

Perspectives,
McKinley Burt
"GLASNOST"
FOR AMERICAN
EDUCATORS
AND
PUBLISHERS

The new Russian policy of "glasnost" is defined as openness. May we take this opportunity to demand a forthright expedition of this process at home as well as abroad?

For instance, we need to most immediately develop reading programs and supporting materials that highlight the great Black contributions to the world's finest literature. There is of course the vaunted works of Byron, Yeats, Tennyson, Longfellow and Poe, but what about the magnificent works of the authors of African descent-whose works (with notations of ancestry) would provide motivation and self-imagery for African-American students: Pushkin Dumas(es), Samuel Coleridge Taylor, Robert Browning, and many others.

Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837): Today's article is about this African-Russian literary giant who changed the history of Russia (and the world) for all time to come with the passionate humanity of his prose and poetry. In direct relevance is "The Captain's Daughter", a historical novel of epic proportions, a story of the peasant's revolt. In this country and as late as 1940, two of Pushkin's shorter works appeared in many primary school readers; his most popular poem, "The Fisherman and the Fish" and "The Golden Cockerel", a fairy tale of great beauty and fancy.

Two of his novels were converted into famous operas: "Boris Godunov" (Mussorgski), and "Eugene Onegin" (Tchaikovsky). At the library you will find a most informative article in the "Negro History Bulletin, March 1948; The Negro's Literary Influence on Masterpieces of Music (pp. 134-137)". Also, if you can find it, there is "Pushkin, the Shakespeare of Russia" by Boris Lee Brasol, N.Y., 1931. More recent and of special interest to English teachers developing lesson plans (we hope) is "Pushkin: A Biography", David Magarshack, N.Y., Grove Press, 1967, 1969.

As with many of Europe's geniuses of African Descent who influenced the destiny of that continent's affairs, there was in Pushkin a very early maturation of talent. At the age of 12 he entered the Imperial Lycee at St. Petersburg where, incredibly, his passionate outpourings led to his becoming Russia's leading poet at the age of 15. His first poem "Reminiscences of Tsarskoye Selo" was not written in the conventional French of the Russian intellectual circles, but in Russian. Russia had at last a great poet using her own language; "With one cut of the sword Pushkin had freed Russian literature from the ties that were keeping it enslaved".

The passage below from the "International Library of Negro Life and History (p.111) indicates that Pushkin's powerful pen was a powerful force in the overthrow of the Czars of tyranny, and was crucial to the development of that mindset which blossomed into the Russian Revolution. "Placing the language of his people among the worlds' most important, Pushkin cried out for freedom and protested bondage and serfdom...became spokesman for the poor and oppressed."

Marx, Lenin, and Kerensky have their due in Russian history, but most of us know that it is first the soul of man which must be reached. Alexander Pushkin did just this in shaping the psyche of the Russian masses without sword or cannon-this great grandson of General Hannibal, the freed African slave who became chief military engineer for Czar, Peter the Great.

Several lines from Pushkin's poem, "Ode to Liberty", says it all:

"Oh shake and shiver, tyrants of the world,
But lend an ear ye fallen slaves
Gain courage and rise."



SPEAK OUT FOR JUSTICE

The Coalition for Human Dignity, formed following the murder of Mulugeta Seraw, has announced that it will hold a "Speakout for Justice" in Lowndale Square across from the Multnomah County Courthouse at noon on Monday June 5, 1989. Kenneth Meiske (aka Ken Death) is to be sentenced this day following entry of a plea of guilty to state murder charges as a result of a plea bargain.

Members of the Coalition have expressed concern about the status of federal charges in this case. They do not want the federal charges dropped. The Coalition wants to call attention to the continuing problem of violence by organized racist "skinheads" and other hate groups against members of our community based on color, national origin, sexual preference or religious beliefs. They plan to provide an open microphone so that those who wish to express themselves on this community problem will have the opportunity to do so. Alcohol, drugs, weapons or violence will not be permitted.

The Coalition is also planning to distribute a flyer at the Speakout and during Rose Festival week which details recent incidents of violence and intimidation in the city and which calls for action by City and State officials to halt this trend.

For information call, 287-6334.
Coalition for Human Dignity
P.O. Box 40344
Portland, OR 97240

BLACK UNITED FRONT to MEET

On May 2, the first meeting of the North-Northeast Economic Development Task Force was held to follow through on the wishes expressed by the community. Six sub-committees were formed to address Economic Development, Jobs, Housing, Land Use, Transportation and Family Services issues and to develop a plan for each area. A comprehensive plan was then put together using each segment.

You are invited to attend the next community meeting on May 31 where the draft plan will be presented to the community for its consideration. The meeting will be held at King Neighborhood Facility, 4815 NE 7th, beginning at 7:00pm.

On April 26 over 100 residents of inner-northeast Portland met to focus on the City's Neighborhood Revitalization Plan. After much debate the plan was solidly rejected on the grounds of inadequate community input. The community called for a more open process. Organizations and individuals seeking to participate were identified.



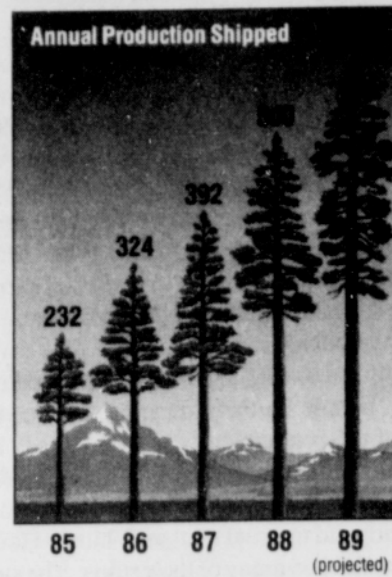
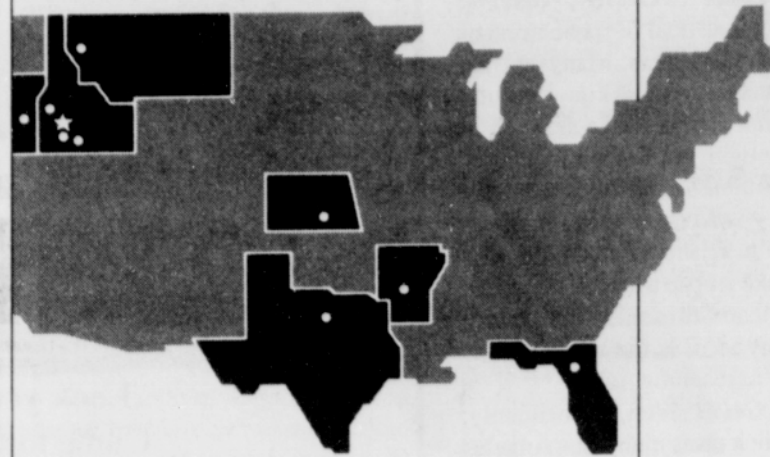
Alberta Street Festival Scheduled

"Alberta Street Festival, N.E. 16th to 19th streets on Alberta Street, Saturday, July 8th, from 10 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Food, Entertainment and Art.
Contact: Royal Esquire Club, Community Service Dept. 288-8569."

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