



Miss Oregon USA Maya Moore is using her title to educate people about multiculturalism and support those struggling with cultural identity.

BY DAVID PLECHL/PORTLAND OBSERVER

Opening Doors and Minds

Miss Oregon USA finds strength in multiracial identity

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Maya Moore didn't think anything of listening to Marvin Gaye records with her father and then slipping out to watch Korean soap operas with her grandpa. To this recently crowned beauty queen, homemade Kim-Chee and the sweet sounds of jazz went hand-in-hand. "There were always different cultural elements in our house," said the 21-year-old Moore, who was named Miss Oregon USA on Nov. 24.

Originally from Kaneohe, Hawaii, Moore moved to Oregon in 1999 to attend Lewis and Clark College. She fell in love with the campus and the scaled down student-to-teacher ratio.

"The school had everything I was looking for," she said.

Moore's father is African American and Cherokee. Her mother is Korean and Caucasian.

Moore said her parents' marriage was never an issue in the midst of Hawaii's racial melting pot, but it was when the family traveled to the South.

"Some people looked at my parents with skepticism," she said. "The idea of a multiracial couple in the South is not as accepted."

Moore saw the Miss Oregon USA pageant as an opportunity to open doors and minds. She hopes to use the title to educate people about multiculturalism and support those

struggling with cultural identity. In the next few months she plans to visit as many elementary schools as possible to talk to children about diversity and her own experience growing up multiracial.

"My parents never bought into the stereotypes," she said. "Without our differences, we wouldn't be a strong community."

Moore has received a Lewis & Clark College Student Academic grant to study how students with

My parents never bought into the stereotypes. Without our differences, we wouldn't be a strong community.

—Maya Moore, Miss Oregon USA

multiracial identities are affected by the challenges they face at six different Oregon campuses.

"People with multiracial backgrounds are faced with different identity issues than people of only one ancestry," Moore said.

She feels many young people are confused about their place and identity in a 'black or white' society that often expects one to choose one race over another.

As part of her Miss Oregon USA prize package, Moore won a \$10,000

scholarship toward graduate school, where she intends to pursue a masters degree, then a Ph.D. in intercultural communications. Columbia, Stanford, Colorado State, and New York University top her list of choices. Wherever she ends up, she hopes it's somewhere busy.

"I thrive off of stress," said Moore, who is always scouting her next adventure. "New York would definitely be something different."

Eventually, she would like to become a college professor, and one day, the college president of a major university.

Presently though, 'her majesty' is most concerned with finishing her work at Lewis and Clark and staying on top of a hectic schedule as Miss Oregon USA.

In March, she'll represent the state of Oregon at the national pageant in San Antonio Texas. The contest will be aired live, March 24, on CBS.

The winner then has a chance to go on and compete for the Miss Universe title.

In preparation for the event, Moore is sharpening her mind and keeping her body fit. She runs often and practices yoga regularly.

"I just have to maintain my balance, my focus and my inner peace," she said. "Because it's going to get really competitive."

Rally Targets Health Care Cuts

Kitzhaber to join Rep. Avel Gordly and others on Capitol steps

Thousands of concerned citizens from around the state will gather on the Capitol steps at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 8 to protest the elimination of addictions and mental health treatment from the Oregon Health Plan.

Gov. John Kitzhaber, State Rep. Avel Gordly and former Senate Majority Leader Dick Springer are

some of speakers scheduled to address the "Rally for Recovery."

The cuts, scheduled to take effect March 1, will

virtually wipeout state mental health and addictions treatment programs as we know them.

An estimated 118,000 will lose access to treatment services, forcing many to leave current treatment programs unless they can personally pay the full cost.

"This would be absolutely devastating to the African

American community and to communities everywhere," said

Corliss McKeever, the president of the African American Health Association. "We are making huge strides to improve the health of African Americans and this would set us back tremendously because people in recovery will likely end up back where they were before they got help. Some will be homeless or dysfunctional and some will commit crimes in the community to pay for their addictions, we simply can't lose these services."

JoAnne Bowman, the vice

chair of the African American Chamber of Commerce and

member of the Governor's Racial and Ethnic Health Task Force said the state has already made significant treatment cuts in the criminal justice system and these additional cuts would devastate individuals coming back into the commu-

nity to continue their rehabilitation at home. Bob Richards of the Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors of Oregon, said health service providers were blindsided by the cuts.

"Coming as they did without a public hearing or any input from professionals or consumers in these fields. By the time the news arrived at the treatment programs, it was an accomplished fact. We never had a chance to make our case,"

Richards said Paul Potter, director of mental health and addiction ser-

vices at Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, said the cuts "will actually increase OHP medical costs through more emergency room visits and more serious medical conditions related to chronic use."

Eric Martin, Director of the Addiction Counselor Certification Board of Oregon, said he hopes the protest "will convince the E-board to reconsider and revise these cuts to lessen the blow to the thousands of Oregonians who will be affected."

This would be absolutely devastating to the African American community and to communities everywhere.

—Corliss McKeever, the president of the African American Health Association

African American Family Wins Smoking Verdict Appeal

(AP) — The Oregon Supreme Court has let stand an \$80 million verdict against cigarette-maker Philip Morris. But company officials say they will appeal, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The Christmas Eve decision not to review the case was a victory for the family of Jesse D. Williams, a Portland janitor who died from lung cancer.

Philip Morris officials say

they might ask the Oregon Supreme Court to reconsider. But they will eventually petition the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn or substantially reduce the award.

"We continue to believe that the Williams-Branch verdict should be set aside on a number of legal grounds, including the excessiveness of the punitive damages award, and we are hopeful that the U.S. Supreme Court will agree to hear the case and send it back to Oregon for a new trial," wrote William S. Ohlemeyer, a Philip Morris vice president and associate general counsel, in a news release.

An attorney for Jesse Williams' family said he doubts the U.S. Supreme Court will take the case.

"It's a highly charged political issue, and I think the U.S. Supreme Court would not go out of its way to use a tobacco case to make law when they had other alternatives," said Charles Tauman, a Portland attorney.

Even if the verdict survives the U.S. Supreme Court, the fight will continue.

Under Oregon law, 60 per-

cent of punitive damage awards goes to the state crime victims assistance fund.

The next round of litigation, by both the tobacco industry and attorneys for the estate of Jesse Williams, will attempt to block the state from getting its cut.

A Multnomah County jury in March 1999 awarded the Williams family \$821,485 in compensatory damages and \$79.5 million in punitive damages. At the time, the \$80.3 million award was the largest in an individual smoker case.

The judge reduced the punitive damage award to \$32 million, saying it was excessively large under the U.S. Constitution. But in June 2002, the Oregon Court of Appeals restored the verdict, which currently ranks as the second-largest punitive damage award against Philip Morris in Oregon.

In March 2002, another Multnomah County jury ordered Philip Morris to pay \$150 million to the family of a Salem woman and smoker who died of cancer. The judge reduced the award to \$100 million. It is on appeal to the Oregon Court of Appeals.

Dialogue on Race

Black Student Union and school leaders to meet Jan. 20

Franklin High School's Black Student Union will have a discussion about race along with students, staff, administrators and school board members during a "Dialogues for Change" meeting Monday, Jan. 20 at Portland State University.

Oregon Uniting will facilitate the discussion. The non-profit group has a goal on advancing racial justice through honest dialogue and public education.

Participants at the meeting will be asked to follow a program carefully developed by Oregon Uniting:

School officials said the dialogue will take place in an atmo-

sphere of confidentiality and will not be open to the general public or the press.

"The discussion process is dialogue, not debate," officials said. "Unlike debate, dialogue is not about opposing each other and seeking to persuade another of the correctness of ones own position. Dialogue invites discovery. It involves two or more sides working together towards a common understanding of the values and life experiences that inform another's world view."

Oregon Uniting facilitators are skilled dialogue leaders. They look like and understand the values and needs of diverse communities.

The power to quit smoking is within your reach.

1-877-270-STOP

We know how hard it is to quit smoking and we know what works. Let us give you a helping hand. Call us today.

DHS
Oregon Department of Human Services

Oregon Tobacco Prevention & Education Program
www.healthoregon.org/tobacco
1-877-2NO-FUME (Spanish) TTY: 1-877-777-6534

Kwanzaa is the time to reflect on what is important to you. Please pick up your gift Kwanzaa bookmark from the African American Health Coalition, local merchants, or the Urban League of Portland.