

**It's Here! "The Colored Museum"**  
**IFCC (243-7930 or 2438-4496)**  
**This Friday thru Sunday --**  
**Review Next Week!**  
**Don't Miss ...**  
**This Exciting Show!**

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

Volume XIX · Number 4

The Eyes and Ears of the community

January 26, 1989

## Portland State University Blames Langston Hughes Play For Deficit

by Garland Lee Thompson

"A deficit of over \$20,000 was posted by the 1988 Summer Program, according to a Dec. 1, 1988 memorandum from Education Activities Director Nina Lowry to Robert Vieira, acting vice provost for student affairs.

This opening quote in Tuesday's Jan. 18, 1988, issue of the Vanguard, Portland State University's student newspaper, that ran below the "mega-points" black caption, "Play Blamed For Deficit."

The alleged play "culprit," PSU's newspaper is referring to is Langston Hughes' classic 1958 musical, "Simply Heavenly," which played the Lincoln Hall Theatre at PSU during the Summer Session, '88 at the University. Langston would have loved it!

"According to Lowry, the budget for the 1988 Summer Program was approximately \$7,000. Administrated by E.A. (Educational Activities), the program usually presents "mini-versions" of student group programs, such as the Film Committee's free movie screenings, the Music Committee's Brown Bag concerts in the park, and exhibits in the campus art galleries.

With the 1988 Summer Program, however, Lowry attempted to establish a link with the Black community in Portland by "presenting a fully-staged production of a work by a Black playwright, with an all-Black cast and a professional Black director."

A key point the Vanguard is quoted; "The Summer Session Theater Program ("The Summer Theatre Festival") was canceled due to previous deficits (that right, it is reported to be \$40,000 and the Jack Featheringill company was expected to lose \$25,000 in 1988 which is the assumed reason it was canceled), leaving the theaters available for this project. The Lincoln Hall theatre was to be dark all summer if no project are brought in. "So where is the Beef?" It was "Simple, according to Thompson!"

"The University had been under fire for not reaching out to the Black community," Lowry said. "It was a big risk to do it right." "Innovation requires risk," so I've read somewhere.

"Lowry was hoping the risk would pay off--to the tune of \$30,000, enough to pay the costs of the show with a profit to put toward future projects (such as an annual Black Theatre Festival or project).

The Vanguard states: "She contacted Garland (Lee) Thompson (founder of the Frank Silvera Writers' Workshop), a New York-based director who had worked with PSU Upward Bound Program.

### THE FIRST TIME IN PORTLAND FOR PLAY'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

"Thompson proposed "Simply Heavenly," a play with music by Langston Hughes that he had successfully mounted in New York (it was Philadelphia's New Freedom Theatre) with his own theater company. They began production early May (it was actually July) and opened the doors of the Lincoln Auditorium the last weekend of August for a three-week run." This was the first time, "Simply Heavenly," had ever played in this City and the thirtieth anniversary since it last played the West Coast (1958 in Los Angeles, which Thompson was a actor, the kid newsboy).

"The show was wonderful," said Sue Busby, director of the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, a publicly-supported ethnic cultural center and theater. "It was a special treat for everybody in the community ... It was sad that seats were empty."

"Low attendance was responsible for large part of the Summer Program deficit, according to Lowry. But opinion is divided on who was responsible for the empty seats."

### BLACK COMMUNITY LET US DOWN

"In her memo to Vieira, Lowry stated Black community leaders and the Black

PSU faculty members she and Thompson had assumed would help fill the auditorium, let us down." (The truth of the matter is that Dr. Darrell Millner, PSU's Chairman of the Black Studies Dept. did attend and supported the production). There are only a hand full of Black teachers at the University to begin with, so who are they talking about? What leaders and who in the community were asked to assist?

The article goes on to state: "To make \$30,000, the show would have to draw 209 people paying the full \$12 ticket price each night of the 12 show run."

According to Busby, special promotion is required to fill a hall, especially for an ethnic show. Block ticket sales to church groups, sororities, and community organizations must be lined up months in advance. She said she begins six months before a show's opening, just to line up an audience. "Radio and newspaper advertising, and posters in the community are fine for a big market like New York, she said, but in a small market like Portland, a producer must have key people committed to bringing in an audience.

The gross receipts from the door amounted to approximately \$5,000. She estimates that EA spent approximately \$24,000 on the play, including \$12,600 in salaries for actors, musicians and production (PSU) employees. In her memo to Vieira, Lowry requested that the deficit of the Summer Program be covered by the year-end balance from the combined Educational Activity programs, which are funded by student incidental fees. Her request was approved by Vieira and Lee Shissler, chairman of the Incidental Fees Committee. Does PSU want the Black community to repay the debt? What do you think? Write us at the Observer office. Are we to blame or what? Who is under attack here?

## Retrogressive Journalism Invades Portland

by Stephen E. McPherson

A scurrilous scandal sheet recently oozed from the primeval muck to emerge in Portland wreaking with yellow journalism, racism and unmitigated hatred. At first glance, one's inclination is to dismiss this rubbish as the rambling of a very sick mind. But then again this was exactly what was said more than fifty years ago when a house painter from Germany initiated his particular brand of political ranting. Since this new publication has such strong political overtones, we cannot ignore it because our recent experience has taught us that an impaired mind is not a strong impediment against gaining a high political office, not only at the local level but especially in the state house and on more than one occasion entree to the oval office, itself.

It is too often that the Constitution of the United States has been employed as a subterfuge to camouflage the evil intent of some misguided miscreant. In this case it cloaks itself in the questionable respectability of the Northeast Reformer and then launches an unbridled attack against the community, its representatives and individual citizens. It is very conceivable that one could have a very legitimate criticism of anyone of the persons mentioned in the article, but when one shoots into a crowd with a double barreled shotgun in order to get just one culprit, then it is the veracity of the assailant that is called into question together with the legitimacy of their accusations.

It is particularly distressing to note the manner in which the writer presents its story. Any one with the least

amount of sensitivity to the Black community and it's concerns would not have portrayed the Northeast community as "possumhood." Even when these words are spoken through Pogo, the comic strip character, the insult remains. Professional ethics prevent this writer from repeating the perjorative characterizations that were employed to describe key persons at

the King Neighborhood Facility. This mean little missile of hate received wide distribution throughout the city. It is interesting to note that a person with a similar name as the N.E. Reformer's author also receives public assistance. Certainly the expenses involved in this effort were not trivial. The question arises as to

(Continued To Page 2)



CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**  
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Dick Bogle, Commissioner  
1220 S.W. Fifth Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
(503) 248-4682

January 19, 1989

Dear Readers of The Portland Observer:

Earlier this month, I was sworn into office for my second four-year term as your City Commissioner.

I want to thank every one of you who voted for me and supported me. My roots run deep in this community. I take your support to my heart, and never for granted.

In addition to representing all the people of Portland, I feel a deep and everlasting responsibility to all people of color. I never forget who I am, or where I sprang from.

These are perhaps the most difficult times in history for parts of North and Northeast Portland. My staff and I are constantly aware of this. Our job is finding solutions that work to break the grip of fear existing in many neighborhoods, and to create an equality of livability throughout the city.

My mind, and my door, are always open. Remember, I am here at City Hall for you, so please don't hesitate to call me with your questions or concerns. If I am tied up, someone in my office will get back to you, just as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dick Bogle, Commissioner  
Department of Public Safety

## National Urban League Releases "The State of Black America 1989;" Panel Of Black Scholars Analyze Key Issues

John E. Jacob, President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Urban League will lead a panel of distinguished Black scholars in an analysis of key issues confronting Black America during the release of The State of Black America 1989 at 10 a.m., Tuesday, January 24 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

The authors and articles are:

Dr. John O. Calmore, "To Make Wrong Right: The Necessary and Proper Aspirations of Fair Housing;" Dr. Price M. Cobbs, "Valuing Diversity: The Myth and the Challenge;" Marian Wright Edelman, "black Children in America;" Dr. Charles Hamilton, "On Parity and Political Empowerment;" Dr. Robert B. Hill, "Critical Issues for Black Families by the Year 2000;" Dr. C. Eric Lincoln, "Knowing the Black Church: What It Is and Why;" Dr. Wade W. Nobles along with Dr. Lawford L. Goddard, "Drugs in the African-American Community: A Clear and Present Danger;" Dr. David Swinton, "Economic Status of Black Americans;" and Dr. Reginald C. Wilson, "Black Higher Education: Crisis and Promise."

The State of Black America 1989 will also be telecast via The Howard University Black College Satellite Telecommunications Network and its affiliate network to more than a million people across the nation.

The State of Black America 1989 addresses some of the disparities existing in the country and is the most authoritative document examining the current status and conditions of blacks in America. The report also gives insight into issues that need to be addressed and the work that must be done towards making a just and equitable society. The 1989 report is the fourteenth annual edition.

NOTE: The Portland Observer will print summaries of major papers in the State of Black America in next week's editorial.

## Newsletter: An Affront To Portland's African-American Community

The Northeast Reformer, a newsletter of the worst kind, defines itself as "A solid expression of the truth, justice, the American way and the editor's personal opinions." The newsletter is supposedly published by a faceless, obscure group called "The Northeast Reform Committee," chaired by Joyce Boles. Boles also takes credit as the newsletter's editor. The newsletter claims it is "about, by, and for reformers in inner-Northeast Portland." It's targets? The NE Coalition of Neighborhoods, and the welfare system. However, once a reader has stumbled through the hogwash of stated objectives, it becomes clear that Ms. Boles and company should be called "The Northeast Deforers."

Case in Point: In the January 1989 issue of the Reformer, Mr. Ronnie Herndon is referred to as "Alron Hernigator," Ms. Edna Robertson as "Miss Boombah Robertson," and Mr. Charles Ford as "Model C. Ford."

In a story entitled "The Front Page," Pogo, the Possum from the Walt Kelly Comic Strip, is found at the Tippin' Inn, drinking and talking a language found only in Ms. Boles imagination.

First, Ms. Boles and company is outta step, outta pocket, outta mind and outta time with Portland's largest African-American community.

The attack on Mr. Herndon, Ms. Robertson and Mr. Ford is intolerable, unacceptable and de-filing. Our community does not share or support the Reformer's bold and tacky attempt to defame respected members of Oregon's African-American leadership.

Secondly, the Reformer's use of the comic strip character, Pogo, as a so-called dumb-witted, Black language talkin' possum, is a serious affront to the entire African-American community. This is not satire or caustic wit. This is blatant degradation parading itself as satire.

Like any American citizen, Ms. Boles and company is protected by free speech and those so-called other good things guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. However, when those rights are abused and when the African-American community is the stage upon which the abuses are enacted or played out, the community is obligated to respond in its own behalf.

We don't need Ms. Boles brand of yellow journalism nor do we need her as a self-appointed prosecutor, Judge and Jury on African-American leadership and affairs.

And ... If Ms. Bole's newsletter is an indication of reform, we all are in trouble ....

## SENIOR OF THE WEEK

Mr. V.L. Bush resides in N.E. Portland. Came to Portland, January 9, 1943 from Huntsville, Ala., to work in the shipyards.

He has held many jobs since. Montgomery Ward -; Nabisco - 241/2 years; Multnomah Hotel - 5 years.

Retired January 31, 1975. Mr. Bush is Meniker of Vancouver Ave. Baptist Church. Pastor (Rev. O.B. Williams) where he serves on Deacon Board.

He is a member of Enterprise #1, Willamette Construction #23, Potluck Comm. Urban League of Portland. Past member of the Urban League of Portland Advisory Board.

He is married to the lovely Mrs. Cealo Bush, who also works every 2nd Wednesday, with Potluck Comm. Urban League of Portland.

Hobbies are fishing and hunting (33 years).

Mr. Bush will celebrate his birthday January 20.

His hobbies include reading, public speaking, and basketball.



Mr. V.L. Bush

### Saluting ....



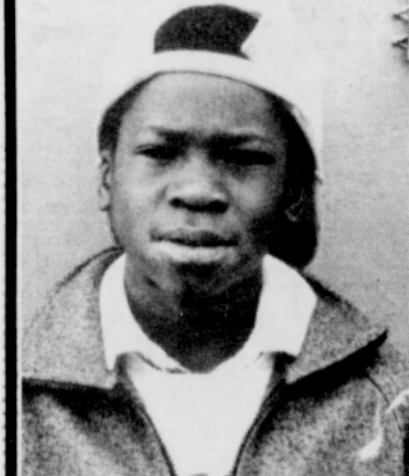
Linda King  
Library Clerk  
N. Portland Branch



Danier Coppedge  
Markham Middle School



Michelle Knight  
Whitaker Middle School



Aneer Lomax  
Kenton Elementary

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I have been offered the opportunity to take on special writing assignments for the Portland Observer.

Because of this, I will be on leave as News Editor for approximately two months. During those months, in addition to writing assignments, I will finish a major stage play, a series of children stories and produce other work relating to the performing arts and African-American Culture.

Nyewusi Askari