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by Ron Weber

# COURAGEOUS

## AFRICAN AMERICANS

### African-American history by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

Many years after his professional basketball career ended, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, formerly Lew Alcindor Jr. is solidly rooted in other careers. As a motivational speaker, youth mentor and coach, and widely published author, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has accomplished much more in recent years than he ever did on the basketball court. While he was one of the most famous players of all times, with his signature "Sky-Hook" shot, Abdul-Jabbar knew he could not play ball all his life. Abdul-Jabbar has written about young men who think they don't have to finish school because they can become rich as a sports hero. He is the first to point out that after the game it is easy to fade into poverty and obscurity. Abdul-Jabbar speaks of his own fears of leaving the game, in the following excerpt from "Black Profiles in Courage: A Legacy of African-American Achievement."

*When I played my last professional basketball game on June 12, 1989, I began my passage from one kind of life to another. At forty-two, it was a scary transport. Even though I had a farewell year to prepare myself emotionally, I still felt strange when it ended. It was like saying good-bye to someone*

*you loved; it felt like a death. But it was also a rebirth. Because for the first time since I was eight, I was free to explore my other interests.*

Abdul-Jabbar had a plan. As a graduate of UCLA, he knew his

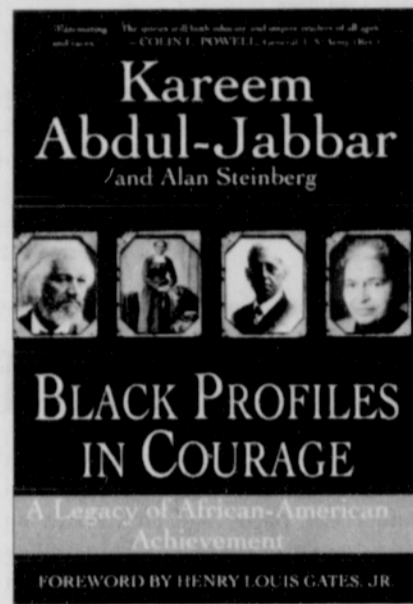
days kept black players from getting to far ahead on the job and in the sports arena as well. In his book, which has a forward by Henry Louis Gates Jr., and is co-authored by Alan Steinberg, Abdul-Jabbar explores the lives of several famous African Americans in history. Profiling an explorer, (Estevan), a writer and speaker (Frederick Douglass), a woman spy, nurse, and leader, (Harriet Tubman), and several other early black American heroes gives the reader a broad base of famous African Americans to enjoy. The book emphasizes the fact that "freedom fighting," is not just physical fighting, as with Crispus Attucks in the Civil War. It is much more. As a black woman "conductor" on the Underground Railroad with a forty thousand dollar price on her head, Harriet Tubman also did her share of

fighting at the pulpit. Abdul-Jabbar's writing on inventor Lewis Latimer show how an obscure quiet man can fight wars with his brain, a pencil, and a piece of chalk. Fittingly, the book ends with Rosa Parks, a small timid black woman on a bus who refuses to

give up her seat to a white person. Abdul-Jabbar shows how this woman used a small non-violent act to bring the entirety of the most powerful nation in the world to its knees. He powerfully demonstrates how this tiny mustard seed brought on a legal battle which forced America to look equality in the face. Abdul-Jabbar demonstrates how Rosa Parks took on a global power, shamed it in front of the whole world, and won the right for all African Americans to equal space on public transportation. The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave had to stand up (while she sat down) and examine the roots of discrimination in the hearts of every living individual across this vast nation.

While he did later become a coach, Abdul-Jabbar had something much different smoldering deep in his heart. He wanted to write. After being awarded a spot in the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1995, this tall black giant with an infectious smile would go on to publish several books, a direction that surprised many of his followers. After coaching an American Indian basketball team, he wrote, "A Season on the Reservation: My Sojourn With the White Mountain Apaches."

Today this well polished intellectual and writer in expensive suits is a long way from the sweaty locker room. While he may not hear the cheers of thousands in huge arenas around the country, he silently feels the joy of knowing that millions of people around the world might be reading any one of his several books at this very moment.



mind would become his primary talent later in life. His first big works as an author, "Black Profiles in Courage," was a natural for Abdul-Jabbar. He used his own courage to face the court when big white ball players like Larry Bird dominated the sport. Discrimination in those

## Striving to Achieve Equality in the Workplace

*continued from Front*  
there stands a drug store, coffee shop, pizzeria and barbeque restaurant, in a much-needed revitalized neighborhood.

Last week, Rohter opened a fifth New Seasons Market, this one called Seven Corners, located at Southeast 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Division.

Designed and constructed using environmentally sustainable

principles, the new 37,500 square foot store creates approximately 140 new jobs, houses New Seasons Market headquarters and offers the surrounding neighborhoods a new array of grocery and pharmacy products.

The opening celebration extends from the weekend of Sept. 4 and 5 to the 11 and 12 with opportunities for the community to gather and participate in grand opening events. "Seven Corners is a great com-

munity" said Rohter, "and we're happy to be a part of it. We hope that seven Corners store becomes a community hub for the surrounding neighborhood—a place where you not only buy your groceries, but where you also run into your neighbors, and have a chance to become more involved and knowledgeable about the issues important to this community."

Rohter's community involve-

ment includes being a volunteer driver and board member for Meals on Wheels, acting as co-chair of Portland/Multnomah Food Policy Council and serving on the advisory committee for the Portland Public Market and the Tacoma Main Street Project. The change Rohter has helped to facilitate is apparent and positive. His work illustrates his belief that being a responsible and dedicated neighbor benefits everyone.

# NEW SEASONS MARKET

## Tomato Lust

ORGANIC TOMATO TASTING  
saturday & sunday • 11am-5pm

We eat them in salads, put them in sauces and top them with mozzarella and olive oil. We make soups and salsas. This weekend we'll be indulging our obsession by offering over 30 varieties of local, organic tomatoes for your tasting pleasure. Sample heirlooms, cherries, traditional romas and slicers. Experience juicy, tangy, sweet and savory. And when we say local, we mean local. We're featuring the crop from Western Oregon Organic Farm in Aurora - less than a half hour from downtown Portland.

And what goes better with garden fresh tomatoes than garden fresh basil? If you thought there was just one kind of basil, think again - we have five distinctive varieties to dazzle you with. We'll also be serving up fresh pesto for you to sample. Take home some of our favorite pesto recipes including low-fat, spinach, arugula, cilantro and parsley-mint versions.



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