

EDITORIAL

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p e r s p e c t i v e s

Show Me Your "I.D.", Young Man Or Woman

By Prof. McKinley Burt

This year's 'Black History Month' series seems to have enabled more African Americans than ever to "identify" with the key black contributions to America's technology and industry; and the feedback indicates a similar impact on other groups.

It is difficult to select a feature from the Portland Observer's many excellent presentations and say, "this is the story that set the tone", or "this account told the world who we really are." But since the readers know that I am biased toward technical innovations, they will not be surprised that I will cite two models which received so much attention from both youth and teachers - 'inventors', of course.

Not that my personal landscape is culturally barren, the readers know better and appreciate that I will continue to push for the broadest learning paradigm for young people. But we all must understand as well that in this super-energized age of science and technology it is absolutely essential that black youths have career role models with whom they can "identify" without hesitation. I greet my youth group, where's your "I.D."

The black inventors (presentations) that I mentioned are "David Croswaite", the engineer from Purdue University who patented the 'thermodynamic' or heat-transfer technology

which made it possible for mankind to inhabit 'skyscrapers' (34 domestic and 80 foreign patents)...and Thomas M. (Don) Rutherford, a graduate of Portland's "Benson Technical High School"; designer of the engine controls for Howard Hughes famed 'Spruce Goose' and many other inventions, including his patented sliding door panel and latch that you see on vans all over the world, today. No. 2,690,268 June 8, 1954.

I get a surge of pride and "identity" every time I talk with 'Don' this Portland graduate of the University of Oregon, just as I got years ago from that other inspired master of technology, David Crosthwaite. And under the favorable circumstances cited here it seemed the most natural thing in the world to expand our small group of neighborhood youth science clubs to include two more under the inspiring mantra of these two names. My former students help.

Previous groups/neighborhoods are "Granville Woods" (Electrical inventions for railroad), "Lewis (Howard) Latimer" (Lightbulb filament patent

and member "Edison Pioneers"), and "Eliyah J. McCoy" (the 'Real McCoy' Automatic Lubricator). The additional slots were awaiting more committed parents willing to dedicate their time and for another industry sponsor; we have both, and they have "I.D.s"

In answer to that unspoken question; yes, there will be female motivator structured into this scheme. Several parents have suggested "Dorothy Williamson", a former student of mine at PSU. She invented and patented the "Paint Caddy", a device worn by the painter to avoid the necessity for frequent trips up and down a ladder to replenish particular colors and shades of paint. I profiled her invention several years ago.

It is interesting how ideas take hold and energize themselves. I stopped in "Al's Beauty Shop" to borrow a book from this dedicated Black History buff and before I could turn around a lady said, "I know you, I see your picture by your 'Observer' articles. I want to talk to you about my kid." Problems with math and science, it turned out and before we were finished, several

other ladies under dryers were questioning me. Two have since called and are involved with kid's science clubs. I will have to stop downstairs more often.

Next week I will pursue other aspects of this "identity" process. For over 25 years I've been innovating or breaking new ground here with this combination 'education/motivation' approach, but it seems that I have no trouble in launching successful models, just failing to persuade others that those two elements go hand-in-hand. I look back at the first federal (H.E.W.) minority health program I brought to Portland in the early 1970s. 'Mysteriously' became part of a 'Metropolitan Steering Committee' while I was out of town on a U.S. Forest Service PSU seminar (another first).

Lost to greed and the proverbial 'game playing' were all the liaisons and resources I had developed with pharmaceutical companies, and medical associations, teaching hospitals, etc. In the 1980s I designed and implemented a minority training program at Providence Medical Center, with academic credits for high school juniors and seniors. This time I handled all aspects myself and it became a county-wide model. My point will be that our youth must be taught early on what to expect and how to manage systems.



BY PROFESSOR MCKINLEY BURT

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Charles Washington
Publisher & Editor

Gary Ann Taylor
Business Manager

Tony Washington
Assistant Editor

Mark Washington
Distribution Manager

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.
Director of Operation

Iesha Williams
Graphic Design

Contributing Writers:

Joy Ramos
Professor McKinley Burt,
Lee Perlman,
Neil Heilpern

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, Oregon 97211

503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015

Email: Pdxobserv@aol.com

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THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Dear Editor:

Here we are, the 21st century and the African American citizen is still going through hell trying to live peacefully in this society.

Last Thursday evening in Portland Oregon, my mother, Dora McCrae and a friend were driving home when this car started following them with it's bright lights on. Deciding to move over to allow it to go around they discovered it was a police officer.

After pulling over she was told to present her drivers license, proceeding to do this she asked the officer why she had been stopped. He then demanded her to present her proof of insurance, at which time she asked again why she had been stopped, to which he replied, "well, if you really must know you turned a couple blocks back and did not use your signal."

She tried to assure the officer that she had signaled and wanted to show him that the signal was working at which he ordered her to turn off the engine and Get Out Of the Vehicle.

She turned off the engine and proceeded to get out, but found herself on the ground and the officer pulling her arms behind her back to put her in handcuffs. She was then ordered to get up and told he was not going to help her.

At this point another police car arrived with two officers who assisted her up. The first officer took her to his car and patted her down and sat her inside. He went back to retrieve her wallet to get her drivers license.

After checking her records and talking to the other officers he approached his vehicle, bent down and said "why can't we just get along". Leaving her sit approximately 1/2 hour, he gave her a ticket and allowed her to go home.

As I said, this was my mother, a 68 year old, slightly overweight Afro-American Methodist minister. She does not drink, smoke, take drugs, or have a habit of causing a scene. I have filed charges, but when are we going to be treated like first class citizens? - Ellen Smith

Smoke Clears for Portland Diners

Restaurant-goers who prefer to dine without a side order of tobacco smoke will eat and breathe smokeless on Sunday, May 31 when World No Tobacco Day comes to the Portland metropolitan area.

"We're asking restaurant owners in Multnomah County to go smoke free for the day," said

Tabitha Evans, coordinator of the event. World No Tobacco Day is an international event sanctioned by the World Health Organization.

Evans coordinated a similar event in Roseburg last year, which was very successful. Eight restaurants that weren't already smoke free participated in the event. Twenty other restaurants that were smoke free before

also participated. Public awareness generated from World No Tobacco Day had several other area restaurants calling to be included the next year.

Portland's chance to have restaurants go smoke-free for a day was made possible with a grant awarded to the American Heart Association, in Oregon by the Multnomah County

Tobacco Free Coalition. The funds were made available by the passage of Measure 44, which raised the price of cigarettes by 30 cents a pack.

There will be an evaluation process so restaurants can measure customer response. For more information on World Tobacco Day, Call Tabitha Evans at 233-0100.

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES: Supporting Family Strengths



"When our family faces a challenge, we face it head on. With all our minds put together, we'll come up with something to meet that challenge."

—GENEVA JONES,
grandparent of six,
great-grandparent of three

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The Portland Observer

Multnomah County's Family Centers support family strengths with 14 locations throughout the county.



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