



The relief train at Bridal Veil, Oregon. 1885. As early as 1900, Black railroad men began to organize to improve working conditions. As a result, monthly wages were raised from \$25 to \$27.50 a month.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

## Back Again, Home (confessions of an ex-executive)

*Pains of insecurity surround me;  
shined shoes,  
conservative suits,  
button down shirts with silk ties.  
bi-weekly payroll.*

*Ostracized, but knowing why;  
executive haircut,  
clean shaved,  
"yes" instead of "yeah" and "no" instead of  
"naw,"  
hours, nine to five. (after five he's alone)*

*"Doing an excellent job, keep it up;"  
promotion made-semi-monthly payroll,  
very quiet-never talks,  
budget balanced-saved the company money,  
quality work-production tops.  
He looks sick. (but there is a smile in his eyes)*

*He resigned, we wonder why;  
let his hair grow - a mustache too,  
out of a job - broke and hungry,  
friends are coming back - bring food,  
not quiet now - trying to speak,  
what did he say?*

*"Back Again,  
BLACK AGAIN,  
Home."*

*Poem by Don L. Lee (1942 - )*



Bill Travis (on left), a Black policeman joins the force in Portland. Travis formerly worked in Vanport, a special housing district.

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.



Robert Ford was one of the first two Black teachers in Portland. He taught at Holladay School. (1945).

Courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society.

### Quote from the Community:

*"There is the notion of 'Last Hired, First Fired'. We (African American men) have to reckon with that. It's not a reassuring place to be. We're overly job conscious. We approach the workplace with a certain amount of buffoonery. People tend to think that it's the apex of intellectual prowess of the Black folk."*

*(Charles Tatum, Portland Sculptor)*

### Quote by the Community:

*"The strength of a Black man is reflected in a strong work ethic. Many Black men would work multiple, menial jobs in order to gain enough to support their families".*

*(Reverend Alcena Boozer)*

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