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Inside	
Spotlight on Muhammad Ali	Page 2
National Urban League funds business education for students	Page 3
Robert Cray Band Returns	Page 5
Why date white when you plan to marry Black?	Page 6

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"The Eyes and Ears of The Community"

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Portland Public Schools: Star Trek Continued

By Professor McKinley Burt

Last week we critiqued school superintendent Matthew Prophet's recent position paper, "Schools: Education or Social Services." His "position" was defined as simply a collection of current polemics in the socio-economic mandates and constraints said to make the delivery of a quality educational product all but impossible.

My own position was that the principal elements of the school district's "Star Plan" represented nothing more or less than a determined effort to counter a "revolution" of frustrated parents -- and many teachers! Further comment suggested that "the fault lies not in the stars" but in the nature of the bureaucracy, or rather than a single "whipping boy," i.e. the superintendent. But we shall keep in mind that "the buck" stops at the top of the pyramid. The implementation of (or failure of) Affirmative Action Programs around the nation has provided us with realistic models of this fact. Whether in industry or public agency, these programs work only when the chief executive of the outfit sets the tone and tenor of the process -- firmly! Wherever such a commitment was unequivocally passed down the line, the program worked.



Computerized Medical Analysis

These statements prefaced my promised comments, "...we need to take a hard look at these famed Base Line Essays, the Curriculum, and the Lesson Plan Models -- and the ephemeral Local Consultants." We should keep in mind that these components relate to a DECADE-LONG MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR SCHOOL DESEGREGATION PROJECT that is heralded as the nation's best effort so far to integrate the document history of minority contributions into the public school curriculum.

The opening salvo was to contract nationally recognized "superstars" to write supporting "Base Line Essays" in the areas of history, science/invention, mathematics, music and literature. These historians were brought to Portland a number of times to address and conduct seminars for district teachers, principals

and administrators. Local consultants, myself among them, were initially contracted to critique the draft essays of those "national" consultants. Sounds terrific, but we shall have to return to this phase later for critical examination of a flawed process -- the goal, after all, was to deliver a specific educational product to the classroom and pupil. As we see below, ten years have passed (millions of dollars) and that has not happened.

At this moment I have before me two "documents" which will serve as credible expositions of my case. The first is simply a recent news report by Bill Graves of the Oregonian staff, "School Problems Disturb Integration Group: a desegregation watchdog group gave voice to its frustration over the many minority students who slip behind academically and never learn about their heritage in Portland classrooms." Keep in mind now that this is a decade-long, multi-million dollar process -- and that you are a taxpayer! and/or parent!

In this news account of the annual report of the "Desegregation Minority Committee" to the Portland School Board, the not untypical experience of testifying senior students as quoted, "public schools had contributed little to her knowledge of her culture...the district designed lessons on African Americans that have become a model for schools across the nation, but [student] said she never saw it until she stumbled across it in the drawer of a teacher's desk that she was cleaning this year. She said that all she saw in school was Martin Luther King, Jr. I DIDN'T SEE THE SCIENTISTS OR RESEARCHERS OR ARCHITECTS -- all these people that black people have been, she said. It hurts my heart to see this happening to my race." (It also hurts the hearts of the parents.)

Well, now, wha'happen? Let us look at the second document I mentioned, generated almost ten years ago at the beginning of the process. It is a very

large and impressive production of 100 pages in a 14 x 8 1/2" format and titled, "Mathematics Scope and Sequence and Science Scope and Sequence; Portland Public Schools Curriculum Department, 1982." As a local consultant I was allowed to provide some limited input to this tome but, as aforementioned, there was absent those norms of acceptable program design -- no structured feedback and no firm institution of critical liaisons for proofing and rewrite. The same may be said for the input of the other local consultants in their particular areas of expertise. And there was no orderly, mandated structure for "inter-consultant" procedural relations -- which is why I referred to us last week as the "ephemeral local consultants." It was an exercise in frustration, probably deliberately planned. To this, add shadow stage managers ducking in and out of the scenery.

This "bible" for multi-cultural curriculum integration had four principle components; Parts I and II, the Mathematics and the Science Scope and Sequence, were of the same format. You will gain some insight into the dilemma of that African American student quoted by the Oregonian -- or the frustration of many district teachers as they sought to reduce the cumbersome intricacies of the process that is unfolded here. Remember the Chinese puzzles of the box within the box, within the box, within the box!"

"The Scope and Sequence section is divided into columns. The two lefthand columns show the major categories of instruction and grade level indicators for Introduction (I), Development (D), and Maintenance (M). For precise grade level instructional learning statements, the Curriculum Continuum - Mathematics should be consulted"

"The righthand columns show the related multicultural information including cultural group region, time period, and specific cultural/ethnic examples. These data are a key part of the multiethnic focus. This list is neither chronological nor inclusive. However, these examples give teachers information which can be used in curriculum planning, teaching, and motivation."

No, the fault certainly does not lie with the stars! *This article is continued on page two as this weeks "Perspectives" column.*

Lack of Funds Delays African American Festival Center

The African American Festival 1990 is approaching its finale. It has been a year of great challenge, education, enlightenment, many hardships and disappointments. However, through it all, God has blessed us to remain intact as an organization and in conjunction with other devoted and committed persons, witness some of the fruit of our labor through the realization and success of the following programs:

1. Participation of our youth in the Starlight Parade.
2. Exhibition depicting the history of the Black Man in Oregon. Exhibit was displayed at Waterfront Park.
3. African American Festival Youth Achievement Awards Program at Waterfront Park.

4. African American Festival NW Gospel Jubilee at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall.
5. Royal Court Coronation & Reception.

The AAF's Parade will take place on July 21st, from 10:00 a.m. to approximately 12 noon.

We had three fund raising programs. These programs did not yield funds with which to operate the Festival's Marketplace and Entertainment Center. The Executive Committee, of the African American Festival Association, met on July 12, 1990, and after much assessment and evaluation, concluded that money was a consideration but was not the only concern. The established criteria for the operation of

the Festival's Market and Entertainment Center, i.e., security, organization, coordination, more community cooperation and planning, had not been successfully met. It is for these reasons that the 1990 AA Festival's Market and Entertainment Center has been postponed until JULY 1991.

The AAF greatly appreciates your expression of support and we are committed to developing the criteria for the success for this event even further during 1990-1991 year. We hope that we can depend on your continued support and we beseech you to encourage others to become actively involved in the African American Festival Association, as a whole, and your continued assistance is needed to help us to promote. UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY.



African American Festival Selects Its Royalty



Left to right: Carolyn Warren (third runner-up), Christie Green (second runner-up), Paul Knauls (King), Kyra Shaunna Parker (first runner-up), Cora Lee Benjamin (queen), Nathaniel Frazier (Senior candidate), Rukaijah Adams (Princess). Not Pictured: Muhammed Hasan Najieb (Prince)

City of PORTLAND, OREGON

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the African American Festival Association, organized in 1989 by Waverly L. Davis, celebrates its inaugural year in 1990; and

WHEREAS, the African American Festival Association, a pioneer in the area of special events, brings to North/Northeast Portland on an annual basis a cultural celebration, in partnership with the Rose Festival, as a sanctioned event to be organized by the African American citizens of North/Northeast Portland; and

WHEREAS, the African American Festival Association's directors have rendered invaluable community and public services as a nonprofit association who cares for the seniors and the youth of its community, assisting in the development of youth, economic development and community-unity; and

WHEREAS, the African American Festival Association is hosting the inaugural cultural celebration of the North/Northeast community July 18-22, 1990, in Portland, Oregon; and

WHEREAS, the African American Festival's royal court, the newly selected royal family, will preside over the 1990 African American Festival and will reign one year as royalty from North/Northeast Portland's African American community;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, J. E. Bud Clark, Mayor of the City of Portland, Oregon, the "City of Roses", do hereby proclaim the week of July 18-22, 1990, to be

AFRICAN AMERICAN FESTIVAL WEEK

in Portland, in recognition of the importance of the African American Festival Association's efforts to bring unity to the North/Northeast Portland community, to the city and to the state of Oregon. And in recognition of the neighborhood associations for their efforts to unify for the betterment of our neighborhoods.

J. E. Bud Clark
J. E. Bud Clark, Mayor



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