

Students from Crown Prince Academy in Ghana, West Africa join their teacher (in gray slacks near door) for an after school photo with visiting Portland student Nana Opoku, third from right, and her mother, Victoria Cook.

Local Student Discovers Africa

Trip confronts many misconceptions

BY NANA OPOKU
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

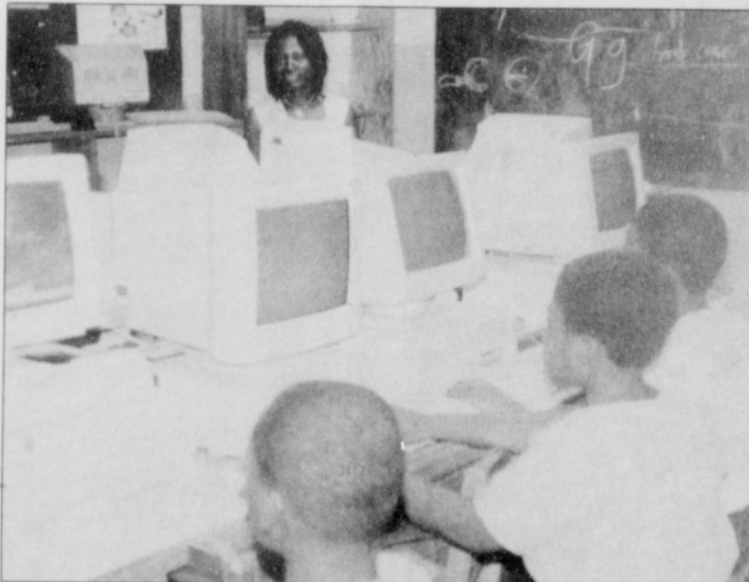
When people turn on their television or search through a magazine or book, there is often an advertisement on saving children or families in Africa due to the fast growing AIDS epidemic or lack of food, clothing and housing.

Seeing such images is bound to give the conception that Africa is a country in complete poverty. But if

you were a foreigner, and America was portrayed in such an ugly manner, would you not also have the wrong conception about America? Just as there is a bad side to something there is also a good side.

I recently had the chance to visit Africa and see for myself what it is really like. And because of my prior misconceptions, due to all the television ads, I was in for an awakening!

When I arrived at the airport in Ghana, West Africa, I was impressed



Fourth grade students at Crown Prince Academy in Ghana, West Africa are about to begin their computer class.

different schools. One that I liked in particular was Crown Prince Academy. Over 500 children ages 2 through 13 have to wear proper attire to attend this prestigious school. The school has a waiting list for admission.

I had the privilege to attend an 8th grade class where the children were taught college level math. For a student to attend this school, it costs 1 million cedis, which is equivalent to \$100 U.S. dollars. If Africa is so poor and malfunctioned how can so many parents can afford to put their children in a school like this?

I visited many museums during my stay in Ghana. One of those was a small town in Cape Coast, where white men in prior centuries kept Africans as slaves until the ships came to transport them to America. Another museum I visited was located in Kumasi, called The National Cultural Center where patterns and colors for different types

of fabric are designed. I also visited the zoo where I saw lions, monkeys, elephants and more! I even learned that most of the wild animals didn't originate from Ghana but were brought in from other countries. There were beautiful beaches, fruit trees and elegant restaurants.

So I guess when people say don't believe everything you hear or see unless you experience it for yourself is really true!

Without going to Africa and seeing and experience the country for myself, I would still have the wrong conception of the continent. I was truly amazed to see and experience where my ancestors originated and I look forward to going back some time soon.

Nana Opoku is a summer student intern at The Portland Observer. She attends City Christian High School in northeast Portland. Her parents are from Ghana, West Africa.

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to see such beautiful people. The Ghanaians treated me with great hospitality. People were fully dressed. I saw or met no HIV positive or malnourished people.

While in Africa, I visited many

Student Achieves at Local School

To be awarded before an audience for an achievement is an honor in itself, especially when the person has worked hard for it. That's the case for our Portland Observer summer intern Nana Opoku who wrote about her experiences visiting Africa in the sidebar story in this week's edition.

One of the few African Americans at City Christian High School in northeast Portland, Opoku managed to win her way to the top of her junior class. Her teachers presented her with a Special Recognition Award for her efforts.

"I had to give up certain things to stay focused on my school



Nana Opoku is honored for her achievement at City Christian High School in northeast Portland.

work," she said, reacting to the honor. "Whether it was basketball, cheerleading or music, it had to be secondary because if you put academics first, everything else will fall in its place."

Opoku has advice to other students who want to succeed. She suggests doing something that no one else does, setting goals and going after them.

"Don't count on anyone to help you," she said. "You must be a hardworking, independent individual and be willing to persevere. Also, don't allow fear to slow down or hinder your goals in life. If you fall, get back up and try again."

Decoy Drinkers

continued ▲ from Front

Because of liability concerns, the decoy that goes into a bar on a mission for Assured Compliance is not allowed to drink the alcoholic beverages. The decoy often will mask his or her motives by dumping part of the beverage in the restroom. Venturing into a bar as a decoy usually takes less than 10 minutes after which the decoy calls Miller to debrief him

on the experience.

What Miller looks for in a potential decoy is someone that appears to be under the age of 26 who has good communications skills and shows the best ability to make judgments.

"You have to have a public service-oriented mind," Miller said.

Even though Miller views his company as a preventative and economical service, he has a hard time getting bar owners to see the relevance. Maybe once they get

hit with a hefty violation they will see the value of Assured Compliance.

"I'm one-tenth of the cost of a ticket. Economically it's better," said Miller.

Working independently also has its benefits for Miller personally.

"I get to decide what clients and where to work," Miller said. "Retiring at the age of 53 after working for the OLCC for 30 years was welcoming."

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