 1987 statistics show that the DA's Office processed roughly 1670 adults for prostitution. "As a prosecutor, it doesn't appear as though we're having much success in combating this problem for this community," he said. "Of those 1670 cases, there was only one, to my knowledge, that occurred outside the City of Portland. Of those 1670 cases that were reviewed in 1987, 45% of them

had been disposed of by the end of 1987 by way of a guilty plea. The rest are generally pending and the majority by way of bench warrant."

It was explained that the DA's Office encourages prostitutes to plead guilty to the charge of prostitution because there are no charge reductions. For first time offenders, the DA recommends to the court a \$300 fine, 24 hours of alternative community service work, and one-year probation. For a second conviction, the recommendation is a \$300 fine, ten days in jail, and two-years' probation. On a third conviction, there is a \$500 fine, 30 days in jail, and two-years' proba-



Officer Harry Jackson . . . "a compassionate person and he understands the problem they [prostitutes] face." - Capt. Potter
Photo by Richard J. Brown

The judge makes the final decision as to what the actual sentence will be.

Captain Potter, North Precinct, Sgt. Mike Bell, and Officer Harry Jackson teamed up to give a broad picture of how Portland police are

attempting to upgrade their strategies and tactics in the area of prostitution. Sgt. Bell and Officer Jackson were introduced as the primary designers of law enforcement of prostitution in North Portland. Captain Potter said the prostitution problem is along Union Avenue and Interstate Avenue. He said that 793 (47%) of the 1670 cases were from North Precinct and had occurred along Union and Interstate. Out of the 793 cases, 187 males were arrested on various charges of prostitution. Twenty-four cases involved compelling or promoting prostitution (pimping).

Potter said North Precinct has three officers, including Officer Jackson, who are assigned to the prostitution beat. They make contact, on a regular basis, with prostitutes, developing information and making arrests. Officer Jackson was praised by Potter. "He's a compassionate person and he understands the problem they face; and he also knows that he's enforcing the law against these people. He gives them ample opportunity to make their changes, and, if they don't, then he enforces the law. And, he enforces it quite strictly, I might add," he said about Jackson.

Prostitution, as Potter explained it, occurs on different levels. Some prostitutes work the streets, others work from hotels, and many work from houses. He said that many of the prostitutes come from homes where they were victimized and that they continue to be victimized as prostitutes.

It was explained that not all the See "Prostitution", Page 2

A Woman of Vision



"I began writing because no one could write my story. I need to say some things about myself and my world that no one else can say." - McElroy
Photo by Richard J. Brown

by Nyewusi Askari

To look into the eyes of Colleen McElroy is to look into a place where vision takes on shapes and images that evolve into words that paint pictures of yesterday, today and tomorrow. She is a Poet.

To hear her talk is to hear and feel African drums beating inside your heart and soul. Strong and vital messages. Poet Maya Angelou describes them as "Rich, and painful, and terribly beautiful." Marge Piercy says they are "Tight, tough, lovely."

She has weaved her magic onto the pages of several books that include "The Mules Done Long Since Gone," "Music From Home: Selected Poems," "Winters Without Snow," "Lie and Say You Love Me," "A Country Under Its Original Name," "Jesus and Fat Tuesday," and "Queen of the Ebony Isles" for which she earned the American Book Award.

On January 21, Ms. McElroy brought her magic to Catlin Gabel School. Her visit was sponsored

by the Distinguished Writers Series, a program that is responsible for bringing a growing number of nationally known writers to the school. Following a Thursday morning assembly in the Cabell Center Auditorium on the Catlin Gabel campus, Ms. McElroy conducted a workshop with Upper School English and creative writing classes.

A professor of English at the University of Washington, Seattle, Ms. McElroy is also a short story writer, a playwright, a professor of writing and literature, and has been a talk show moderator, and a speech therapist. She earned her Ph.D. in 1973 from the University of Washington. She also has received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship and a Pushcart: Best of Small Presses Award.

She explained her visit to Catlin Gabel School. "I shared mostly poems with the students and how to collect stories about their families; how to go and ask for grandpa's picture; how to imagine your history when you don't have anything in writing and how to fill in the gaps. You might have a relative who will tell you a story. I one case we had a child who had a letter from a relative outside of the state, who, in that letter, because the child asked, said these are the things you need to know. Some of the things weren't clearly explained, so I told the child to go back and

ask again. That's how you get it. But most of what we know is by word of mouth. It's not always true that we have something as concrete as a photograph, but almost always there is something else that can take its place.

"There was a Black student in my class in Nebraska who's grandmother could only remember a recipe she had been given by her mother. We worked together on that and then we wrote a story around that recipe. That was as tangible as anything. It told something about the geography, where she came from, and it forced the child to begin to think and imagine what life was like then. So, she had a stronger sense of history."

Ms. McElroy said she learned how to tell stories so that she could win friends in a hurry. "I learned how to understand what was important in a story." She explained that it's important for writers, especially young Black writers, to use language that can paint a picture. "At Catlin Gabel, I talked about language being the way that we get somebody else inside our heads. Language is what you use to make the blind see. You can't be in my childhood, but with the right words, I can let you see a bit of magic."

Her magic is strong, sweet, candid, skillful, sometimes painful, but never confining. In the poem "Ruth" from the book "Queen of



PC Peri, recently returned from Nicaragua, addresses a crowd at a rally protesting the latest proposal for Contra aid. The rally was held Monday noon at the Federal Building. See related story on Page 4.
Photo by Richard J. Brown

the Ebony Isles," she speaks to her mother in a way only a daughter could. "I have finally faced myself in you. For years I have written poems nonstop but yours were always more difficult. I have even tried dream language but your image slips into some zone of blackness even deeper in color than your skin when I am angered. How often has the venom from your blueberry lips stunted the growth of a poem. How often has your voice been with me. Wherever I go you have gone and sometimes gladly my need to reach out has pulled

you to me. Mama for years I have hidden hundreds of unfinished verses in the corners of dark closets. Read this and count them."

Powerful, like the magic she weaves when she talks about why she became a writer.

"I began writing because no one could write my story. I need to say some things about myself and my world that no one else can say. It's the drive that keeps me writing. Because I am conscious of who I am, what I say touches a lot of people and allows them to have one

See "Woman of Vision", Page 4