

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## COURAGEOUS AFRICAN AMERICANS

### Canada's black heroes

BY JUNE ACOSTA POTTER

Oscar Peterson, the brilliant, world-renowned jazz pianist, died recently at his home in Mississauga, Ontario, a suburb of Toronto.

Peterson was black, the son of a Pullman porter and born in Montreal on Aug. 15, 1925. (My first encounter, as a little girl, with a black person was a Pullman porter: kind, patient and impeccably dressed.)

Though he was a veteran of many world tours, performing in many great cities, Peterson always returned to Canada, and in recent years, his home in Mississauga.

Canada, of course, was the Promised Land, a destination of the Underground Railroad during slavery times, a blessed haven and refuge, a "Welcome Home, Travelers" land.

Canadian citizens were known for treating black people (whether from Africa directly, or the U.S.A.) as valued members of the human family, worthy of respect and courtesy.

A naturalized citizen, born in Canada a long time ago, I customarily seek to reconnect to by mother

country to re-establish associations from the past.

During a recent phone conversation with a lifelong friend, I learned that the new priest at St. Anne's Catholic Church in Iroquois Falls, Ontario, was black - Father Augustine Katuka, from Nigeria.

My friend reported that: "They all love him!"

When Jackie Robinson was chosen by Brooklyn Dodgers General Manager Branch Rickey to be the first player to integrate Major League Baseball in 1947, he played with the Montreal Royals, a Dodger farm team.

Robinson reported in his autobiography "I Never Had It Made" that during tours in the U.S., he was regularly harassed and verbally abused, while his teammates suffered along with him. But they were welcomed home joyously by Montreal citizens who sought to comfort them.

Today, Canada has opened her doors and arms to Hispanics, deemed illegals south of the border and to Haitians, dispersing them throughout the country, and extending aid and monetary assistance.

During the forthcoming Olympic winter games in Vancouver, B.C., all Americans will have a chance to observe and enjoy Canadian hospitality.

By the way, many black Canadians call themselves African Americans. After all, the name should apply to all who dwell in both North and South America!



Governor Kulongoski and Senator Gordly share one of her many honors.

### Black History Month Salute to:

Oregon Senator Avel Gordly

and the Avel Gordly Center for Healing

Opening February 28, 2008

621 S.W. Alder, 5th floor

Portland, Oregon

The Avel Gordly Center for Healing is a new mental health center that is culturally responsive to the needs of African Americans. The Center was developed by the African American Mental Health Commission in partnership with Oregon Health and Science University. It is named for Avel Gordly who will retire from the Oregon Senate in 2008. The list of her accomplishments is extensive:

- First African American woman elected to the state Senate
- 16 years of public service
- Former Director of Youth Services, Urban League of Portland
- Lifelong advocate for racial and ethnic justice
- Recognized champion for the support of mental health
- Currently serving as Associate Professor, Dept. of Black Studies, Portland State University



Senator Gordly and some of her student interns during the 2007 legislative session.

*"Senator Avel Gordly's unwavering, heartfelt, and informed leadership and advocacy on behalf of Oregonians living with mental illness has resulted in improved services, greater understanding and better communication and education regarding their daily lives as well as issues they face. The way she lives her life inspires us to live our best lives while considering others. We are all better citizens because of her example of service."*

Judge Adrienne Nelson  
Multnomah County Circuit Court

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### Struggle for African American Business

Roscoe Dixon was born in Virginia in 1843 and became famous for owning and operating Roscoe's Oyster House in Astoria.

During the later part of the 19th century, Dixon migrated to Oregon and settled in Astoria where he married Theresa Antoinette Townes. Many African Americans in Oregon encountered discrimination in the job market and were employed as servants or laborers, so Dixon's position as a proprietor was extremely unusual.

The African-American population of the state was relatively small at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1860, less than one percent of the population in the territories of Oregon and Washington were African American. African Americans held a variety of occupations in Oregon. Many were farmers and farm laborers, artisans, merchants, servants, skilled laborers, sailors, railroad workers, porters, waiters, cooks and barbers. Household servants, a position typically held by



Roscoe Lee Dixon owned Roscoe's Oyster House in Astoria in the 1800s.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

African Americans throughout much of the nation, were overwhelmingly Euro American in Oregon.

### In Loving Memory

John W. Harris

Services for John W. Harris, 52, who was born Oct. 24, 1955 and was called home on Feb. 9, 2008, will be held Friday, Feb. 15 at 11 a.m. For more information, call Cox & Cox Funeral Home 503-281-4819.



PACT Parents and Children Together

### Mothers: Is raising a child with ADHD stressing you out?

Parents and Children Together (PACT) is a research study comparing two approaches to helping families with children with ADHD. Eligible families receive either an ADHD family advocate or education materials.

You may be eligible if you have a child with ADHD and live in the Portland area.

There is no cost to participate in this study. You will receive a gift card of at least \$50 every six months.

For more information:

call **503 418-3603**

or email [pact@ohsu.edu](mailto:pact@ohsu.edu)



Change can't happen if we see things just one way. That's why diversity is important to who we are. We are proud to be an equal opportunity institution.

IRB# 2071

### "Beloved Community"

### We honor the life and works of Martin Luther King Jr.

It is our primary goal as a labor union to better the lives of all people working in the building trades through advocacy, civil demonstration, and the long-held belief that workers deserve a "family wage" - fair pay for an honest day's work.

A family wage and the benefits that go with it, not only strengthens families, but also allows our communities to become stronger, more cohesive, and more responsive to their citizens' needs.

Our family wage agenda reflects our commitment to people working in the building trades, as well as to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to make Dr. King's concept of the "beloved community" a reality.

Pacific Northwest  
Regional Council of  
**CARPENTERS**

Affiliated with the  
United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America



Representing more than 5,000 carpenters and other construction workers in Oregon state.

Do you want to know more about becoming a union carpenter? Whether you've worked in the non-union sector for years or are looking for a career with potential, we want to hear from you. Call Kathy Swan toll free at 1.877.285.4810 or email: [kswan@nwcarpenters.org](mailto:kswan@nwcarpenters.org)

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