

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

## An Observer Special Report

### The Struggle To Dream:

On Saturday, January 4, 1896, Mr. H. R. Clayton, the Editor and Proprietor for the Seattle-based, Black-owned newspaper "The Republican," wrote the following:

"Four million Negroes without education, only thirty-two years ago, and now there are ten million, fifty per cent of whom can read and write. Four million with not over two dozen churches, and now they have fully one hundred thousand separate church edifices. Four million Negroes without any money or means only thirty-two years ago, and now the last census shows that they have money and possessions amounting to \$500,000,000. Four million of Negroes without a home and now they own more than that many millions of acres of land. Four million Negroes all collected in the South, miserable slaves, and now they are to be found in not only every state of the Union, but in every community, whether it be cold or hot, and wherever they are, owning property or acquiring it just the same as the whites and just the same as though they had been freemen all of their days..."

Mr. Clayton's editorial speaks highly of the economic gains made by African-Americans after only 32 years of freedom from chattel slavery. He would be happy to know that, in 1987, the total wealth of African-Americans was estimated at well over \$280 billion dollars. However, in Portland's African-American community, the apparent lack of economic growth and development is a topic that's beginning to draw fire from many quarters.

Many Black Oregonians are convinced that the lack of economic growth and development in the Inner North and Northeast communities stems from (1) discriminatory practices by lending institutions; (2) exclusion from economic/political decision making that directly impacts the economic growth of the Black community; (3) the inability or the unwillingness of state and federal agencies to enforce laws that were designed to end discrimination in the workplace; and (4) the media's continuous portrayal of the black community as a "community under siege."

The belief that some of Oregon's leading lending institutions are involved in discriminatory practices, in regards to the African-American community, was lent support by an article that appeared in the Business Journal, Aug. 8, 1988. Written by Tom Gauntt, the article points out that federal figures on the distribution of mortgage loans show a pattern of discrimination in Portland's poor areas. "As a whole, banks, thrifts, and credit unions are not meeting the mortgage needs of low-income areas," Mr. Gauntt writes. "For Portland's poor areas, especially inner North and Northeast Portland, there is plenty to protest. A look at mortgage lending in the Portland metropolitan area shows that while poor areas contain 14.5 percent of the 267,279 owner-occupied units in the entire metro area, in 1986, those areas received 5.3 percent of the \$458.8 million in mortgages. About 7.4 percent of the

total number of mortgage loans went to these poor areas. Defined as areas where the median household income is 80 percent or less of the metro's median, most of the poor areas are within Portland's city limits."

According to Mr. Gauntt, "Among the major lenders, the institution with the worst record in making mortgage loans in poor areas is First Interstate Bank of Oregon. In 1985, 1986 and 1987, for example, First Interstate made a total of just two home mortgage loans in four very poor census tracts centered on Northeast Union Avenue and Northeast Prescott Street." Other findings in the article were:

- Benj. Franklin made mortgage loans in all but five of the metro area's 264 census tracts. Of its 157 million in 1986 mortgage loans, 7.2 percent went to poor areas. It's loans to poor areas totalled \$11.3 million.
- Crossland Federal Savings Bank made 12.6 percent of its total \$56.6 million in mortgage loans in poor areas.
- Far West Federal Savings Bank made 5.5 percent of its total mortgage loans to poor areas.
- The Portland Teacher's Credit Union made 14.2 percent of its \$4.8 million in 1986 mortgages and home improvement loans to poor areas.
- The City of Portland Employees Credit Union made 13.4 percent of its \$1.9 million in mortgage and improvement loans to poor areas.
- Oregon Bank in 1985-86 combined, made less than \$600 thousand in total mortgage loans in the metro area.
- U.S. Bancorp, with \$13.5 billion in assets would not reveal its records to the Business Journal.

In the African-American community, there is a saying, "if you think it is hard tryin' to secure a mortgage loan, you should try to secure a line of credit to keep your business going. You will really be out in the cold and out of business in a week!"

Many Black Oregonians are not convinced that the City of Portland is doing all it can to make economic improvements in their communities. Specifically speaking, (1) the city's seeming unwillingness to back the Black community's claim that media coverage is overplaying the problem of crime in the African-American community, (2) the city's slowness in marketing the African-American community as part of its livability program, (3) the city's seeming reluctance to highlight, in its marketing plan, discrimination, the Black underclass, homelessness, drug and nity and, (4) the city's seeming inability to decide how it is going to characterize the African-American community from day to day.

If these points are considered low marks for the current city administration, the marks given for the current state administration of Governor Neil Goldschmidt is even lower. Black Oregonians have been slow to forget the Governor's "squash Ron Herndon" remark during the early days of

### Prelude Part I of IV By Nyewusi Askari

his reign. Now they are starting to question the Governor's sincerity about including the African-American community in his Oregon Comeback Plan.

Questions are being asked: (1) When the Governor announced that portions of the lottery funds would be designated for economic development, did he plan to include the African-American community in that designated development? (2) If so, why hasn't it happened? (3) If the Governor is sincere about his Children's Agenda, when will he take time to talk to the children of Columbia Villa and Northeast Portland? When will he make them realize that they, too, are part of his Children's Agenda?

These are but a few of the questions Black Oregonians are asking. They are convinced that the City of Portland and the State of Oregon cannot fully realize any dream of complete economic revitalization until the needs, the real needs, of all its citizens are sincerely addressed.

In the African-American community, the issues of poverty, discrimination, black underclass, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, economic exclusion, negative media portrayals and violence with insistent and undeniable urgency.

It's about the struggle to dream, the struggle to overcome. In part II of this series, African-American businessmen/women speak out.

### "Business As Usual(?)"

by Professor McKinley Burt

Gone is Neal's Pharmacy, gone is Bill Benton's Neighborhood Grocery, gone is the Madrona Record Shop and The Juke Box Distributorship, gone is Bill Denton's Haberdashery, gone is Avritt's Garage and Service Station, gone are the Fraternal Hall and Acme Business Club, organizations of railroad men who operated many Retail and Entertainment enterprises as well as Apartment Complexes. Just a few of many — All Black-owned!

Was centrally-planned Urban Development the primary cause for this demise of inner-northeast core businesses — The Coliseum, the Freeways, the Emanuel Hospital expansion? A newcomer to Portland would find it hard to believe that Union Avenue was once a bustling thoroughfare of retail stores, groceries, restaurants, clubs, banks, florists and new and used car dealerships. Or that brown-skinned 'Chester' built a shop that kept twenty men busy painting and detailing cars for 'Auto Row'.

Would the new arrival believe that in the late 1940's I set up the Union Avenue Finance Company for two white accounting clients, then spent afternoons flying up and down the street financing the smaller auto dealers' inventories of used cars. How would you explain that aesthetic disaster of a median strip that traverses the avenue — simply some planners stupidity, wiping out both parking and access? — Or as part of a

long-term caper calculated to substantially reduce the asking prices to promoters and longer-term investors (including the City of Portland, California speculators or perhaps Japanese syndicates as is happening now in Hawaii)? Perhaps the new Convention Center is just an off-Broadway play, with the real multi-billion dollar production coming later in Albina!

While the land question is fundamental to understanding the economics of inner-northeast — past or future — it is important to examine more closely the accompanying experience of the Black entrepreneur. The most structured phase of the 'New Black Enterprise' in Portland came during the 1960's and 1970's; this occurred within the framework of federal programs like the S.B.A. (Small Business Administration), the O.E.O. (Office of Economic Opportunity), and Model Cities (The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966).

These ad hoc 'poverty programs', created in the hysteria following the Watts Riots, tried in a mostly uncoordinated manner to deliver to Portland a fairshare of President Johnson's "Great Society." A key objective of this mission was the implementation of a Black economic base of individual entrepreneurs and corporations. I came upon this scene in 1969, from a background of

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### Introducing:

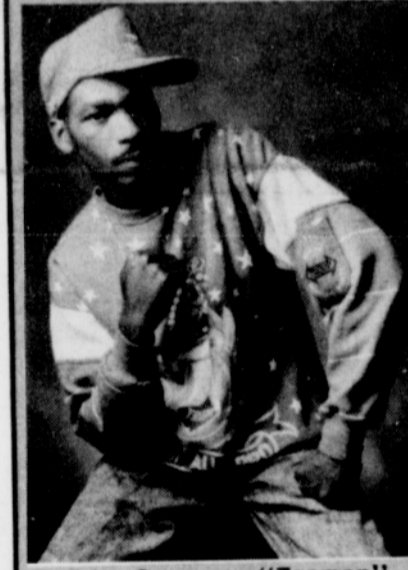


Angelique Witherspoon

Angelique Witherspoon, a senior at Jefferson high school, is one of the KBPS 1450 AM 'Summer Sound' news reporters. KBPS is licensed to the Portland Public Schools.

The 'Summer Sound' staff is busy producing 'High School Spotlight', a series of special programs which will air the first two weeks of the school year. 'High School Spotlight' can be heard from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Sept. 6, from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Sept. 7 - 9, and from 11 to 11:30 a.m. Sept. 12 - 16.

The 1988 broadcast season was Angie's third year with 'Summer Sound'.



Brian Dance as "Zooman"

Brian will star in the Storefront Theatre's NW Premiere of "Zooman and the Sign." The play is scheduled to run Oct. 29 to Nov. 20 at the Dolores Winningstad Theatre in The Portland Center for the Performing Arts.



Ms. Wanda Irving

Communications Services Director for Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services. The Portland Observer will spotlight Ms. Irving in its upcoming "Minority Business Issue."

### ANNOUNCEMENT

The Black United Fund's Saturday School still needs Volunteers. For more information please call Avel or Karen at 230-9427.

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## NEWSMAKER OF THE WEEK

### Percussion Group Seeks Donations

by Bill Scheider

Evelyn Crews, a volunteer fundraiser for Northeast Portland's Alfred E. Yaun Child Care Center, believes that music is a community affair. She believes, too, the North/Northeast community has a wealth of talent that has nowhere to go. It's not surprising, then, that teaching music and channeling talent would be central elements in a supplemental program she helped develop at Yaun Center.

Although called a child care center, Yaun, in actuality, is the last surviving live-in group home facility for juvenile males in the Northeast community. The 15 boys housed at Yaun range in age from 14 to 20 and are referred from the state's Children's Services Division and the juvenile justice system.

Since its inception by Rev. Sam Johnson during the Model Cities era, Yaun's focus has been on meeting the needs of this group, Black juvenile males.

"Johnson knew," Crews said, "that from the day he is born, caring parents, kin, and friend support group not withstanding, the Black male is targeted or labeled 'at risk' in this society."

Yaun Center's treatment program consists of group and individual counseling, academic skill development and group recreation, Crews said.

"One thing the Board [of Directors] is trying to do," she said, "is to add positive supplemental activities [to the treatment program]."

One of those activities, The Yaun Percussion Ensemble, was started at Yaun last February. Crews was instrumental in its creation. Drawing on a background in organizing marching bands, Crews helped coordinate an effort by Yaun staff, directors, and volunteers to establish the ensemble as a "positive, fun activity which also builds skill, focus and coordination."

There are "about 11" young men playing with the Yaun Percussion Ensemble and music is only part of what they learn.

"Most of them have not been part of a positive group activity," said Crews. "Many have low self-esteem and lack confidence — they're used to failure and don't want to fail again."

But Crews and the ensemble's instructors, master percussionists and teachers Caton Lyles and Greg Fisher, let the members know that they can come and go in the group. In effect, they allow the players to succeed at their own pace.

"Sometimes, they'll drop out when they get to something hard," Crews said. "Then another group



Rev. Sam Johnson, Founder  
Alfred E. Yaun Child Care Center

member will show them how to play it, or they'll work it out themselves. Then they'll figure it wasn't that hard after all and come back in. We try to keep it open and let them know they can come back."

Playing with the ensemble also teaches its members that they can achieve something they want by working for it. And that working for it can be fun. The need to help each other succeed is also stressed.

The kids are learning, too, about love and trust from the counselors, staff members and volunteers at the center and from the teachers with the ensemble. But Crews said the facility is experiencing a funding crunch, and some of its activities, including the ensemble, are in jeopardy.

"What on paper seem like large dollar amounts coming to Yaun from CSD," Crews said, "are in reality dike-plugging funds. Without the dedication of under-paid counselors, a concerned board of directors and volunteers, the few success stories told would not be."

Private funding is needed to supplement the state funds, Crews said.

"These kids," Crews continued, "just got to where they know we're not going to leave them. That's one reason we're a little antsy about funding this year. These kids are used to people letting them down, and we don't want to do that."

Yaun's current funding runs out on Oct. 25, and the Percussion Project needs money to keep it thriving past that date, according to Crews.

"The pay-off," she said, "may not be seen now, but exercising our ability to guide our young males into the role of decent human beings will eventually benefit us all."

"And you'll get a great musician out of it." Please send your contribution to Alfred E. Yaun's Percussion Ensemble, 5128 N.E. Rodney, Portland, Oregon 97211.