

The History Of L.I.F.E. Center Twenty-five Years of Service to Those In Need

Continued from front page

and Little Herman, doing comedy routines" and musical groups including "the Hamiltons, the Cleveland Williams Band, the Charlie Gable Trio and Warren Bracket and the All Stars."

Mrs. Harris recalls that a singing group known as The Willing Workers Singers went from church to church seeking donations. Local grocers donated food for fund-raising dinners, and organizations such as Hike for the Hungry in Milwaukie and the Urban League gave money.

In July 1968, the center received a six-month demonstration grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, allowing it to move to larger quarters at 321 N.E. Russell Street (where it stayed for 16 years), and to begin paying Mrs. Crowe and three full-time employees. The total operating budget was \$2,800 a month.

Government funding ended in 1969 and never returned. Part of the gap was filled by United Good Neighbors, forerunner to United Way, with a \$16,583 grant in 1973. By 1976, the grant was increased to \$21,600, which covered an \$800 a month salary to Mrs. Crowe and lesser salaries to three employees.

Still, the mainstay of the center's existence continued to be -- and still is -- the volunteer work from people receiving help from the center. The Oregonian of September 21, 1976 told the story of Margarita Lujan, a grandmother who had come to the center for help and stayed to become a supervisor under Mrs. Crowe.

"Like many of the L.I.F.E. employees," the reporter wrote, "Mrs. Lujan first came to the center as a recipient... She continued to come daily until, finally, Mrs. Crowe offered her a job that paid some \$375 per month (and she) has since been removed from the welfare and food stamp rolls."

The same reporter noted that other L.I.F.E. Center workers had been ordered by courts to work at the center in lieu of a fine or jail term. A few of them enjoyed the work and asked to stay on as paid employees, according to the report.

In May 1984, L.I.F.E. Center moved into its present building at 2746 N.E. Martin Luther King Boulevard, and with the help of two large grants as well as its own savings, it has come close to paying off its mortgage. In 1985, the center received a \$50,000 grant from UPS Foundation, the charitable arm of United Parcel Service, and in 1987, it received \$25,000 from the M.J. Murdoch Foundation. Mrs. Harris was present to receive the first check, and as the Oregonian reported on December 21, 1985, she turned the check over to then-board chairperson Patti Bentley.

That building presently is being renovated. On November 9, 1991, a front wall mural by renowned artist Isaka Shamsud-Din will be unveiled as part of a 25th anniversary celebration. L.I.F.E. Center has grown over 25 years and now assists families throughout the metro area, including Multnomah,

Washington and Clackamas counties in Oregon, and Clark county, Washington.

Most of the thousands of requests it filled last year, according to Director Charles Carter, are from families or individuals with low or no income, including many Soviet immigrants.

One of the most successful and most-publicized projects of the Center for the past six years has been its back-to-school clothing drives, done in cooperation with Children's World Learning Centers. KGW-TV and KINK radio this year donated \$35,000 in air time for public service announcements for the drive between July and September. Thousands of children received clothes and school supplies. KBMS Radio has a similar drive for winter coats and clothes, and has made L.I.F.E. Center a recipient for the past three years.

In May 1991, Challenge Foundation gave the center a \$30,000 grant for producing a video and clothing reclamation project. Other businesses have contributed in kind to the center. A 1979 newspaper article mentioned "dozens of boxes of shoes donated by the Thom McAn Co." and a "panel truck given by Pacific Northwest Bell." Carter notes that Williams Bakery, Safeway and Tui-Li Bakery still regularly contribute food; and that Sears, Nordstrom, J.C. Penney, Norm Thompson, Nike, Lamb-Weston and Christ community Church of Newberg also give goods.

Regular corporate cash donors include PGE, U.S. West employees, Tektronix Foundation, Nabisco, American Red Cross, Vann & Vann Funeral Directors, the Oregonian, King Broadcasting, Emanuel Hospital Orthopedic Nurses and U.S. West Foundation. Carter noted that churches which have given regularly to the center include: Highland Baptist, St. Luke Lutheran on S.W. 46th Street, Lake Grove Presbyterian and Milwaukie Lutheran.

"But the most support," Carter pointed out, "has come from the thousands of individuals who have given both money and material goods over the years."

United Way still provides a portion of L.I.F.E. Center's \$90,000 operating budget, although the allocation has shrunk in recent years. Ruth Ann Jennings, the present board director, said that the securing and maintaining of other funding sources has become a priority in an effort to avoid a reduction of the center's services.

Director Carter said he would like to see the center expand into food deliveries to the elderly and handicapped, while broadening its present base by acquiring new sewing machines and washer/dryers.

He cautioned, however, that the reasons for starting L.I.F.E. Center in 1966 still exist today, on an even greater scale. "The government's War on Poverty may have failed, but poverty still exists, and so we carry on the fight as best we can," he said.

New State Telephone Numbers in Portland

Individuals or organizations needing assistance or information from some state government offices in Portland with 238 and 239 telephone numbers must call new phone numbers as of November 4, 1991.

Pat Smith, Telecommunications Network Manager, said "The new phone numbers are the result of preparation for the move of people from the westside of Portland to the new office building opening in early 1992."

The State will be using numbers in the 731 prefix and the change will apply to approximately 18 agencies at this time. Branch offices for Children's Services, Adult and Family Services, State Police, Highway, Senior and Disabled Services, and Vocational Rehabilitation as well as the headquarters for the Blind Commission and other commissions will be affected by this change.

The agencies affected by this change receive several thousands calls per week. "It is important that the public begin using the new numbers in order to assure prompt service from these agencies," said spokesperson, Pat Smith. "That's why we timed the number change to coincide with the delivery of the new Portland telephone directories from US West."

Two of the numbers that receive a great many calls 24 hours a day are the Child Abuse reporting hot line, 731-3100, and State Police Services, 731-3030.

Pat Smith suggests that callers wishing to contact Portland Offices of State of Oregon agencies should check the Blue pages in the new Portland directories. Listings appear in the blue section under the State of Oregon heading in both white and yellow page books.



Katherine Heppburn has been nominated for 11 Academy Awards, more than any other actor.

New Director Named at PCC Small Business Development Center

Bob Keyser has been appointed to direct the Portland Community College Small Business Development Center. The SBDC provides assistance to new and emerging business owners, offering one-on-one confidential business counseling, classes, workshops and management training programs. The program is a division of the PCC Open Campus.

Keyser previously worked as a marketing specialist and instructor for the center and helped develop the SBDC's popular management and marketing courses. He brings more than 19 years of experience in sales, marketing and management in the manufac-

Crime And Punishment In America: Conclusion

by Prof. McKinley Burt

This is the final chapter of a five-part series that has presented a realistic frame of reference for examining the position of African Americans in the nations criminal justice system. We have defined the majority of inner-city-predominately black -- as most efficient INCUBATORS OF CRIME; not as reservoirs of urban blight or a failed citizenry, nor even as a consequence of underfunded Urban Renewal programs.

Instead, I have given an insight into the structure of the American extension of the 500-year old European model of GHETTO as an ethnic and economic containment device (see last weeks description of origin of name and system in Venice, Italy). Further, we have detailed the methodologies employed by establishment institutions, public and private, to control and limit the participation of blacks in the real property equities and commercial exploitation of the land. Since real estate is the major, basic construct upon which a capitalistic society operates, it is a given that a people so constrained and exploited for several centuries could not help but be the victims of traumatic social and economic disabilities which would prevent any effective participation in that euphemistic AMERICAN DREAM. Some banks are just now making feeble efforts at change.

All of these revelations were incorporated into a three-quarter course I designed and taught for four years at Portland State University; "Black Economic Experience," 1972-76. Housed in the School of Urban Affairs and in the same quarters as the "Criminal Justice Department" with its many Law Enforcement Classes, I had innumerable interactions with personnel of Portland Police Department -- as well as employees of related city, county, state and federal agencies.

Many of these persons were students in my class and, with the notable exception of the police, represented a broad ethnic profile. The course began

with the period immediately following the Civil War and by the end of the third quarter dealt with the contemporary problems of African Americans in areas of employment discrimination, the dearth of economic opportunities to buy, sell or manufacture goods. Even the possibility of leasing attractive locations, or obtaining bank financing (despite the media hype about available government programs). To make a point I used that widely-viewed CBS program where "Famous Amos" of chocolate cookie fame appeared alongside the founder of the "Holidays Inns." Both were said to represent the American Dream, a process by which one could start from scratch and pull oneself up by the bootstraps to attain any goal desired by hardwork.

I will be eternally grateful to Famous Amos for telling the truth on national television, "Despite good credit, a good business start financed from my savings, the banks would not lend me a cent, OR EVEN DISCUSS MY PROJECTIONS. I went over to the Finance company and was able to secure a high interest loan on the pretext that I wished to TAKE A VACATION TRIP TO THE WEST INDIES." In subsequent magazine articles "Amos" has occasionally voiced his displeasure at those who would use that success he has obtained as a model for black youth -- without telling him of the outrageous constraints placed upon them by the financial community. We note that Mr. Johnson, founder of Ebony Magazine, was forced to go to Canada to purchase newsprint when American firms would not sell paper to a black publisher (Now that they do we must wonder what the price was to be let through--surrender of a sizeable equity?). But then, of course, Nat King Cole could not get a sponsor for a network program.

It was the police in the class--from blue collar and hard hat backgrounds--who had the most difficulty in acknowledging a connection between these economics and social barriers and a

failed system where many might decide to get their portion of the highly-advertised dream "by any means necessary." A number of these guardians of law and order would still insist on recounting how their grandfathers came over from the old country, "broke and ignorant, also living in a ghetto, but had the will and drive to beat the odds and succeed "just as any American can do--we were never on welfare."

With only a couple of exceptions it was impossible to get past the rigid mindset endowed by a history of America that is racist because it deliberately avoids (in school or text) revealing the true story of the operative system that shaped today's traumas. Even when I used "Commager's Documents of American History and The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (Sept. 1966)" to document how white European immigrants were almost exclusively given the better job opportunities (particularly skilled trades), unrestricted opportunities to buy land, obtain franchises and join business associations. It seemed to no avail to ask, "how hard would it have been for you under these conditions to raise a family and keep it intact, to endow your children with a sense of equal worth or with a drive for upward mobility with a goal PLAINLY ACHEIVABLE?"

Obviously, this mindset is not solely attributable to law enforcement personnel. But, because the attitude is so general we find that rather than realistic policies and programs for effective intervention in a disintegrating social and economic system, frantic efforts to fund more prisons and control options for both black and white. The level of training and education for police and related personnel has been upscaled and they do yeoman work for the most part. However, we note that some of the hottest issues on the stock exchanges are the equities in firms building prisons, contracting incarceration, manufacturing restraints, or providing security. Is it too late?

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf Services Begin

The Motor Vehicles Division has broadened its service capabilities to include the deaf community by installing a telecommunications device, or TDD. This service became available on November 1, 1991.

TDDs provide telecommunications assistance by allowing callers to type their message on a keyboard. The message is then electronically transmitted to the receiving TDD, which displays the typed message.

"Our goal is to equally serve all segments of society," said Barbara Pierce, supervisor of DMV's Communications Section, where the TDD will be located.

"The TDD will help our deaf customers feel more comfortable while conducting business with us," Pierce said.

The telephone number for the TDD is 373-1523.



Commission Meeting

Date: November 13, 1991
Place: Oregon Convention Center
777 NE MLK, Jr. Blvd.
Room 113, Portland, OR
Time: 9:30 a.m.

Commission meetings are open to the public. A complete agenda is available at PDC. Call 823-3200.
PDC is the City of Portland's urban renewal, housing and economic development agency.



Cargo floating on the water from a sinking ship is called flotsam, while the debris washed ashore is called wreck.

Blacks Were In America Before Columbus Landed

BY DR. MARK HYMAN

Not until recently had historians recalled that Black people were in America before Columbus arrived. The Indians of Haiti told the navigator Africans had sailed to their island from the south. Their boats had been loaded with merchandise.

Leo Weiner, a language specialist, wrote a book called "Africa and the Discovery of America." He showed how traces of languages among people could determine their history and places they had lived. Weiner found traces of West African languages among the ancient Mayans, the Olmecs and other indigenous people of the New Land.

Who created the giant, 40-ton African-faced stone heads found in La Venta, San Lorenzo and Zapotles in Mexico? What about the perfectly sculptured terra cotta heads of Africans which date back to 500 years before Christ? No artist could have created the perfect image of the African had the black man not have been present. It was also found that the football-helmet-type crown was worn by Olmec kings as well as by black kings and pharaohs in the Eighteenth and Twenty-Fifth Egyptian dynasties. How did they copy from each other?

Columbus himself gave proof of the African presence before the Euro-

pean navigator landed. In his writing in his "Journal of the Third Voyage," he said he wanted to find the black people the Indians had told him about.

The last of the ancient makers of pottery, hundreds of years before Columbus, left pronounced faces of Africans. Some were wearing earrings found in West Africa, particularly Gambia. Tombs of the Olmec Kings gave up African cameos and miniatures.

Proof goes on with the discovery of Sickle Cell disease among the Lacadones in an isolated area in Mexico. The most popular proof of African presence in America was the farming of yams by the Indians. Yams is an African-grown food named after an African people. The Portuguese found West Africans cultivating maize which is not an African food, but American.

Without question there had been meetings between Africans and indigenous Americans for centuries.

Rumors are one thing, but proof is another. The records of early Spanish explorers tell of African ships sighted. Some had been wrecked on the shorelines, but they were here... indeed.

Dr. Mark Hyman is both historian and journalist. Information on his books is available by writing to: 5070 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa., 19131. Or calling (215) 473-0050.

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L.I.F.E. Center plans 25th anniversary fundraiser

The Low Income Families Emergency (L.I.F.E.) Center celebrates its 25th anniversary with a fundraiser at Pine Street Theater Sunday, November 10. The event's theme is "Celebrating 25 years of life with dignity."

"The theme conveys the spirit of L.I.F.E. Center's mission and its work with people throughout the community," said Charles Carter, Executive Director.

KOIN-TV news anchor Eric Schmidt serves as master of ceremonies for the program that headlines Body and Soul, a ten-piece band that has performed on the Tonight Show, the Today show and has shared the bill with The Four Tops and The Temptations.

Other entertainment includes the Streetcorner Singer, a six member acappella group, the 70 member Mt. Olivet Baptist Church Choir, a L.I.F.E. Center history, award presentation and a keynote address. A raffle and door prizes are also planned during the evening celebration.

Money raised during the event goes toward the general operating fund.

L.I.F.E. Center's fundraiser is part of a two-day anniversary cele-

bration that begins with an outdoor mural being unveiled Saturday, November 9 at the Center, located at 2746 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd. Isaka Shamsud-Din painted the 450 square-foot mural depicting the history and purpose of the Center.

The Low Income Families Emergency Center is a nonprofit, United Way agency that provides food, clothing and household items to people throughout the Portland metro area. The program is unique in that able-bodied people must work at the Center in exchange for items they receive.

Schmidt makes opening remarks at 4 p.m. The Streetcorner Singers perform at 4:15 p.m. Mt. Olivet Baptist Choir sings at 4:30 p.m. The L.I.F.E. Center history presentation is scheduled for 5 p.m., followed by the keynote address at 5:45 p.m. Awards presentations are followed by Body and Soul at 7 p.m., which will play till 10 p.m.

Pine Street Theater is located at 221 S.E. 9th. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. Advance tickets are available for \$8 at L.I.F.E. Center at 284-6878.

For more information, call Charles Carter at 284-6878.

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