



African American Festival 1990



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"The Eyes and Ears of The Community"

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## Blacks and Science, II: "Who Told Thee Thou Was Naked?"

by Professor McKinley Burt

When this question was put to Adam in the Garden of Eden, it indicated that the "head man" knew that Adam's position was shaky. How could someone who had been so gifted be weak enough to allow himself to be brainwashed by the devil? As we stand at that threshold of the 21st century of science and technology I cited last week--where we were told that "only the scientifically literate and technically proficient will be able to make it--can it really be true that African Americans stand helpless and "naked" before the storm? I think not!

It was with specific purpose that I described the Black Inventors of America whose innovations created so much of this nation's industrial might; and that the last few weeks of my "Perspectives" column (see page 2) has examined the extensive background of Blacks in the basic industries of manufacturing, transportation, communications and agricultural processing. I could have added that early on this century these combination inventors and entrepreneurs were sponsoring national and international exhibitions to display their wares and brains (The Atlanta and Paris, France Technological Expositions; documented in the U.S. Congressional Record).

This week in that some column the purpose becomes clearer as I describe the development of my course design at Portland State University, "Black Economic Experience"--and how I proceeded to document that African Americans (and Africans) from day one have possessed the drive and cognitive ability to master technology and carry it to new heights. The involvement and performance of Blacks in the four ma-

lor components of industry cited above reinforce the conclusion that daily, hands-on familiarity and experience with technical tools and processes can be a sufficient predication for significant Black accomplishment in technology. So one can well imagine what could have been achieved except for the constraints of racism and the attendant economic disabilities which prevented the exploitation of a group genius for its own benefit.

So how is it that in many cases we find our "New Adam" standing dejectedly in a garden, covering his nether parts and crying plaintively, "I am naked, oh Lord?" And since genes could not have changed so quickly, how is it that we have many fearful African Americans despairing that "with so many educational disabilities imposed upon us, there is no way we can compete in an age of mathematics, sophisticated instrumentation, computers and space technology?" It is obvious that there needs to be a total and MASSIVE BLACK INTERVENTION in the destructive educational and media processes that have led to the concealment or outright expurgation of Black technical achievement in this country--a vicious, century-long program of academia and publishers that has "destroyed" the very existence of those magnificent role models which could serve our youth so well.

It is either that or face extinction as we neglect the great learning tools of our "real and relevant" history, and allow an establishment media to state like the arrogant Humpty Dumpty said to Alice, "Things are what I say they are!" A few hundred sport celebrities and entertainers are not sufficient as

survival icons to point the way for a beleaguered race in the space age--even as millionaires. I suppose that it is easy for some to despair as they note how many have forgotten that bitter-sweet video produced by Bill Cosby at the end of the 1960's, "Black History: Lost, Strayed or Stolen." The recitation of Black science and invention was a combination of exuberant pride and a humbling sense of loss. African Americans cannot afford such a loss--nor the loss of an evolutionary niche in the scheme of things.

But we have it now that there is a way and it is quite open if African Americans are willing to respect and to learn from their history--and have a commitment commensurate with the scope of the task. Those inventors and technicians are still there, genes unchanged. We've got to reach them whether they are in school, on a job, in the military--or in gangs, or in jail. Though "retired" I am busy 16 hours a day writing and designing experience-based curriculum in math, science and relevant applications. With the help of a few dedicated volunteers from academia and a Beaverton "Science Park Industry" I maintain a weekly interaction with educators and others across the country. Some are in cities where, at their invitation, I'll be doing workshops this Fall and Winter. Some will be here for a workshop I'm conducting this summer at the same westside electronic facility. We need an awful lot of us busy in this fashion. Contact me.

There are some here in Portland who are doing a magnificent job in mentoring and inspiring minorities in technology. I would especially cite "MESA" ("Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement). Inaugurated in 1985, this program has an African American director, Mrs. Renee W. Anderson, and serves over 400 students in five middle schools and two high schools. Their annual banquet will be held June 19 at Portland State University in the main ballroom at 6:30 P.M.

Certainly, we cannot neglect to commend a Portland teacher who so very early on perceived the need for science education at the very earliest levels. We commend Ms. Claudia McDuffy who conceived and directed project "BEEP" (Boise Elementary Environmental Project) in the middle 1970's. There are a number who deserve commendation but more next week.

## President Bush Films a Public Service Announcement for the United Negro College Fund

President Bush filmed a public service announcement for the United Negro College Fund in a White House filming session on Tuesday, May 22, 1990.

In this thirty-second commercial titled "Dreams," the President states that "the American dream is alive -- nurtured, in part, by the United Negro College Fund. The Fund reaches out to deserving young students with a quality

education -- an education that turns wonderful young dreams into realities." In the commercial, the President is joined by five young children who tell their dreams for the future.

The commercial was produced by the New York advertising agency Young and Rubicam, which has been handling the United Negro College Fund account for the past 19 years.



President Bush and seven-year-old Tessa Hersh, who wants "to be the President" when she grows up, on the set during filming of the United Negro College Fund Public Service Announcement.

## Congratulations

1990



## Western Conference Champions

## 1990 ROSE FESTIVAL QUEEN & COURT



Queen Erin Neill is shown being crowned by Rose Festival Prime Minister Tony Pasion Photo by Katie Tichenor



Renata Adamidov Wilson, Johanna Moody Franklin, Tammy Herdener St Mary's, Katina Williams Grant, Anna Beck Roosevelt, Jennifer McLaughlin Madison, Karrie McIntyre Central Catholic, Oona Hathaway Lincoln, Julie Justice Parkrose, Valarie Doakes Jefferson, Donna Olson Benson, Carmen Bailey Marshall



## AFRICAN AMERICAN FESTIVAL GAINS WIDE SUPPORT

After months of planning, brainstorming, and ups and downs, Portland's First African American Festival will soon become a reality.

Spokesperson Waverly Davis, today announced that endorsements have been received from the ranks and files of the business sector, community leaders, and politicians.

The festival schedule (June 1 - July 22) will be highlighted by a gospel program at the Schnitzer Concert Hall Saturday, June 16, 1990, 7:00 PM.

## Oregon's Largest Government Agency Goes On The Road

The Oregon Department of Human Resources will hold a series of historic Town Hall meetings across the State during the week of June 11th. Officials will travel to Pendleton, Bend, Portland, Medford, and Eugene. For the first time since DHR was created in 1971, all seven Division Administrators will join the Department Director in discussion sessions with local citizens. "We want to incorporate the views of Oregonians as we go about our job of making wise investments in people," said Department Director Kevin Concannon. All State agencies are now in the process of preparing their proposed budgets.

Oregon Human Resources is the largest single Department in State government. Its \$3.5 billion, two year budget includes about one quarter of the State General Fund. The nearly 12,000 employees of Human Resources serve Oregonians with programs rang-

ing from providing widely used economic development information, to public health, to administering welfare assistance for the poor. Department services are used by such groups as seniors, the disabled, the mentally ill, and the unemployed.

In each of the five Oregon communities, Human Resources leaders will meet with citizens at two Town Hall sessions--one in the afternoon from 3:00 to 5:00 and one in the evening from 7:00 to 9:00. Department officials will also confer with community leaders and local Department staff members. The sessions are scheduled in Pendleton on Wednesday, June 13th; Medford on Thursday, June 14th; and Eugene on Friday, June 15th.

Attending with Concannon will be Steve Minnich, Administrator of the Adult and Family Services Division; Bill Carey, Administrator of Children's Services Division; Dr. Rich Lippincott,

Administrator of the Mental Health and Developmental Disability Services Division; Dick Ladd, Administrator of the Senior and Disabled Services Division; Pamela Mattson, Administrator of the Employment Division; Mike Skeels, Administrator of the Health Division; and Joil Southwell of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division.

The public will also have an opportunity to question and give opinions to those who head the State's Medicaid program, Alcohol and Drug program, and State Community Services program.

While the Department has held public budget hearings in the past, there has never been as substantial an effort at reaching citizens, according to Concannon. "We're going to reach out to these communities for informal discussions with Oregonians about our mission," said Concannon, "and we want to provide these forums for citizens to offer their views on critical needs and issues of concern to them and us."

# The Portland Observer is the Official Newspaper of the African-American Festival