

Mrs. Frances Schoen-Newspaper Room  
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# PORTLAND OBSERVER 25¢

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"The Eyes and Ears of The Community"

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## Parents Face School Daze, Part 1

by Professor McKinley Burt



The local education scene is infinitely more important to Portland parents than those news reports from Russia of Batman facing up to Robin (Gorbachev vs Yeltsin). But will they, and the community, face up to the fact that some basic problems in the "learning game" have come full circle to besiege us again?

We expected some shocks, with the economy down and all; the state's main industry, lumber, at the mercy of that Spotted Owl -- with a corresponding cut in education funds that come from timber cuts. And, certainly, the media has kept us well aware that the fallout from Proposition 5 produces a new cutback in educational services each week. But how many are aware of a corresponding attrition in vital services (and commitment) related to Portland Public School's nationally acclaimed multicultural program that was said to be the best in the country?

As a consultant and participant from its inception, I have an experience-based perception that the detractors of the Baseline Essays and other forward-looking models for the motivation and self-image of minority students are clapping their hands in glee. Why? Because under cover of the fiscal constraints cited above, the operational structures of many such beneficial programs have been gutted or modified just as surely as has the communist apparatus in Russia -- but hardly with the same altruistic intent.

Any observer at the district's recent "budget adjustment" conference could see the pendulum swinging in a new/old direction. But it would have required a degree of familiarity with the system to determine exactly how these decisions would play out down in the "trenches." Now, in this first month of school, we may view and assess the ramifications of this NEW ORDER. Things have not been perfect but the new look may spell catastrophe.

First, let us take a look at the "Integration Services Specialists," the cadre of multicultural personnel assigned to schools around the district for on-site implementation. These specialists have been absolutely essential to an effective liaison between students, teachers/administration and parent. It has been their dedication and yeoman work (far beyond an 8 hr. day) that has bolstered attendance, reduced dropouts, resolved conflicts and conducted year-around motivation and image-building sessions. The results have been exactly what the district has built its boastful statistics on. But what do we find happening now?

Those "fruitful" budget sessions saw their jobs first cut out entirely and, then, restored to half time! And how will their "non-advocacy" hours be spent? A number will become DRUG AND ALCOHOL SPECIALISTS! Since over the years I (and many others) have been enabled by this personnel to come into classrooms and auditoriums to interface with students and teachers in a very effective manner -- as successful role models and bringing historical and contemporary information for motivation -- we especially deplore such a short-sighted dislocation of the multicultural process.

But there are more "glitches" in the system facing the parents and community this year. We will mention several, but will have to explore them more in depth next week. The "D-MAC" (desegregation monitoring) Committee has its budget reduced and has lost its secretary. In other words, the watchdog has been muzzled. There is still a vast underutilization of qualified African-American math and science teachers who are assigned to half-time classroom service at best--while white professionals, new to the system are brought in from outside. I wonder what the local district is going to tell the "Milwaukee System" now. I will hear because I have two former students teaching there who are running a "technology-motivation program" I designed. See you next week.

## Adoption and Foster Care Summit to Educate the Community

"Preserving the African American Family through Adoption and Foster Care" is the theme and focus of an informational summit to be held on Friday and Saturday, September 13 and 14 at the Cascade Campus of Portland Community College. The summit is sponsored by One Church, One Child of Oregon and Washington states and will feature Father George Clements as a guest speaker. Father Clements founded the One Church, One Child program in Chicago in 1980.

The reception on the night of the 13th (6:30-9:00) will feature entertainment by Nyewusi Askari and Company which will include African American voices and drummers, poetry, and portrayal of historical characters. The summit will take place on the 14th from 8am to 5pm; a box lunch will be provided.

The summit will address the issues of African American children in the permanent planning system of the state. Some of the topics to be discussed: drug-affected infants, extended family, advocacy for children, culturally competent adoption services, and foster care needs and recruitment.

### Objectives of Summit

\* To provide information on the issues facing African American children in the permanent planning process.

\*To provide an opportunity for public and private agencies, childcare providers, parents, organizations and others to purposely plan for the future of African American children in the permanent planning system of the state.

\*To provide information on legislation needed for the priority placement of children of color and the legislative process.

\*To make deliberate plans for the process of finding extended families as resources.

\*To make available the ready resources of One Church, One Child of Oregon and Washington States.

\*To use the information for national distribution through the National One Church, One Child program.

Program objective: "to promote the adoption of primarily homeless African American children by providing educational services and other instruction relative to the problem to adoption."

## Ron Fields Receives Police Hall of Fame Award

Lt. Ron Fields of Empire Security Service received an award of merit from the American Police Hall of Fame Wednesday, August 14. The ceremony was held at the State of Oregon Human Resources Building to recognize Lt. Field's work in handling a disturbed and suicidal youth June 21 at the building.

The American Police Hall of Fame is a national memorial to law enforcement officers established by the National Association of Chiefs of Police "to recognize service and valor above and beyond the call of duty."

Capt. Charles Moose, commander of the Portland Police Bureau North Precinct, presented the award to Fields.

Fields is the Site Supervisor at the State of Oregon Human Resources Building for Empire Security Service, a division of Coast Industries, Inc. Coast Industries is a diversified services corporation serving security and building maintenance needs for government and commercial clients throughout the Western United States.



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