

STUDY OF BLACK HISTORY TODAY SEEN AS RELEVANT AS EVER

By Henry Duvall

Rooted in the 1920s but born in the '60s, Black History Month comes and goes every February giving Americans what Professor Russell L. Adams of Howard University calls a "momentary view of the black experience."

Describing the annual observance as beneficial but insufficient, Adams, who chairs Howard's department of Afro-American studies, says the study of black American history continues to be relevant because many Americans have "inherited uncorrected stereotypes" of blacks and the American experience involving race. "In the past, Afro-American studies (on college campuses) were seen as correcting the historical record," he points out. "While that's still important, these studies are also seen today as a useful component of one's preparation for living in a diverse society."

Adams attributes some of the interdisciplinary field's gains to an increasingly minority presence in the nation's growing multicultural workforce, where a degree of cultural awareness may go a long way in climbing the career ladder in the next century. He believes that the black experience is intertwined with the American experience and culture. Although he indicates that the typical American knows very little about Afro-Americans, their importance is underscored by the fact that a civil war was fought to determine their status in society.

"We are just beginning to study the black experience in a formal sense, whereas the study of Western culture goes back centuries," says the scholar, an associate professor in Howard's College of Liberal Arts.

Adams says there has been a greater need for the study of black history and culture during the Reagan administration, which sparked a conservative mood in the nation, he contends.

"Decision makers need to have all the objective information they can receive, especially during an era of conservatism when stereotypes may take the place of (reasonable) thought," he emphasizes.

The conservative mood breeds "reliance on stereotypes and withdrawal of attention to the realities of our experience," adds Adams, who is black and holds a Ph.D. degree in political science from the University of Chicago.

The professor says the study of black history is also relevant today because of the nation's "social amnesia," explaining that Americans quickly forget the struggle that has been waged for social justice.

"We now have generations of young people who were born since the '60s but know nothing of it," he points out. "Black studies function as a social memory bank for this generation."

Although the national observance of black history began around 1926 as "Negro History Week," it wasn't until the '60s that the observance expanded to a month-long celebration and the study of Afro-American history emerged on college campuses.

Black students were outraged to find that many American universities claiming to be comprehensive in scope had practically ignored the Afro-American presence in their curricula, says Adams. The professor says that today the study of Afro-American history and culture enjoys increased support at many of the nation's colleges and universities.

On some campuses, the schools are considering making Afro-american studies mandatory for all freshmen, he emphasizes, noting that Howard has such a requirement.

Says Adams, "The schools have accepted the fact that a good college curriculum includes recognition of the black presence in this society."

Rep. Dix Introduces Bill For First-Time Home Buyers

Salem--To enable Oregonians who find themselves priced out of the home buying market to afford a new home, House Majority Leader David Dix, D-Eugene, has introduced a bill that will allow individuals to establish tax deductible accounts.

The measure, House Bill 3273, provides that amounts contributed by individuals or couples to an "Oregon housing account" and the interest from that account are deductible from Oregon taxable income provided the holders of the account meet conditions set up by the law.

"The American dream is to be able to own your own home and it's no secret in this state and across the country that the number of families buying homes is declining," Dix said. "This plan will provide one avenue for them to realize that dream again."

The account can be established at any bank, savings and loan, or credit union and contributions cannot exceed \$2000 per year and \$10,000 total for couples. In addition, no one can open a housing account who owns or has owned a home; the money can be used only for purchasing a home; and the purchase must be made within 120 months. The bill sets no maximum income level for eligibility. "This is an effort to both allow young people in the state to buy their first home and to stimulate the housing economy," said Dix. "I think it's something we should push through this session."

Black Mayor For New York?



By Dr. Lenora Fulani

The prospect of having a Black mayor has to please not only the African-American community but all progressive-minded people in our city. The New Alliance Party has always supported, in principle and in deed, greater inclusion of politicians of color in city, state and national government. Therefore, I welcome Mr. Dinkins' announcement that he is a candidate and I extend my support to him. I urge everyone in New York's diverse communities to join me in supporting his Democratic Party primary campaign.

But it would be less than candid of me if I did not respond to everything that Mr. Dinkins said in announcing his candidacy. "New Yorkers are tired of politicians who...act only after problems reach crisis proportions," Mr. Dinkins says. That is certainly true. But the fact is that David Dinkins, along with his Democratic Party

chums, have been in positions of power for many, many years and they have utterly failed to provide that kind of leadership on behalf of the people of this city. They haven't been able to solve problems before they've turned into crises or after. Rather, Mr. Dinkins has spoken for the Democratic Party, he has acted for it, and he has supported that party's candidates—including Ed Koch. If anyone wonders why many folks in the community might be skeptical about the announcement, that's the reason.

Once again, I think it is very important to support Mr. Dinkins' primary run. But I will continue to build an independent coalition through the series of Dump Koch speakouts I've been conducting throughout the city for the last six weeks--so that we can run candidates for various positions in the primary and, even more importantly, in the general election.

I will announce my own plans to run for citywide office at a major speakout in March. I hope to work with a slate of true independents who will function as watchdogs on the scandal-ridden and profoundly corrupt city administration that has failed miserably to solve problems either before they've turned into crises or after. We need to make sure that the people's interests, and not those of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party are represented down at City Hall and in each of the borough halls.

The views expressed in this article are those of Dr. Fulani and do not reflect those of the Portland Observer.

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"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"

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Colgate - Palmolive Co. Yields to Pressure from African-Americans
By Don Ringler



When Colgate-Palmolive Co. bought half-ownership of the Hong Kong firm Hawley & Hazel, the giant New York-based conglomerate found itself with a fulltime public relations problem. H&H manufactures the most popular toothpaste sold in Asia, Darkie. The toothpaste was marketed with a logo featuring a minstrel in blackface.

For three years C-P shareholders, religious organizations and African-Americans have criticized the company for promoting racial stereotypes. Giving way to unrelenting pressure, Colgate-Palmolive has announced that it will change the toothpaste's name to Darlie and its logo to a portrait of a man of ambiguous race in a top hat, tuxedo and bow tie.

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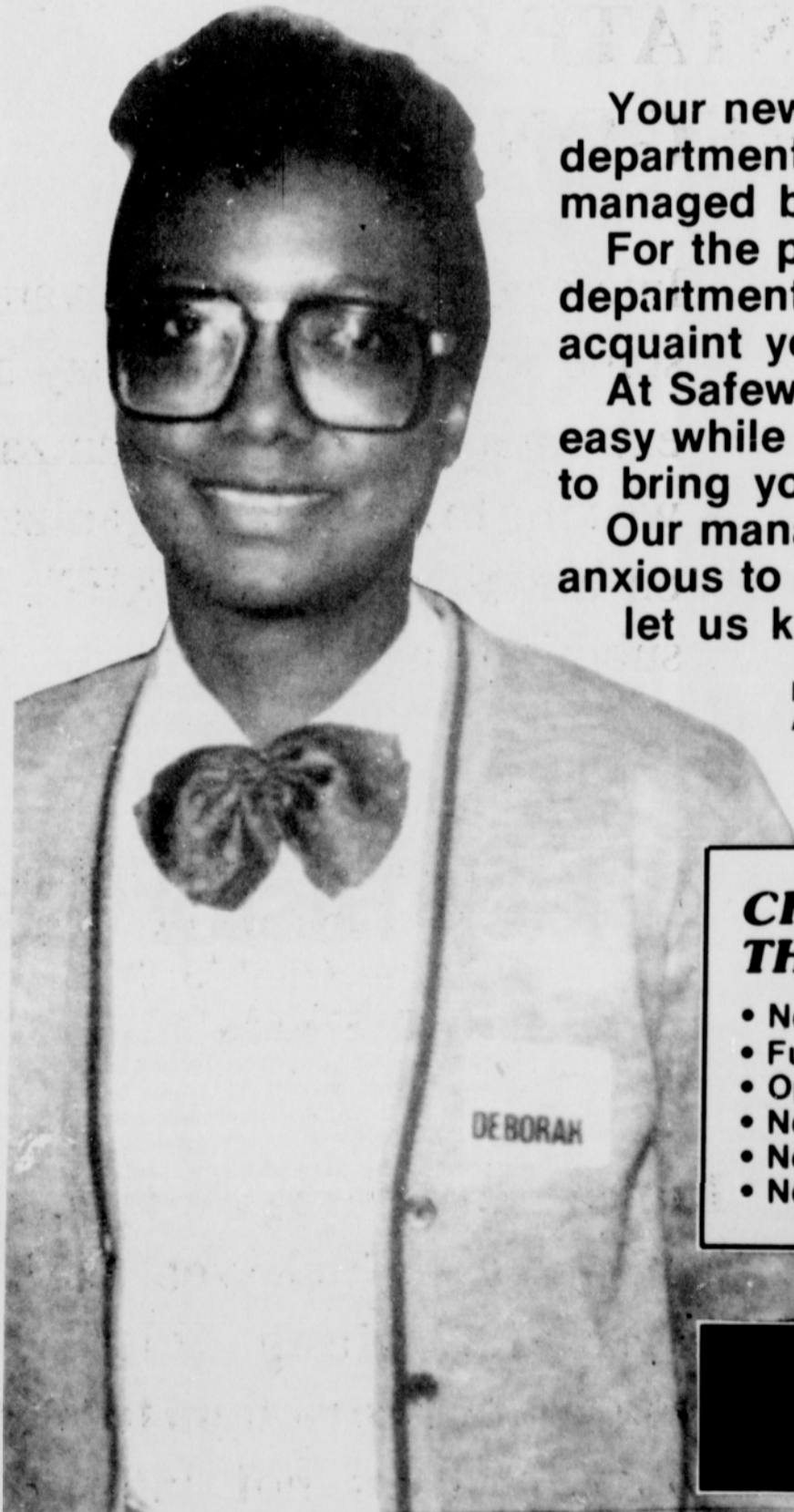
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