



### Jackson and the Rainbow

Page 2

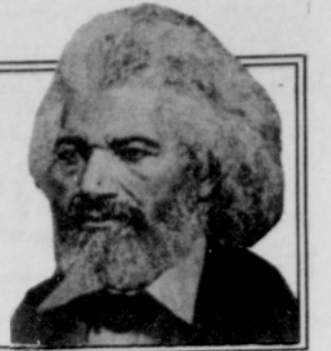
### "Black Clout"

Page 3



### Blacks in Politics

Page 7



25¢

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

USPS 959 680 8555  
Copyright, Exie Publishing Co., Inc. 1984

Volume XVIII, Number 14

"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"

February 17, 1988

## Saturday School Teachers Celebrated

by Nyewusi Askari

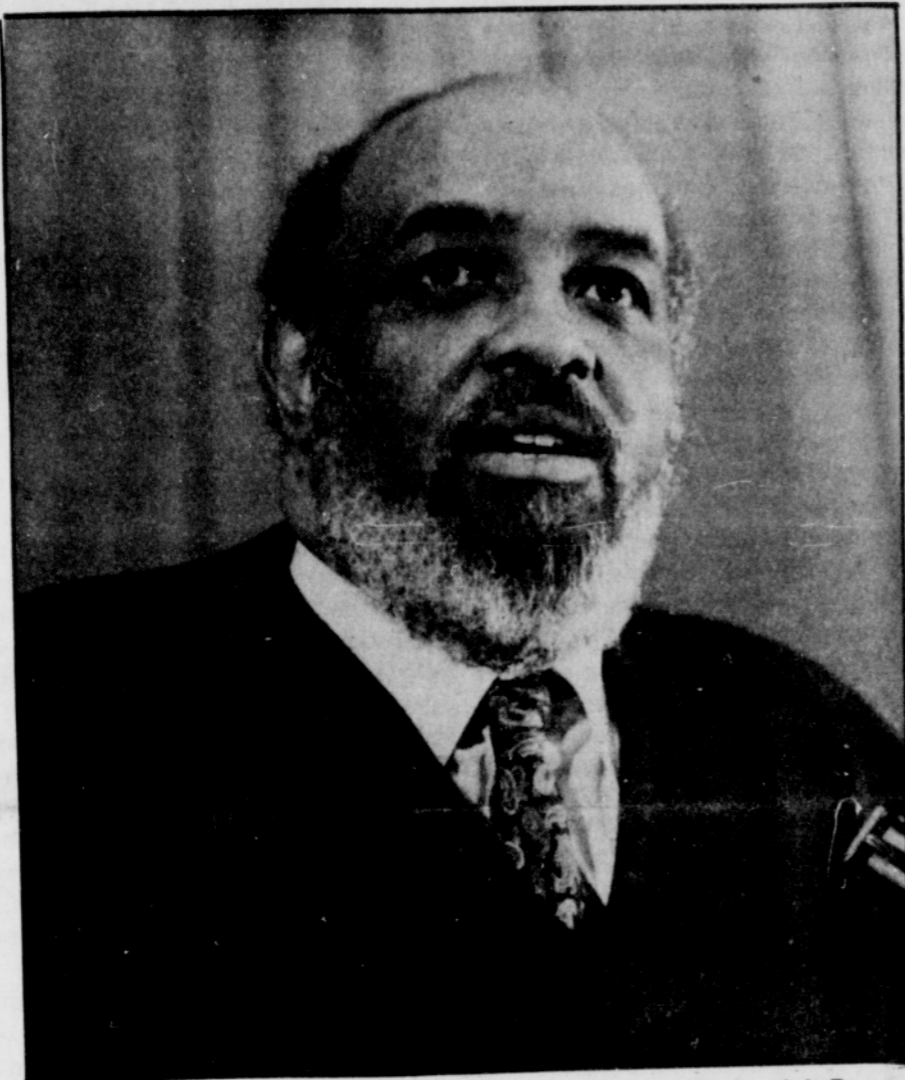
After four weeks of intensive training, volunteer teachers for the Black United Front's Saturday School met at Portland Community College Cascade Campus last Saturday to celebrate the success of the Teacher Training classes and to review final plans for the School's opening, scheduled for Feb. 20, 1988.

The tone of the celebration was set by Mr. Ron Herndon who thanked the teachers for their dedication and involvement. "You could have been home watching football or basketball games. Instead, you gave up your precious Saturdays in order to insure our children's future. The Saturday School owes its existence to you," Herndon said.

The upbeat mood of the teachers set the stage for a rousing speech by special guest Mr. James DePreist, Conductor of The Oregon Symphony. Mr. DePreist was introduced by Mr. Herndon.

"When you begin to talk about role models for children, I really can't think of a better one than Mr. DePreist. He's always been active in events in the community and everywhere else. He has never hesitated to lend his support to a good cause and most certainly we think this is a good cause," said Herndon.

The response of those congregated to Mr. Herndon's introduction made it clear that Mr. DePreist is admired and respected throughout the African-American community. Many of the young children and young adults who were seeing Mr. DePreist for the first time, up close and personal, were in awe. One small child couldn't hold back her joy. "I've seen him on television, Mama. That's him! That's him!



James DePreist

Photo by Richard J. Brown

You think he'll give me an autograph? The other kids at school won't believe I saw him if I don't get an autograph..."

When Mr. DePreist stepped to the podium, he made it clear that he was more than honored to be involved with the Saturday School. "I am really happy to be here," he said.

Mr. DePreist praised the teachers

for their dedication and commitment to an idea whose time had come. "This group gathering today and the whole thrust of the Saturday School program is something that not only should make the rest of the City proud of this community; but also just think of the people who preceded you: our grandfathers and great-grandfathers, our mothers and grandmothers who did

have a greater sense of community than those of us in this modern age.

"There is nothing that I can think of that is going on in this City now that is more important than this project. And one of the reasons that I am here is to underline that fact. You should be very proud of what you're doing.

"It isn't any surprise that young kids turn to other forms of making money, because money becomes the goal. What we're talking about is finding a level of education that is equal to the potential that exists in every child. And that potential is unlimited so the quality of the education should match it. The only way to do that is to really have a vested interest in how the children turn out. We can't have a vested interest in how the children turn out if we don't become involved.

"There can't be any cracks for our children to fall through. There can't be any excuses like that. And there won't be excuses or cracks if parents realize that more than mothers and fathers, they are parents. Those are very different responsibilities. Any dummy can make a baby, but to be a parent, a responsible parent, that is hard. You're a parent for a lifetime.

"All of the children who've signed up for the Saturday School and all of the parents who have been responsible for seeing that they've signed up, deserve a lot of credit."

Mr. DePreist concluded by saying that so many times when he thinks about what is right with the City of Portland, a part of the same sentence ends with the name Ron Herndon. Those gathered responded with a standing ovation.

Throughout the celebration, parents were allowed to register their children for the Saturday School. Certificate of Awards were given to teachers and volunteers.

The volunteers are a mix of African-American, White, American Indian and Hispanic. Yvonne Martinez, a resident of Woodburn, explained why she got involved. "We have two children who are Black and they don't get the kind of exposure to Black history and culture in Woodburn. They get a lot of exposure to Mexican history because of our involvement, but we thought it would be good for them to come and learn with other children about their people."

Martinez said her family's involvement with the Saturday School training sessions has been an exciting experience. "I have been brought to tears many times, and finally meeting the people who understand the importance of education for our children is beyond

words."

Larry Kleinman, a white volunteer from the Woodburn area, said he works for a farmworkers union that is very active in Woodburn's Mexican community and that they were very impressed and pleased to participate in a community-based organizing effort like the Saturday School. "We work in our community there, and it doesn't give us much time or opportunity to see other similar kinds of efforts in other areas; especially because this is an area of education and that's not an area we work in very much, so this broadens our perspective," Kleinman explained.

The celebration ended with Aisha Irving, age 12, and those congregated, reciting the Saturday School Pledge of Excellence: "We know we can learn. We know we are smart. Excellence is our purpose. We are proud of ourselves, our families and our community."



Teenagers, their parents and friends enjoy "bloopers" from the "We Are Your Future" cable TV news show. About 35 people gathered at Portland Cable Access for the premier showing of the 30-minute program. "We Are Your Future" was written and hosted by Portland area teens. (L-R) Karen Green, Dana Mitchell and Zelika Milton are talents from the production. Photo by Richard J. Brown

## Dr. Molefi Asante and Afrocentric Idea

by Kamau Anderson

Africa and her children, that is people of African descent, have been studied and written about for centuries. The majority of these studies and writings was done by European scholars from an European worldview or Eurocentric perspective. A new breed of writers and scholars among the children of Africa is beginning to emerge again with a different worldview, a different perspective. This revitalized African worldview is called afrocentricity and its most articulate modern spokesman is Dr. Molefi Asante of Temple University in Philadelphia. Dr. Asante recently shared with the Portland community his ideas on afrocentricity at Portland State University as the guest of the Black Cultural Affairs Board.

What is afrocentricity? Dr. Asante offered the following definition: afrocentricity - n. 1. the putting of African experiences, values, and history at the center of all analysis and interpretations. No phenomenon, no event, no aspect of human development can be allowed to be seen as placing Africa in the margins or on the periphery of human development. We (African people) must be placed in the center of history. To be afrocentric is not to be anti-anybody. It is a powerful



Dr. Molefi Asante

affirmation of one's own history and culture. Dr. Asante stated that the most dangerous people in the world are those that have no historical context of themselves. Afrocentricity is an attitude, a way of life, that provides economic, social and political empowerment and psychological stability once the African-American recognizes himself or herself as an African person.

Most of the early writings about the history of Africa and Her children was improperly interpreted, distorted, and in many cases just plain omitted. Dr. Asante spoke about the cultural maligning of African

history, achievements, and contributions unlike any comparable period in history. The obliteration and deletion of thousands of pages of African history has caused African-Americans to not know who they are today. With the loss of the historical memory of a people, there are no models for achievement and consequently there is no motivation to achieve.

To be afrocentric is to identify with the oldest knowledge database in the world and a powerful value system, also. Dr. Asante pointed out that once African-Americans really understood this information and value system, the lessons that we would be teaching our children is that our history did not begin in 1619 and our Africanness did not end in 1619. In making his point he quoted El Hajj Malik el Shabazz (Malcolm X). When someone told Malcolm that they didn't leave anything in Africa, Malcolm responded, "Why you left your mind in Africa! Dr. Asante also used a Wolof proverb of West Africa to insure that his point was clear: 'You can leave wood in the river for ten years but it will never turn into an alligator.' We have been taught in America to hate our Africanness and to hate Africa and, Dr. Asante says, in so doing we lose our sanity, we go

crazy. We all have a story to tell in that regard.

Dr. Asante outlined ten ways in which the mis-education of African-Americans came about. The first he called temporal tampering, the tampering with time and chronology. For example, calling Hippocrates the father of medicine. Yet an African by the name of Imhotep, a multi-genius, was deified as the father of medicine two thousand years before Hippocrates.

Secondly, the process of text isolation, highlighting insignificant data. The search for Livingston by Stanley is important in African history.

Radical nomenclature is the third tool in the mis-education process. Arbitrary changing African names to European names: Kinshasa, Zaire to Leopoldville, Zimbabwe to Rhodesia, etc.

The fourth in the process is inventing illusions. Dr. Asante used the term "negro" as an illustration. There is no "Negroland" or a negro language. Who you are should instantaneously identify you with land, history, and culture.

The fifth was creating negative terms like "Bushmen" and "Pygmies". These Africans call themselves Saan and Twa people, respectively.

Number six was omitting significant data. Greece is the classical historical reference for the western world but it is rarely if ever stated in western literature that Greek philosophers such as Thales, Pythagoras, Solon, and others did their schooling in Africa.

Distorting facts was number seven. A case in point is South African history as taught by the minority Europeans. They state in their history text that there were no "Negroes" in South Africa when they arrived in the seventeenth century.

The other three points were creating Europe-centered reference points for Africa, inquiring from a European perspective about African phenomenon, and looking at Africa as if it is static.

The result of this ten-point mis-education process is the creation of an African person in America who can not relate to their history, no sense of themselves and history. This process produces someone who 'just wants to be human,' someone who thinks that being yourself (African), honoring your own motifs and culture, is something foreign or weird.

Dr. Asante points out that all humans have a culture and histori-

cal heritage. He related a story about one of his students who questioned him about wearing African clothing. The student said, "I used to dress like that when I was in my ethnic phase." The student was wearing Scottish plaids and Dr. Asante responded, "Look at yourself, you are still in your ethnic phases, it all depends on whose ethnicity you're into, your own or somebody else's!"

Dr. Asante told the audience what must be done to develop an afrocentric attitude. We must tell our own story and not depend on others to do that for us. First, you must have a positive attitude about Africa and appreciate your culture. Then have study sessions on African and African-American history and culture. Participate in afrocentric rituals for your children by simply decorating your home with paintings and art from the culture. By doing just this, it will have an economic, social, and psychological impact on the community.

Dr. Asante concluded by stating that the development of an afrocentric attitude will force our institutions to react and be supportive

See "Afrocentric Idea" - Page 3