

Award Winning Novelist Caps Black History Month At Whitman

BY DAN NGUYEN-TAN

Imagine these acclaimed actresses—Angela Bassett, Halle Berry, Alfre Woodard and Oprah Winfrey—possibly starring as four black, well-educated career women in the Hollywood movie version of Terry McMillan's best seller, *Waiting to Exhale*.

Those four names rolled off McMillan's sharp, penetrating tongue in response to a question, posed at Whitman College recently, as to who might play the leading roles in the movie version. McMillan, who spoke at Whitman as part of Black History Month, is currently working on the screen play of *"Waiting to Exhale"* while writing her next novel, *"A Day Late and A Dollar Short."*

Approximately 350 people filled a Whitman auditorium expecting McMillan to read from *"Waiting to Exhale,"* which ranks No. 3 on the New York Times hardcover bestseller list. Instead, McMillan introduced parts of her next novel, which is scheduled to hit the bookstores in the fall of 1995.

"A Day Late and A Dollar Short" opens in the narrative voice of a loving, 54-year-old African American woman living in Las Vegas, reflecting on her life and relationship with her children and husband. McMillan's message combines sadness and courage, which her aging character captures from her hospital bed when she says:

"What being sick does is make you think about your life in ways you never stopped to think about before. This (asthmatic) attack scared me, and I thought this was the one, but apparently, I'm not ready to go now where just yet. I got too much living left to do....I've got to make me some big plans. I've had enough little ones to last me the rest of my life."

McMillan's literary credentials are inspiring. Her first novel, *"Mama,"* received an American Book Award

from the Before Columbus Foundation, and her second novel, *"Disappearing Acts,"* is currently the top best-selling novel by a black writer in America.

She wrote *"Mama,"* published in 1987, while working as a word processor and raising her son, Solomon. The next year she was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in literature. Since then, she has written columns and reviewed books for the New York Times Book review, the Philadelphia Inquirer, and the Atlanta Constitution.

Despite her stature in literary circles, McMillan refuses to accept labels. "I don't see myself as a spokeswoman," she told Whitman audience. "What I am is an African American female author. I write stories. The only thing I hope is that my work makes people feel better. If I wanted to be a real spokeswoman, I think I would have become more visible. I would have gone into politics or wrote non-fiction. This is America. People like to put labels on you. Just being a writer isn't enough. You have to be a spokesperson. I'm not that."

So, who does speak for or about? "I write about African Americans, or so-called 'black folks,' because they're my family and I'm a part of this family."

McMillan, who now lives outside of San Francisco, said she typically wakes up at around 5am, works until her son gets up for school, smiles at him at breakfast, waits until he leaves the house, and then resumes writing, one chapter at a time.

"Everybody writes differently, but I work in chapters," she explained. "I work straight through. I start out writing on the computer. When I get enough down—the heart of the chapter—then I add the veins. When I'm working on a book, I work on it every day."

Already an award-winning



Terry McMillan (third from right) with Whitman College students (left to right) Anya Corbett of Albany, OR; Alioune Kane of Senegal, West Africa; Julie Fong of Santa Maria, Calif.; Veronica Rubalcaba of Riverside, Calif.; Adrina Tarver of Portland, OR.; and Marsee Banks of Bremerton, Wash. (Photo by Ruben Garcia)

novelist, McMillan hesitates when asked to choose the favorite among the novels she has written. "I'm proud of the stories I've told. They're like kids—you love all of them."

Black History Month at Whitman was organized by its Black Student Union in cooperation with Shari Clarke, director of Multicultural Student Affairs at the college.

Babbitt Signs Order To Make Reclamation One Of First "Reinvented" Agencies

The National Performance Review completed one of the first total make overs of a government agency today when Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt signed an order restructuring the Bureau of Reclamation.

The overhaul eliminates layers of management, cuts decision making time, improves efficiency, and saves millions of taxpayers' dollars. The estimated long-term savings produced by today's actions after Fiscal year 1995 is approximately \$40 million a year.

Best known for the construction of such engineering marvels as Hoover and Grand Coulee dams, Reclamation is the Federal government's water manager in the arid West. It is also the nation's largest wholesale water

supplier and sixth largest electric utility.

"Americans deserve good service from their government. Today's action shows government can change to become more responsive to people's needs," said Commissioner of Reclamation Daniel P. Beard. "We will be able to solve today's water resource problems while using fewer taxpayer dollars."

"Over the last nine months, hundreds of Reclamation employees told us how we could serve taxpayers better. Today, Secretary Babbitt has adopted those ideas. The reduction in managerial layers and a new emphasis on decentralized decision making will have a significant effect on many federal water programs and policies," Beard said.

University of Oregon President Myles Brand Accepts Position At Indiana University

Oregon State System of Higher Education Chancellor Thomas A. Bartlett today released the following statement:

Myles Brand, President of the University of Oregon since July 1989, today informed me that he has accepted the position of President of Indiana University effective August 1, 1994.

Dr. Brand has been a dynamic, successful president. He has brought about many changes that have been valuable for the University of Oregon and for the Oregon State System of Higher Education.

President Brand has piloted the University of Oregon during a financially difficult five years, and the institution has come through in sound condition.

President Brand is leaving to accept the leadership of a very large and prestigious institution; in many regards, it is at the forefront of American higher education. We wish him well, and we will miss him in Oregon.

New Summer Tri-Met Youth Pass Available

You'll be glad to hear that this summer Tri-Met will be making it easier for youth to get around town AND to the programs you coordinate. People 18 and under will enjoy unlimited travel this summer at a bargain price when the Tri-Met Board of Directors approves the new summer youth pass on April 27.

For \$35, youth can purchase a Tri-Met pass good for travel anywhere, anytime in our service area,

during June, July and August. That's a savings of \$37. The special passes will be available starting May 20 at participating schools and Tri-Met sales outlets. We're interested in working with you to identify how you can use and help distribute "The Pass" to those you serve. Promotional brochures will be available at the Youth Summit on Friday, April 29th. For more information, please contact Beth Erlendson in our Marketing Department at 239-6438.

Multnomah County Library To Host Celebration Of

Where's the place to be April 16-23? Central Library or any one of the 14 neighborhood libraries that make up the Multnomah County Library system! That's when Check It Out! 1994, a week-long, countywide celebration of libraries -- featuring over 90 special programs at branch libraries as well as "The Main Event" at Central on April 23 -- happens.

"Check It Out! is a wonderful opportunity for families and people of all ages to visit their library to enjoy the programs, listen to music, read, check out books and celebrate this library that we all love," says Ginnie Cooper, director of libraries for Multnomah County. "And the best news is that all events are free, thanks to the generous help of our business and organization sponsors."

Library visitors during Check It Out! week can meet Deputy Chief John Bunnell, TV star of "American Detective" and "Cops," learn how to save money with coupons; solve the "Mystery in the Library"; enjoy clown, magic, ventriloquism, origami, puppets, square dancers, a master gardener, recycling tips, a hobbies fair, a health and fitness show, story times, movies, beading, country line dancing, a book discussion group, a community talent show, a bike tour, an overnight pajama party and much, much more!

P.S. Volunteers are still needed to help at library celebration events. If you'd like to help, call Sami Scripser at 248-5461.

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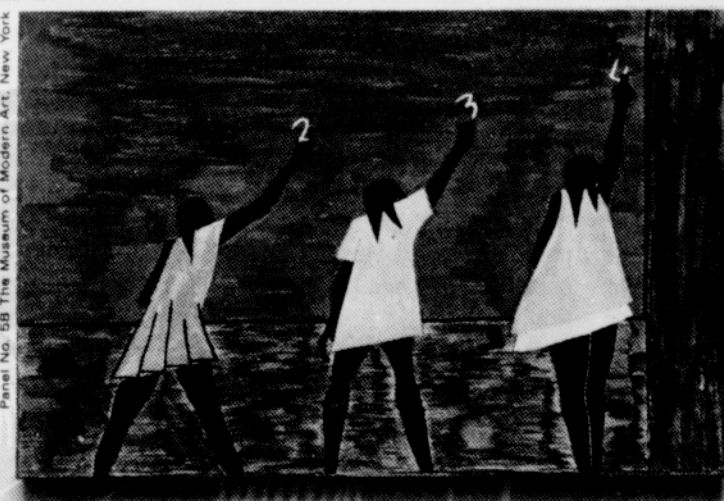
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