

PORTLAND OBSERVER

VOLUME XX NUMBER 15

"The Eyes and Ears of the Community"

April 11, 1990

AFRICANS SET THE WORLD'S STANDARD FOR STYLE, FASHION AND BEAUTY

African peoples practically began their existence as the world's leaders in style and fashion--from hairstyle to dress, to jewelry. Not only did ancient Africa give the world mathematics, astronomy and letters, but pioneered in the cultural idiom of "looking good"... "stylin'". As well-documented here, we have had no peers before or since.

Considering that African Americans belong to a race that has always been "one step ahead" in class and sophistication, they might well ask, "Where and when did it all begin?" Why were others still wearing animal skins and piercing their tightly balled hair with the bones of predators, while Africans had already pioneered an advanced culture that the world has always denied--but has tried to copy ever since?

W.E.B. Dubois, the noted Black historian, tells us, "In Greek narratives, Ethiopia, 'land of the burnt faces', lay either side of the Red Sea in Africa and Asia, and was inhabited by Black folks."

As described in Smith's "A Dictionary of the Bible", it is "the country in which the Greeks and the Romans described as Aethiopia and the Hebrews as 'Cosh', lying to the south of Egypt and embraced in its most extended sense, the modern Nubia (now the Sudan)." This civilization founded by peoples whom the patriarchs described as the "Sons of Ham" flowered 9000 years ago (long before Egypt's dynasties)--and it is the transmittal of Ethiopia's culture and tradition to the North which is responsible for Egypt's glory. First to Egypt, then to Greece, then to Rome, and eventually the world. For now, let us see what went on in the

length hair, but more often they wore it long. These styles were replaced in later periods by intricately curled and plaited coiffures; the upper classes wore wigs made of human hair and vegetable fibres, and those worn on ceremonial occasions were dressed in a variety of elaborate ways and further ornamented with diadems, coronets, flowers and jewels. Great trouble was taken over hairdressing by men and



bronze, and other small implements kept in fitted boxes or leather cases. The poorer sections of the population queued for the attention of the barber in the open, under the trees.

A wide range of cosmetics and beauty preparations was used by both sexes: scented oils and fats for massaging the body in hot weather; cleansing creams consisting of animal or vegetable oils and lime, and perhaps chalk, for restoring youth, and eradicating wrinkles and blemishes. Women painted their cheeks with rouge, and the red pigment found in cosmetic jars is a red ochre which was probably used with a base of vegetable or tallow grease, which perhaps a little gun-resin, and this may be the cosmetic that was also used as lip rouge.

Eye make-up was used from the very earliest period, for which a preparation of green malachite (a green ore of copper) was the earliest and remained the chief one used; the other, which came into use much later and survived into the Coptic period, was of galena (a dark grey ore of lead). The finely ground material was made into a paste or powder, and has been found in the tombs among personal belongings contained in segments of hollow reeds or in small vases, themselves sometimes reed-shaped. The present-day Egyptian kohl, which is still extensively used as an eye cosmetic, consists of soot or a mixture of galena and lamp black, and is applied with a small rod made of wood, bone, ivory or metal, which is moistened with water and dipped into the powdered preparation. The ancient Egyptians applied their malachite and galena eye-paint with similar sticks, or with the finger, to add lustre to their naturally almond-shaped eyes, and as a protection against the dust and the glare of the sun, or to ward off flies and other insects.

Too tough! No wonder it was too hard for any other culture of those ancient times to follow that act--too difficult for a lot today; class is born, not made. For instance, note the illustration of the African ladies at an ancient feast. The literature describes their "elegant coiffures", surmounted by cones of perfumed pomades designed to slowly trickle down to bathe the head and shoulders. Men were seated on the opposite side of the room as they were "inclined to reel about and roll on the floor." This tradition, like many others learned in Egypt, was transmitted to Israel by the Jews of the Exodus ("The Hebrews anointed the hair profusely with ointments, which were generally compounded of various aromatic ingredients": Ruthiii.3; 2Samxiv.2; PSxiv.2; Eccl.ix.8; see Smith, Dictionary of the Bible).

So it was that the Africans on both sides of the Red Sea--in Ethiopia and Somali, in the Yemens and across the Gulf of Eden in Arabian Africa (the ancient biblical land of Punt)--early on began the fabulous trades in frankincense, myrrh and spices, and developed the manufacture of perfumes, unguents and pomades. When the famed African "Queen of Sheba" visited King Solomon, she came with "camels that bare spices." Frankincense produced a special fragrance that for thousands of years has been a significant element in religious ritual--in the Book of Exodus, Aaron was instructed in its use (Smithsonian Magazine, 12/86, page 148).

Indeed, it is well-documented that Africans set the world's standard for style, fashion and beauty. And see the illustrations in both sections of this special edition.



fashionable daily life of our ancestors.

It is only to be expected that in the course of three thousand years, fashions in dress and hair styles should vary and show a tendency to become more elaborate as time went on and as distinctions between people and their personal taste became more varied and sophisticated; yet, generally speaking, the unvarying climated tended to keep dress simple and light, and basically it remained fairly constant. The simple styles of the Old Kingdom, a linen loin-cloth of short apron or skirt for men knotted at the waist, with sometimes a sleeveless tunic, and a straight linen tunic for women supported by crossed straps under the breasts, was universally worn by kings and queens and commoners alike. In the New Kingdom the upper classes of both sexes wore more flowing garments with sleeved tunics and cloaks, often finely pleated, still of very fine white linen, colour being provided by elaborate jewelled collars, necklaces, bracelets, pectorals and ear-rings.

Men in the Old Kingdom wore their hair short, and women sometimes followed the same style with shoulder-

women alike, and an array of perfumed ointments, dressing and fixatives were used, and there are many recipes for combating grey hair and baldness. Wigs and wig boxes were buried in the tombs together with other personal possessions deemed essential for eternity.

Open sandals were made of plaited papyrus or reed and prettily ornamented; some were of gold, and may have been worn only on ceremonial occasions, carried by sandal-bearers, to be put on at the appropriate moment. Egyptians seemed just as happy walking about barefoot.

Children presented no great problem where dress was concerned: they went about naked for the first few years, after which the boys were given a loin-cloth and girls a belt or a simple tunic. They wore their hair short except for one curled sidelock hanging over one ear.

Men and women spent a lot of time over their toilet and were attended each morning by their barbers, manicurists, pedicurists, masseurs and hairdressers, equipped with hooked razors with curved bronze blades, and sets of knives, scrapers, files and tweezers of copper and

Adair Appointed Assistant Director



Donny R. Adair

Oregon Department of Human Resources Director Kevin W. Concannon has named Donny R. Adair Assistant Director with responsibilities for Human Resource Management. "With 12,000 employees in the Department," said Concannon, "the human resource function is one of the most significant." Adair will assume his new job on May 1, 1990. He currently serves as Human Resource Manager of the Department of Environmental Quality.

The 39-year old native of Portland was employed in the Human Resource Division of Emanuel Hospital and Health Center for nine years and held the position of Employee Relations Manager prior to joining DEQ in January of 1988. He also served as an investigator and technical assistance coordinator for the Bureau of Labor and Industries.

Adair has been active in community affairs in the Portland area. He has chaired the Boards of the Urban League of Portland and the Tri-County Affirmative Action Association. He has also served on the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, and the boards of Red Cross and United Way.

Adair will be responsible for a new thrust in organizational development, personnel policy development, affirmative action, and equal access issues. Adair will chair the council of personnel managers of the seven DHR divisions.

Gang violence, Juvenile Crime, Fighting...

The suspension rate in Portland Public Schools has increased. Middle schools have experienced the highest percentage of students suspended between 1988 and 1989.

Suspension has risen for three minority groups, Native Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans. The rate for African American students is about three times higher than for European American students district-wide.

Cityscope will explore this issue on Saturday, April 14, along with Catheryn Schar, Portland Public Schools' supervisor of student discipline programs and Junious Williams, consultant to the district.

Congratulations . . .

To **Tinisha Williams**, 11, who was selected to represent Beach School as "Miss Cinderella", 1990. The upcoming pageantry will be held in Wilsonville on June 27, with the winner competing in Miami, Florida in August.

The fifth grader aspires to become a model and veterinarian.



Tinisha Williams

And to **Ada Reed**, recent recipient of the Portland Public Schools Employees award, presented by the Masonic Officers Association of Portland and Vicinity. Ada represented 1% of the minority population receiving an Outstanding Service Award, granted for exceptional or exemplary service in conduct of or improvement in the Public School system, as Woodlawn School Community Agent and developer of the Woodlawn School Community and family Outreach Program.

Meritorious Service Awards were presented to Edna Mae Pittman, support staff at Whittier Middle School and Lurleen Shamsud-Din, Mentor Coordinator, Sabin Elementary School.



Ada Reed

Black United Front Marches



Hundreds of marchers take to the street in support of the Black United Front's annual march.



The March continued up Martin Luther King Boulevard Jr. north, and east on Killingsworth.

CREED OF THE BLACK PRESS

The Black Press believes that America can best lead the world away from social and national antagonisms when it accords to every person, regardless of race, color, or creed, full human and legal rights. Having no person, fearing no person, the Black Press strives to help every person in the firm belief that all are hurt as long as anyone is held back.

**The staff and management
of the Portland Observer would
like to wish you and those close
to you a happy Easter Sunday.**

IT'S HERE!!!

THIS issue of the Portland Observer contains a Special pull-out section featuring hair care products and hairstyles. Don't forget to look for this handy guide.