



PHOTO BY NICOLE HOOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Melanie Dixon (left), the PCC student director of legislative affairs, discusses a rally trip to the State Legislature to advocate for college funding with another PCC student.

Student Fights for College Funding

continued ▲ from Metro mom as a role model.

"My daughter needs to realize that as a black woman she is smart and needs to learn the importance of giving back to the community," said Dixon.

In 1993, Dixon opted for a GED because high school wasn't important to her. She was more concerned about what was "going on in the streets." Now Dixon has a 3.2 grade point average in college and many opportunities are in her future.

"Melanie has proven to everyone that she comes into contact with just how ready she was to return to school, take on a leadership role and make significant changes at Portland Community College," said Kendi Esary, student leadership coordinator and

Dixon's mentor. Dixon is graduating from PCC in June and will attend Portland State University in the fall. As a communication major, she believes she will be well equipped for a career as a motivational speaker or news reporter.

EL OBSERVADOR

Bride's Tale Opens Racial Wounds

Fabrication tapped into stereotypes

(AP) — It took just hours for Jennifer Wilbanks' story to dissolve, and until Thursday for her to apologize. It turns out the runaway bride-to-be had not been kidnapped — much less by a gun-wielding Hispanic.

But among minorities, a white woman's tale of being victimized by a threatening man of color is unlikely to fade quickly, partly because it's happened before and taps into powerful stereotypes rooted in painful history.

"This speaks to how Latinos are perceived in society," said Lisa Navarette, spokeswoman for the National Council of La Raza in Washington D.C. "Americans only know minority communities, par-

ticularly Latino communities, through stereotypes, through images in the media. If people keep being portrayed as criminals — as undocumented immigrants or criminals or gang members — that's what we tend to believe."

Wilbanks was believed missing when she vanished days before she was to be married in a 600-guest affair in Duluth, Ga., population 22,000. On April 29 she claimed that she had been kidnapped in Atlanta by a Hispanic man and a white woman with a handgun, a story that quickly unraveled.

Her admission that she had run away, overwhelmed by wedding pressures, prompted protests among local and national Hispanic leaders.

At one point, a Hispanic leader not only demanded an apology but said she should be made to perform community service in a Hispanic neighborhood. Now, Georgia authorities are debating whether to prosecute or sue her.



Jennifer Wilbanks

Such racial hoaxes are actually not rare, said Kathryn Russell-Brown, a law professor at the University of Florida, who wrote "The Color of Crime," a book documenting 67 such cases that occurred between 1987 and 1996.

"The majority of perpetrators were someone white falsely accusing someone black," Russell-Brown said. "You typically don't see the Hispanic criminal in terms of a hoax

case, but she put this duo together and it's got this resonance. ... It's still this idea of a criminal element that is colored."

Historically, the threat of black men victimizing white women has loomed large and powerful, and provoked many of the more than 4,700 lynchings in the decades between the end of the Civil War and the dawning of the civil rights era.

The peak came in 1892, with 230 killings, but continued well into the 20th century, according to Tuskegee University, a one-time black college in Alabama that is now a National Historic Site. Most of those seized by white mobs and hanged were black men, but Native Americans, Asians, Jews and Hispanics also were victimized, experts said.

Today, growing national anti-immigrant sentiment that feeds Americans' stereotypes of Hispanic immigrants stealing jobs and undermining the nation's prosperity made Wilbanks' story plausible, Navarette said.

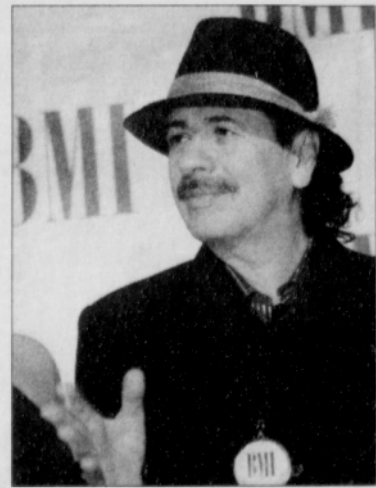
Santana Honored at Latin Awards

(AP) — After more than 30 years in the music business, 36 albums and eight Grammy Awards, Carlos Santana can call himself a BMI icon.

The virtuoso guitarist known for his passionate, energetic rhythms received the special honor at the 12th annual BMI Latin Awards last month in Las Vegas.

Santana joined past honorees James Brown, Brian Wilson, Dolly Parton, Isaac Hayes and Van Morrison.

Emilio Estefan and Latin pop star Estefano shared the songwriter of the year award.



Carlos Santana

Estefan, co-founder of the Miami Sound Machine and husband of singer Gloria Estefan, was honored for his work on Cristian Castro's "No Hace Falta," Shalim's "Se Me Olvido Tu Nombre" and Victor Manuelle's "Tengo Ganas." Colombian Juanes won song of the year for "Fotografia," a duet with Nelly Furtado. The hit is from the nine-time Latin Grammy winner's multiplatinum album, "Un Dia Normal."

The awards recognized the past year's most performed Latin songs on U.S. radio and television.

Goldman Prize Honors Mexican Farmer

(AP) — A Mexican farmer who fought for land rights and forest protection for the Tarahumara Indians of northern Mexico is one of six activists who won the prestigious \$125,000 Goldman Environmental Prize.

The award to Isidro Baldenegro Lopez was announced Sunday in San Francisco. The prize is granted to grass-roots activists who are deemed environmental heroes.

The other winners were: - Jose Andres Tamayo Cortez, 47, a Roman Catholic priest from Honduras who organized a coalition of small farmers to battle for forestry reforms.

Biologist Kaisha Atakhanova, 47, of Kazakhstan, who led a successful fight to keep her country from importing nuclear waste.

- Congo botanist Corneille E.N. Ewango, 41, who protected rare

animals and plants in the Okapi Faunal Reserve throughout a decade of civil war.

- Stephanie Danielle Roth, 34, of Romania, the lead organizer against construction of Europe's largest open-cast gold mine in her country.

- Chavannes Jean-Baptiste, 58, of Haiti, who founded the Peasant Movement of Papay and has taught principles of sustainable agriculture to more than 200,000 people.

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The Test of Heart

question is, have we realized our own greatness that's before our face daily, which is in each of us? And via the respected struggles, and the blood of our ancestry, mix families or not? How do we value them? Certainly not by the wealth they received, nor by the company they keep. But by the heart depicted in their commitment, reflecting the origin of our Black priceless worth against the staggering paramount of odds, perpetually giving way to our letting freedom ring & our lifting every voice to sing. We sing the happy song our "unsung heroes:" Dr. King; Marcus Garvey; Booker T. Washington; & Carter G. Woodson. And yes that song Hero, born a few miles outside of the African Continent in Palestine, Jesus of Nazareth.

Regardless of Hundreds of years of odds, we are about 40 million African American citizens in Americans. Sadly, though about 2 million are jailed, yet that leaves about 38 million law abiding African Americans. For some reasons, I don't expect Fox News to report our good side. Maybe it's just mean spirited? With elections being suppressed we must unite to blood of ancestry & human dignity for God's sake. And yes for the first time since Dr. King, vote suppression happened to my Mom & Dad in Florida for frivolous & unlawful reasons. My parents, Rev. Dr. Jim and Jannie Pearce are too, well known in their Community & great human beings.

About 10 years ago while doing broadcast "Blacks in Biblical History on KBMS radio, & while working behind the seen to bring a much needed unity in tackling Portland's common problems, I met some great men & women. The likes of Pastor Wendell Wallace & the Maranatha group; Ron Herndon; Robert Phillips; The Sen. Avel Gordly; The Coalition of Men & many other great men & women of this Northeast precinct. What's the point? The point is a question. The