

Presenting: "Uniquely Yours..."

-- Young African American prepares for grand opening of new designer & discount store in black community



Blanche Elaine Toney

Blanche Elaine Toney comes from a family of achievers. Her mother, Judy Wilson, bought and operated a full service salon in Raleigh Hills for fifteen years. Her father, Cecil Toney, was a barber, an artist and a well-known musician who played locally with Jazz great Mel Brown. Her sisters, Theresa and Kathy Toney, are both hair designers. Her brother Steven is planning to attend college this fall.

On Friday, July 22nd, 1988, Blanche, in the tradition of her family, will grace the State of Oregon, the City of Portland and the African-American community with the grand opening of her own business "Uniquely Yours" Boutique & Nail Salon, the first Black-owned designer and discount store in the Portland metropolitan area.

A teen mom, Blanche says it was peer pressure that forced her into a premature marriage that failed. "I became pregnant before I was married and everyone told me that my life was over. Wanting to rise above that type of gloom and doom, I rushed into marriage. When it didn't work, I went into a rut which lasted approximately five years. However, with the support of my family, I began to reconstruct my life."

Personally, she thought she might become a stand-up comedian. "Everyone used to laugh at my jokes," she recalled. "Then I received offers to attend two well-known performing arts schools but turned them down. I think the business bug was eating away at me. Anyway, not afraid to take risks, I went on my first business venture which was the formation of a Employment Service in Los Angeles. After that, I ventured into the Arts and Crafts business. When I came back to Oregon, I worked as a repair technician for an electronic company in Hillsboro. I was able to advance some, but was very limited. I knew I wasn't going anywhere."

Around the time Blanche was organizing herself to exit from the electronic's company, she heard about the wholesale garment district in L.A. "I checked it out and

ended up buying a few thousand dollars worth of merchandise. I was amazed at how fast I was able to sell what I had purchased. After checking out the designer discount scene, I discovered that there wasn't a designer discount store in Oregon that catered to African-Americans at a fair price."

Convinced that she could open her own designer discount store, she mapped out floor plans, contacted wholesalers, designed a financial plan and began looking for space to house the store. Her search led her to Mr. Leon Harris, general manager for the Portland Observer. Impressed by Blanche's determination to establish a business, he pledged his support and vowed to contribute, as much as possible, to her success. So, when the Portland Observer purchased it's new facilities, Mr. Harris offered Blanche the opportunity to occupy space next door to the Observer's main facility. And the rest is history.

Blanche is excited about her grand opening. "Something inside of me kept saying, girl you can do it ... you can do it ... don't get frustrated. And now it's going to become a reality. However, my getting started in business is in line with what's going on with African-Americans throughout this country. The support I have received from Mr. Harris is also typical of how Black businessmen and women are helping younger Blacks get started on the road to economic development."

She continued. "My business will offer everything from silks to T-shirt and everything in-between: linens, jewelry, a discount nail salon and the lowest price in the State of Oregon. I am going to be here and I want the community, City and State to check me out. Tell me what you want and I'll deliver it. For example, I now have silk suits for women that are normally priced at \$300, ready to go at below \$200. I am also here to make a contribution to my community."

Concluding, Blanche said, "Each morning I wake up and say, girl ain't nothing to it but to do it..."

The Dream Of Success Realized

-- excerpts from Rev. Jesse Jackson's speech at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, Georgia July 19, 1988



...For our children. Young America hold your head high now. We can win. We must not lose you to the DRUGS, and the VIOLENCE, PREMATURE PREGNANCIES, SUICIDE, CYNICISM, PESSIMISM and DESPAIR. We can win. Wherever you are tonight, I challenge you to hope and to dream. Don't submerge your dreams. Exercise above all else, even on drugs, dream of the day you're drug-free. Even in the gutter dream of the day that you'll be up on your feet again. You must never stop dreaming. Face reality yes, but, don't stop with the way things are, dream of things as they ought to be. Dream ... face pain ... but love, hope, faith and dreams will help you rise above the pain.

- (2) Keep on dreaming young America.
- (3) Dream on the high road of sound values.
- (4) Don't surrender to drugs. The best drug policy is no first use. Don't surrender to needles and cynicism.
- (5) Never surrender young America and don't give up.
- (6) ... I have a story.

I wasn't always on television. Writers were not always outside my door. When I was born late one afternoon, October 8th, in Greenville, South Carolina, no writers asked my mother her name. No one chose to write down our address. Mama was not suppose to make it. And I was not suppose to make it. You see, I was born to a teenage mother who was born to a teenage mother. I understand. I know abandonment and people being mean to you and saying that you are nothing and nobody and can never be anything. I understand.

Jesse Jackson is my third name. I am adopted. When I had no name, my grandmother gave me her name. My name was Jesse Burns until I was twelve. So that I wouldn't have a blank space she gave me a name to hold me over. I understand when nobody knows your name. I understand when you have no name. I understand. I wasn't born in the hospital. Mama didn't have insurance. I was born in the bed at home. I really do understand: born in a three room house, bathroom in the backyard, slop jar by the bed, no hot and cold running water, I understand: wallpaper used for decorations? No ... for a wind-breaker. I understand.

I am a working person person. I had a shovel programmed for my hands. My mother, a working woman. So many days she went to work early with runs in her stockings. She knew better but she wore runs in her stockings so that my brother and I could have matching socks and not to be laughed at, at school.

I understand ...



Happy Birthday!

Nelson Mandela
"Our Spirits Are With You!"

YOUNG ACHIEVER OF THE WEEK

A Dream Come True ...

On Sunday, July 10, 1988, eight year old Nikesha Hunter was crowned overall winner in the Oregon State Miss Cinderella Contest. Miss Hunter prevailed in the Mini-Miss category for girls ages 8-12.



Miss Hunter will represent Oregon as she competitions begin July 28, 1988 in Miami, Florida.

Supporters of Nikesha ask for your support. Participation in the international competition costs \$800. This amount include housing, airfare, food, and entrance fee. A deposit of \$100 has already been submitted to hold a space. Unfortunately Nikesha needs more funding to compete for the international title. If you or your organization would like to support Nikesha, please contact: Ronee Walker, c/o MARI, P.O. Box 12471, Portland, OR 97212 or call 288-1662. The Portland Observer is proud to salute you as our "Young Achiever of the Week."

Coalition March ... A Profile ...



Young men step out front during march by the Coalition of Black Men last Saturday.

by Stephen E. McPherson and Mattie Ann Callier-Spears

Like the proud Masai, Watasi and Mendingo warriors of their ancestral past, hundreds of African-Americans assembled at the King Neighborhood Facility on Saturday morning to launch an attack on the criminal element of Portland. Their army consisted of fathers, sons and grandfathers.

Mr. Sam Jackson, Jr. showed up with his son-in-law and his 12-year-old grandson, Mitchell. Mr. Jackson said, "Now is the time because it is long overdue. This what we need. A Black concerted effort was badly needed. Through this show of force, hopefully, the turmoil will cease."

Spearheaded by the Coalition of Black Men by high noon their numbers had grown to over 300.

OBSERVER'S INDEX

FEATURES.....	Page 1 & 3
EDITORIAL / OPINION.....	Page 2
RELIGION.....	Page 4
ENTERTAINMENT.....	Page 5
CLASSIFIEDS.....	Page 10-11

Classified / Display.....(503) 288-1756
News Desk.....(503) 288-0033