

# Portland Causes Stir At Conference

BY MATTIE ANN CALLIER-SPEARS

Multi-Culturalism has become a primary focus in school districts nationwide. Questions that have been surfacing, too often, are -- "How are the ethnic students benefiting from the present curriculum in the schools? Do white teachers have the understanding and the ability to teach students of other countries?" These, of course, are only two of many questions which seem to be buzzing around the nation.

For approximately ten years, school districts have attempted to solve this dilemma. The increase of Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans and African Americans in the classrooms has caused a geographical quandary which, in some cases, has placed the school districts in a not-so attractive light. "There are too many cases where the parents are accusing the teachers of not teaching their children and/or they (the teachers) don't understand our people enough to be able to teach them in the first place." This is a mere smattering of how the parents have been speaking out, with concern, for their children's educational development or the lack thereof.

In New Orleans, Louisiana from October thirty-first through November fifth, there were very talented and dedicated representatives currently working in the field of Multiculturalism who had gathered from all over the United States of America; from Canada, from England and even the continent of Africa at the Hilton Riverside Hotel, to address pressing issues on *Multi-Cultural Education*.

As registration took place, everyone looked to see who you were and where you hailed from. When they saw Portland, Oregon on my badge, they all came over to me and said "You are the one we need to talk to..." And I asked, "Concerning what?" Their response came fast and unanimously; "What about this *BASELINE ESSAY* that Portland

has instituted and, as we understand it, is presently being used in their everyday curriculum?" I, of course, provided them with a response that was based purely upon the knowledge that I had from hearing other educators converse in Portland; but, I could not provide them with any in-depth information. However, several conference participants had had the opportunity to have Carolyn M. Leonard, Coordinator of the Multicultural/Multiethnic Education Office, with the Portland Public School, to come to their districts across the nation for the sole purpose of providing them with and enlightening them on the concept of the *Baseline Essays* and the possible effect it would have, if properly utilized, in their districts. These conference attendees had adopted the *Baseline Essays* for use in their districts and had very positive comments about its effectiveness. Others stated the essays' focus was too narrow to meet the needs of the diversity within their districts. Had there been an adequate representative from the Portland Public Schools, a great sharing would surely have taken place. Because -- the invisible, well sought-after, highly spoken of celebrity of the conference, were the *Baseline Essays*.

Geraldine Hammond, Central Administrator and Multicultural Education Coordinator with the Salem-Keizer Public Schools, was the only representative at the conference from the state of Oregon. "I did not come prepared to address the issue on *Baseline Essays*," Hammond stated, "We, in the Salem-Keizer School District, are presently looking for materials, inservice training ideas and activities that will provide our students with a greater appreciation of cultural diversity."

## THE CONCEPT OF BASELINE ESSAYS

[information provided by PPS Multicultural Office]

The concept of Baseline Essays was introduced by Dr. Asa G. Hilliard III, consultant to the Portland Public School District's desegregation plan, in 1982. The term, when used by Portland Public Schools, means a series of essays that give information about the history, culture and contributions of a specific geocultural group in the areas of art, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies and music. The purpose of the essays is to provide the reader with a holistic and thematic history of the culture and contributions of a specific geocultural group\* from ancient times to the present. This will enable the reader to get a sense of the significant events that have occurred as well as a better understanding of the group's world view -- axiology (values) and epistemology (ways of knowing).

Writing essays that address traditional areas of study provides a framework that allows teachers to move the information from the basic discipline to the specific subjects the teacher will present to students. Baseline Essays are to be read by all district staff-administrators, counselors, support staff, teachers, etc. This will enable them to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the history, culture and contributions of the geocultural group and further, to utilize the information to provide better service to all students.

While the District has made a commitment to Baseline Essays for each of the geocultural groups, the length of the essays has not been defined. Ideally, essays should not exceed 50 pages; however, the individual essays can be significantly shorter in length. References and bibliographies will enable those who need more information to do follow up reading or research.

\* *Geocultural Group* = *Inhabitants of the United States are divided up into six geocultural groups: African-American, American Indian, Asian-*

*American, European-American, Hispanic-American, and Pacific Island-American. These divisions, with the exception of the Hispanic-American, are based upon the land masses where human-kind could be found approximately 10,000 years ago. In this instance, American is used as a synonym for United States. All residents of the U.S. are hyphenated Americans with the exception of American Indians.*

\*\**Hispanic-Americans are, of course, European, Indian and African; however, they are presented as a geocultural group because of the government definition and the group's acknowledgement of the term Hispanic.*

Educators weren't the only ones present at this international conference. Included were representatives of major corporations, textbook and publishing companies. Each seeking answers, i.e., "Will they adopt our textbook or not? Or what new materials and ideas will surface and is it too late to include this information in this year's publication?"

One such person present was Proctor Houston, Group Vice President of Jostens Learning Corporation. He was raised in the streets of New York and now resides in the state of Louisiana. He opened his luncheon presentation by saying "In order for businesses to be successful, they must cooperate with schools and communicate what kind of employee skills are needed. If not, businesses will find themselves ill-prepared and unable to operate."

Houston said that he grew up in a multicultural environment. There were Jews, Italians, Spanish, African Americans, Whites and Puerto Ricans. "We all went to the same schools," said Houston. After he had reached the high school level, he had a negative experience with a guidance counselor. "I don't want to go to that school" he told his parents. His parents had to fight to get him in an academic high school. All

students of ethnic backgrounds were being steered to the trade high schools because the counselors felt that their intelligence levels could not handle the materials and learning from the academic high schools. It was through his parents' persistence that he was able to attend the high school of his choice. "I did not realize the impact that this experience had on my life until I had reached adulthood. It helped build self esteem and pride." He continued, "When you find a person who is comfortable with themselves, you will find a person who likes himself and has a good attitude. Attitudes are very important. To be successful, you must be well prepared."

"In my business, there are three very important 'p's': the person, the product, and the preparedness."

"The demographic changes are evolutionary. According to the statistics, there are over 250 million young people, of ethnic origin, presently going through the doors of our educational institutions. In two years, these figures will have increased to 268 million; and, in four years, it will have increased to 282 million. The statistics are real. This progress is evolutionary. Can you separate multicultural issues from business and education? The answer is an unequivocal 'No!'"

"There are 64 million kids under the age of 18. In California alone, 46.4% of that 64 million and 30% of the 46.4%, are minorities." And the statistics go on and on and on, in the same fashion across the nation. Are we ready to address the needs of this increasing number of minority children? Everyone of these children have to learn.

Houston said that he really has a problem with labeling -- i.e., at-risk or disadvantaged. He asked the question, "At-risk of doing what?" He cited an incident at a school he visited. There on the playground were many young chil-

dren playing. As he walked across the grounds, the teacher who was escorting him commented, "See those kids over there? They're at risk." He looked at her puzzled and asked, "At-risk of what?" Her response was, "They are at-risk of failure by the time they reach high school." He was so upset. Houston said that a child can just look into your eyes and tell what you are thinking. He can tell whether you care or whether you are just going through the motions while awaiting his imminent failure. How productive are labels? And -- how effective are they?

Houston described America as being "a bowl of tossed salad" instead of it being a "melting pot." In a melting pot, all the items tossed lose their identity; but, in a salad bowl, each ingredient retains its identity and combines its flavors to enhance the flavor of one another.

"What are the real issues here?" asks Houston. "Schools are forced to provide more and they can't afford more. I say -- all children can learn if they're given a chance. Are there more teachers that can't teach than there are children who can't learn? There are too many children who have paid high prices for our mistakes."

Businesses need to have better communications with schools and provide support to the programs for *Multiculturalism*. We must demand a better system for educating all of our youth, together we can make a difference. We must identify and recruit teachers who are gentle, fair and concerned about the quality of the product -- our children.

We must seek ways to provide support and funding for good teachers. Our theme should be --

**"FIND ONE GOOD TEACHER, SAVE ONE CHILD!"**

[continued in next week's issue]

## Project Help/Oregon Heat Fuel Assistance Fund Celebrates 10 Years

The Project HELP emergency fuel assistance program will kick off its 10th year with a birthday party Friday, November 15 at the Salvation Army's new family services building, 1712 NE Sandy Blvd. Cake will be cut at 11 a.m., following a brief presentation. All who have contributed in the past or been helped by the program are invited to attend.

Project HELP helps local needy families pay their winter heating bills. It is sponsored by Pacific Power and Portland General Electric, and administered by the Salvation Army and other community social service agencies.

To date, it has helped almost 44,000 families throughout the two utilities' service areas. Funds for the program come through customer and employee donations, bolstered by donations from the shareholders of Pacific Power and Portland General Electric.

Project HELP is marking its 10th

year by taking on a new partner -- Oregon HEAT. Oregon HEAT (Home Energy Assistance Team) is a service of Oregon Energy Services, Inc., a non-profit statewide corporation which promotes energy self-reliance for low income households.

By joining with Oregon HEAT, the utilities are supporting the creation of a statewide fuel fund with the desired result of raising more funds for energy assistance. The Oil Heat Commission is another major participant in Oregon HEAT.

Contribution envelopes for Project HELP/Oregon HEAT are in customers' November electric bills. Donations may also be sent to Project HELP/Oregon HEAT, PO Box 5080, Portland, Oregon 97208-5080.

## PDX International Passengers Increase 40 Percent

International travel through Portland International Airport (PDX) in September 1991 increased by 40 percent over September 1990.

September's passenger increase continued 1991's pace as international traffic has grown 27 percent year to date, from 207,335 passengers in 1990 to 264,158 in 1991.

"The increase in international traffic has been a real boon this year, as domestic travel has dropped slightly," said Keith Phildius, Port of Portland aviation director.

Phildius said the growth in international traffic in 1991 is the result of several factors: Delta Air Lines' addition in February of a daily nonstop flight to Nagoya, Japan, and Portland's continued rise as an international trade and tourism center.

Overall for September, PDX traf-

fic was down 4,000 passengers from September 1990. For 1991, PDX's passenger counts trail 1990's figures by only 8,000 passengers. PDX, however, continues to outperform the national aviation industry, which was down 4 percent for 1991 over 1990.

Cargo tonnage through PDX in September was 11,069 tons, a 7 percent jump over September 1990. For 1991, cargo tonnage is 100,827 tons, up 2 percent over 1990.

General aviation operations (take-offs and landings) at the Port's airports experienced mixed results in September. General aviation operations were up 5 percent at PDX, while declining at Portland-Hillsboro Airport by 6 percent and at Portland-Troutdale by 12.5 percent. For 1991, however operations at Hillsboro and Troutdale have increased over 1990.

## A.K. Rucker Gives 155%. Do You?

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pass on to kids what he's learned: "It's good to have enough money to survive, but it's also important to keep your self respect and have fun doing what you want to do."

"It's my way of giving back something to the community," Rucker said of the Whitaker program. "Some people get out and don't look back. It's easy to donate money. But we need more black

leaders to help (keep down) gang activity. There's so much misunderstanding. People don't know how to solve problems so they run away instead of getting involved."

Rucker is involved. He wears it on a tee shirt to bring it home to the kids, especially on tough days: "Why am I here? To give you 155%. Why are you here?"

"Mommy, I'm cold."

Help warm the home of a needy family this winter. Support Project HELP/Oregon HEAT. Project HELP is an emergency fund created to help less fortunate families and individuals pay their winter heating bills. And Oregon HEAT (Home Energy Assistance Team) is a non-profit organization that helps these people become financially self-sufficient again.

The two have now joined hands and are funded by your donations, as well as those from local energy providers. Last year, your donations helped about 3000 families. Deserving recipients are chosen by the Salvation Army or local social service agency.

Don't let this winter be a chilling experience for some families. Look for the tax-deductible donation envelope in your November utility statement. And give what you can. It will go to help a local family. And it will give you a nice warm feeling in return.



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