

Black History Month

The Black Press First part in a series

Brave publishers, editors started first African American newspapers

BY RON WEBER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It took a lot of bravery to write news for African Americans in the early 19th Century when the first black newspapers were published.

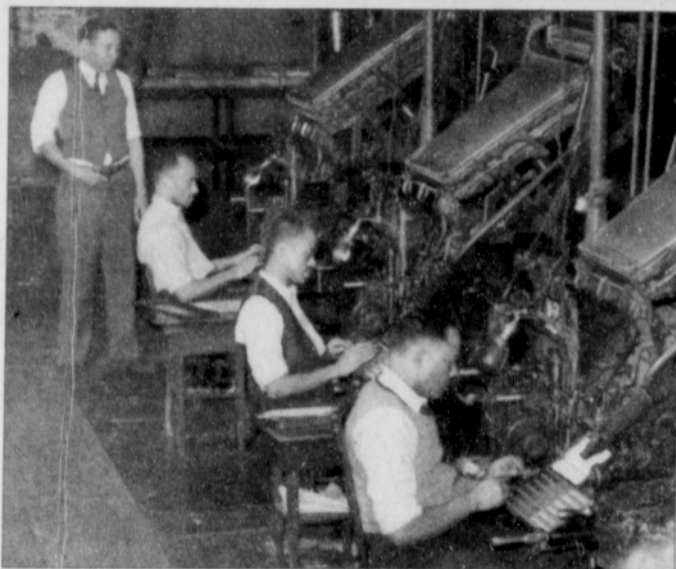
Plain and simple, it wasn't allowed. However black newspapers and magazines did spring up in certain parts of the country, especially the Northeast. They were smuggled throughout the country at great risk to not only anyone who was selling them or giving them away, but at an even greater risk to the publishers and editors.

The business of Black Press grew rapidly after the Civil War. America's descendants of Africa had been suppressed long enough. Whenever the racist whites turned their backs, black writers went to work. Old presses sprung up in dark and dingy basements or private back rooms.

Thoughts denouncing racism and prejudice began being pounded out by both white and black abolitionists. Like the rapid sound of African drums, messages denouncing white supremacy and cruelty to blacks quickly spread across the land of the free whites.

A few newspapers and magazines had lofty goals that were very hard to read and understand. In almost humorous ways, early editors sounded off with long dialogues, hoping to impress their readership, sound highly intelligent and thus attract more educated readers.

Though personalities clashed and loyalties quickly changed, black papers and magazines continued to grow out of a demand for equality and the need for the nation's black population to pull together.



Linotype operators punch in copy for the "Chicago Defender" in 1941, one of the most influential African American newspapers in the United States during the 20th Century. By 1947, the newspaper's circulation exceeded 60,000 and it had 131,000 subscribers nationwide.

On March 16, 1827 two New York clergymen, John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish started the *Freedom's Journal*, America's "first newspaper written by blacks for blacks." The two editors felt, "...that a paper devoted to the dissemination of useful knowledge among our brethren, and to their moral and religious improvement, must meet with the cordial approbation of every friend to humanity..."

Due to Russwurm joining the American Colonization Society in an attempt to establish a black colony in Liberia, the partnership broke up and the paper closed down after only two years and two weeks in business. Although the paper lived a relatively short life, it was the first of its kind and opened the doors for other black publications.

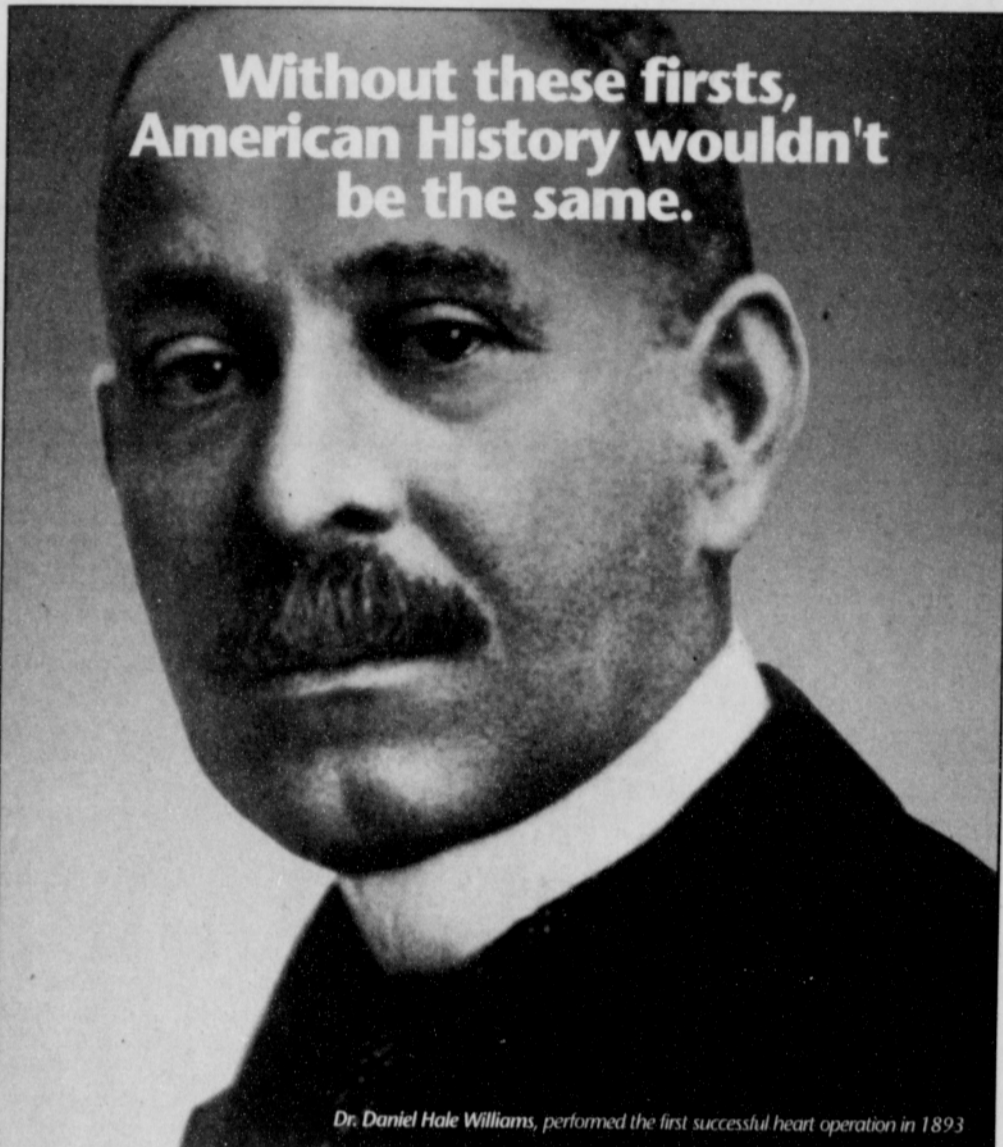
From 1837 to 1841, "The Colored American (Weekly Advocate)" was published by Phillip Bel in New York City. The newspaper established a goal to "educate its subscribers" by including information on "principal railroads, length of rivers, heights of

principle mountains, principal colleges in the U.S., and the principal features of various countries of the nations of the earth." On the March 4, 1837 issue, the paper changed from its original name of the "Weekly Advocate" to "Colored American" with Sam Cornish as the editor. Cornish established a new motto of "Righteousness Exalted a Nation."

The paper was hereafter "...designed to be the organ of Colored Americans—to be looked on as their own, and devoted to their interests—through which they can make known their views to the public—can communicate with each other and their friends, and their friends with them; and to maintain their well-known sentiments on the subjects of abolition and colonization, viz.—emancipation without expatriation—the extirpation of prejudice—the enactment of equal laws and a full and free investiture of their rights as men and citizens."

"The Colored American" was *continued* ▼ on page A6


Without these firsts, American History wouldn't be the same.



Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, performed the first successful heart operation in 1893

Madame C.J. Walker, first self-made American woman millionaire • Hyman S. Thomas, invented the potato chip, originally known as the Saratoga chip • Matthew A. Henson, first man to set foot on the North Pole • Jessie Jarue Mark, first woman to earn a doctorate in botany • Isaac Murphy, won the very first Kentucky Derby • Dr. Charles Drew, discovered the method for preserving blood plasma • Jewel LaFontant Mankarious, first woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court • Yvonne Clark, first woman to earn B.S. in chemical engineering at Harvard • Louis Armstrong, first to sing in "scatting" style • Otis Boykin, invented guided missile device • Jane Wright, pioneered several advances in the field of chemotherapy • Frederick McKinley Jones, inventor of portable X-ray machine • William A. Hinton, developed first test for syphilis • Norbert Rillieux, developed the first system for refining sugar • S. Boone, invented the first ironing board • Frank Grant, inventor of the baseball chinguard • L.D. Newman, inventor of the hairbrush • Shelby J. Davidson, created the first adding machine • William Warwick Cardozo, pioneered the study of sickle cell anemia • Kurtis Blow, first rap artist

You can't talk about Black history without talking about American history. Let's remember the African Americans who helped build America.

 Washington Mutual

PCC: Celebrating Educational Equality and Excellence

"Intelligence plus character. That is the goal of a true education."

Martin Luther King Jr.

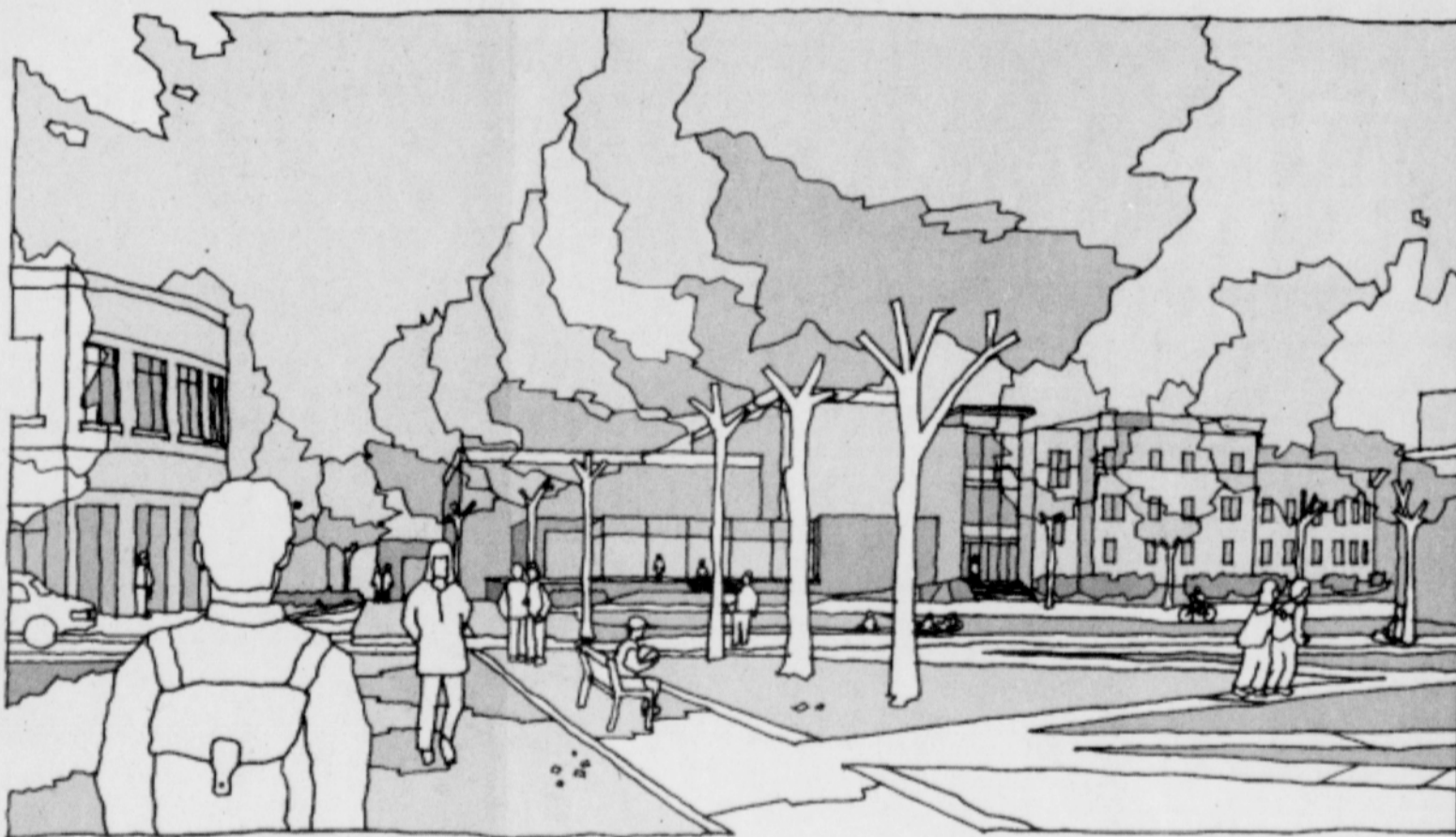
Portland Community College joins all citizens in honoring the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. His dedication to the pursuit of equality, his contributions to civil rights and his insistence on excellence in character and in actions shaped our nation's conscience.

PCC is founded on the principle of equal educational opportunity. Like Dr. King, we too have a dream.

Our dream is to make the Cascade Campus the nation's premier urban community

college campus. We are reaching that goal by building and planning for the future. We hope the community will focus on the dream with us. In the next few years, here is what is planned:

- A new building on the corner of Killingsworth and Kerby, open to the community, and housing a gymnasium with seating for 600 people.
- Three other new buildings, fronting on Killingsworth and Albina, and improvements to existing buildings.



Architectural rendering, PCC Cascade Campus 2004

- New, modern science labs in Jackson Hall.
- Better lighting, beautiful landscaping and community access to the campus.
- A healthy balance of campus, commercial and residential properties in the area.
- 400 new full-time jobs in the community during the next four years.
- Educational opportunities to meet the growing needs of the community until at least 2010.

■ PCC's goal is that at least 20 percent of the construction contracts will go to minority, women and emerging small businesses (MWESB).



Portland Community College