

MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION: Are we on target?

Submitted by Betty Garner

AFRO-OREGON AMERICA SPEAKS Part I

Betty Garner is a native of Portland, Oregon. She has won numerous awards in her community and state. Some of which include Ms. Black Oregon, Elks Oratorical State Competition, The Oregon State Sheriff's Association President's Special Award for recognition for commendable service toward better law enforcement. She is presently Chairwoman Sabin/Irvington Heights Neighborhood Association. Her present occupation is a teacher at Roosevelt High School in North Portland and her assigned duties this year entailed, Global Studies, Speech, Basic Literature, Composition, Economics and Government. (She is concerned about our leadership in the City of Portland and is seeking community support for Multicultural leadership in social, political and economic reform.

Note: Betty Garner will be announcing her candidacy for city council in 1990. Introduction

This a story that must be told and read if we are going to save our children from further degradation and corruption. It is a story that must give people hope and a full understanding of why we have so much apathy in Portland. It is a story that should shed light on why our children do not achieve in the Portland Public School system and will give different view points on Multicultural education. And finally it is a story that cries out for leadership worth of our children and worth of those seeking to continue to strive for equality politically, socially and economically.

Many educators who study psychological and sociological foundations of education break our learning patterns down in categories of age. During these times effective instruction depends on the integration of principles from various perspectives. In this article we are looking to explore the multicultural

perspective.

The obvious stimulating factors come from family, community, and education. It is these areas that one must look at when considering the organizational context in which cultural learning occurs. Family motivation, community motives and educational interpretations become the major focus for adjustment to a society in which we live.

In relationship to the categories of age one will find that usually during the 0-7 year span, the family builds the characteristics of gradual language development, recognition of objects and family viewpoints. In other words development is stimulated by information produced in the home and gained through senses from actions and body movements. Children usually observe the objects and people appearing and disappearing. Perhaps this is where our stability develops. Perhaps it is during these years that our self-confidence sets in. Perhaps it is during these years that representation of what is good or bad has been introduced. Perhaps this is where one determines how their culture is affixed to the real world.

In an effort to present a more clear overview as to what teachers and parents think, this writer interviewed some of them who expressed the following opinions.

QUESTION: Is there definite continuity in the child's mind during this stage as it relates to family observations? Do children adapt to the kind of thinking presented to them by their family from your perspective during the 0-7 stage?

EVERGIE HARRIS, Occupation: Presently site supervisor for children's program.

Yes, I believe there is a definite continuity during this stage as it relates to values adapted from family observation. Starting from birth to three years of age, I would say that the child is basically molded into patterns of what they are going to be like. Their attitudes and personalities are examples of what I mean. They also have learned rejection and acceptance.

Development of culture is prevalent, their desire for certain foods, love, etc.

From the periods between three years to seven years when they come in contact with others in another environment mixed feelings are developed, for example they almost always begin to act like some other child they admire. Then when they return to the home, parents again restate their values.

EVELYN SMITH, Secretary for Local Law Firm

Yes, I believe kids learn from their environment. All children come into the world the same, in terms of emotions, curiosity, etc. It's after they get here, that you see the change from whatever influence that enters their lives. It's environment. They do not know fear, prejudice etc. All Teddy Bears look the same.

ADA REED, Occupation: Local Community Family Counselor & School facilitator.

Of course children adapt to family observations. Why? Because they are products of their environment. They are products be it visual or auditory. If you notice, what they watch on T.V. can build a foundation. Basically I think that the question speaks for itself. What they see, what they hear, is what they will be about in the environment we live in.

The next stage 2-8 years, centers around the educational environment whereby gradual language developments are increased toward the ability to think. A symbolic form is raised in the minds of the young. A mayor runs the city, a governor runs the state, a commissioner helps the mayor. Some logic is developed here, perhaps in one direction. Most of the educators in my school are Euro-American. There are very few people that look like me in our textbooks.

QUESTION: Why aren't our children proud of our heritage?

LOIS MARIE LEWIS, Occupation: Poet & Teacher.

Because we bought into the concept of Black. There is no such thing. If there was anything of distinction between the species then Black and white could not mate and produce offspring.

COLORED/Changing Names

During COLORED
I was not yet born
I traveled a long sojourn
in MEXICO AT NEGRO
Arriving on the Oregon scene
with afro-amerikin
I wonder if they reNamed
the...COW?
At phases of black,
I took a crayon of the same
Marking upon refined Tree-Pulp
Raising my head searching
the veiw. There is no likeness
seen of either hue
BLACK/WHITE - ha, ah, ha.a.a
Bearing this with a grin I became a
Human -BEING
Refusing to degrade my
personage On arbitrary whim
Those applications Changing Name
They'd send it back again
De-Man-D-ING...Identity
I Wrote: African
Native American, White
Some French and Itali-N
If females pinch
Hispanic, Indian,, Unknown
What will you Re-Name IT when
Finally settled on always been
HUMAN.....

QUESTION: Why do our Afro-Oregon Americans emulate the prostitute and pimp rather than seeking to become a commissioner, mayor or legislator? Is it because they do not see multicultural people in this role?

PAUL MCCOY, Occupation: Piedmont Neighborhood Association Vice Chairperson.

I see a lot of fragmentation. People aren't focusing on giving much thought to the future. I think that's what leadership is all about. I think that we're kind of caught up in a crisis: Drugs, crime, etc. I think that its too bad we didn't look toward the future.

We have some progressive leaders, such as governor Goldschmidt: However, often people and many Afro-Oregon Americans will try to destroy ideas that could be very good for our city and many will try to destroy the process just because they were possibly overlooked, or they weren't notified. So there goes what might be a successful operation for all those involved.

Why our children become involved in prostitution is a tough question. Possibly because we have never related to them well. My feelings are that it is partially because we are not giving them what they need. Everybody talks about youth at risk but no one is really committed. What about getting them in a room and concentrating on what they really need.

One must surmise that this is a difficult stage for a child. For the child leaves a cultural background (the family) and heads to a new educational format. An institution for further developmental learning. An institution designed to create a sense of education that helps the child grow and adjust to the working environment.

It is during this time that the child will most likely have difficulty thinking through problems. If the adult educator says do it like me, they are more apt to adapt to that given way.

QUESTION: When you send your child to the Portland Public School system, is there concern about his/her development multiculturally? Do you expect it to be easy for your child to see the world from someone else's perspective?

BETTY GARNER, Occupation: Chairwoman of Sabin/Irvington Heights Neighborhood Association & teacher at Roosevelt High School.

I am concerned about sending my children to a school where name calling, fighting and improper language is running rampant. A child can only be as educated as their environment. For centuries children of multi ethnic backgrounds have been called slang terms or derogatory names. This induces hostility to most. Schools should make a ruling that this type of language will not be tolerated.

I am sure that my children can see another's point of view, because I use the concept or reversibility when I educate my own. The perspective, however, is long lost in our schools. Most people are too tired or have heard these words so long until it does not phase them. If you are using this type of language in your home, if you allow it to go on in your classrooms, children will emulate. Then you have become

part of the problem.

ANITA HENSON, Occupation: Assistant Closing Coordinator for a local Real Estate firm.

For years I have been appalled at the United States, let alone the Portland Public School system, for not preparing their children to be multicultural. We are a nation of many peoples. We live in a universe of diverse cultures. We need to get with the program.

As for the second half of the question, I definitely think that it would be easy for my son to see others perspectives. I will not tolerate ignorance when knowledge is available. Third knowledge should be first and foremost in our school systems. Instructors should be equipped with the knowledge to dispel the prejudices, the biases and the fear of the unknown.

ANNETTE PETETT, Occupation: Secretary for a Local Union, & member of A. Philip Randolph.

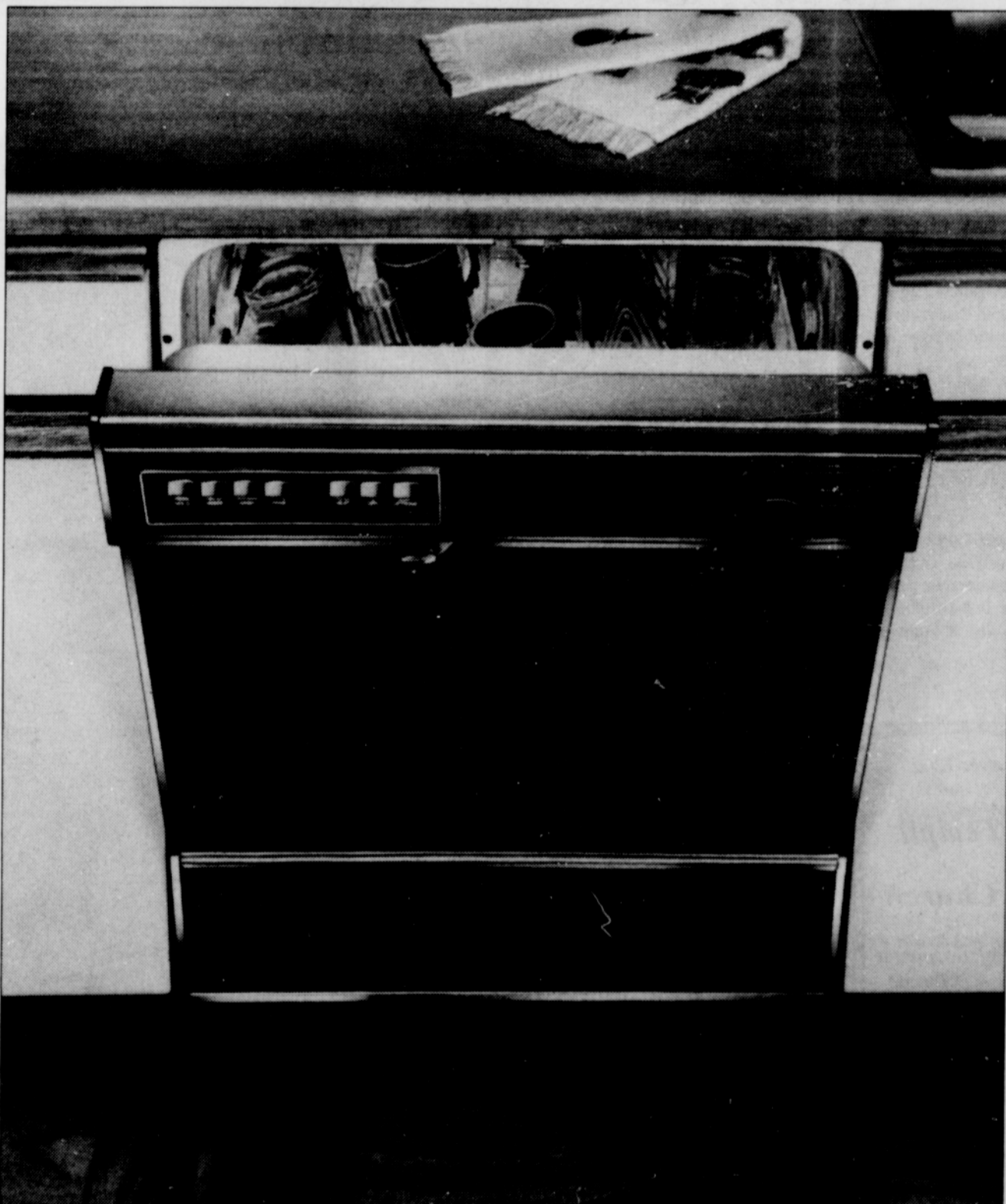
First of all, I believe that the teachers in the Portland Public School system have no idea what multicultural education is about. As an Afro-American group as a whole, I don't think that we really know it. We stand at a guessing game of do we really know it, or do I know it? Our child's present cultural values has come through his family. But the question is, do we really know in our city, state, and nation what the multicultural person is? Let us all go to school and learn this again. We have got to go together to conquer this!

To define Multicultural education as a whole, one must look at the total makeup of America. In general, it is the influence of all cultures that has made our country what it is today. To define what cultural education will do for our country as a whole; it can be summed up to:

- 1) provide positive identity to the contributions of all cultures in America.
- 2) It will help diffuse racism for it allows cultures to be studied to alleviate prejudices, biases or myths.
- 3) It will expand dialogue and promote justice whereby real solutions can be discussed to create a safe environment.

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