

York: Too Long Ignored

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shoulders a focal point and a symbol of the burden he bore during the Lewis and Clark expedition, including fragments of William Clark's maps "scarred" on his back.

After first reading about York, Neal and Abosedra were eager to dig up his history. They visited Doug Erickson, Lewis & Clark's head of special college collections. Only text fragments from the actual journals of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark provide some clues as to who he was.

Born in or near Ladysmith, Virginia, York and his family were slaves to the Clarks. His servant from boyhood, Clark inherited York when his father died. In 1804, Clark took York, a large, strong man, as the only African-American member on the Lewis and Clark Expedition.

In journals dating from 1804 to 1806, Clark describes York's duties that attest to his skills in scouting, hunting, field medicine and manual labor in extreme weather conditions. York excited the curiosity of Native Americans who treated him with respect, making him a key person in trading and diplomatic relations.

Sadly, the freedoms York endured on the trail were not carried over at the end of expedition. While every other member received money and land for their services, York got nothing. Clark even refused to grant York's request to reunite with his wife, who was a slave in Louisville. He remained a slave under another master until 1816. His ultimate fate is unclear and disputed among historians.

Neal says that with York's memo-

rial in place, the history of his life is exposed for future generations. The statue is not just a way for African Americans to learn York's story, but any number of students who may not know his history.

While he initiated the project, Neal said it would not have happened without the help of so many people involved.

He would like to recognize all those who helped bring the York statue, notably from Lewis & Clark's York Committee and chair Linda Tesner; the director of the Ronna and Eric Hoffman Gallery of Contemporary Art at Lewis & Clark; Chris Jay, lead donor and Lewis & Clark trustee; Darrell Millner, York historian and professor of black studies at Portland State University; as well as fellow law students Lee Matthews, Eric Hevenor, Sara Bagheri, and Matthew Abosedra.

He also recognizes the Honorable Ancer L. Haggerty, senior judge, U.S. District Court, Portland for giv-



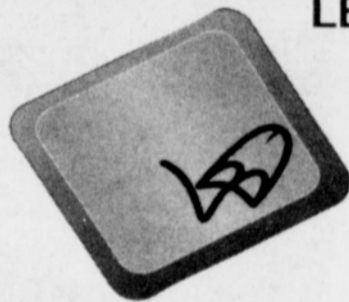
Charles Neal was a law student at Lewis & Clark College in 2004 when he came up with the idea to build a monument of York, the first black man to explore what is now Portland. Now an attorney in California, he is pictured in 2010 with Alison Saar, the artist who sculpted the statute for the college's southwest Portland campus.

ing him the flexibility to complete his internship while working on the York project.

"Without them helping, there would be no memorial to speak of," said Neal.

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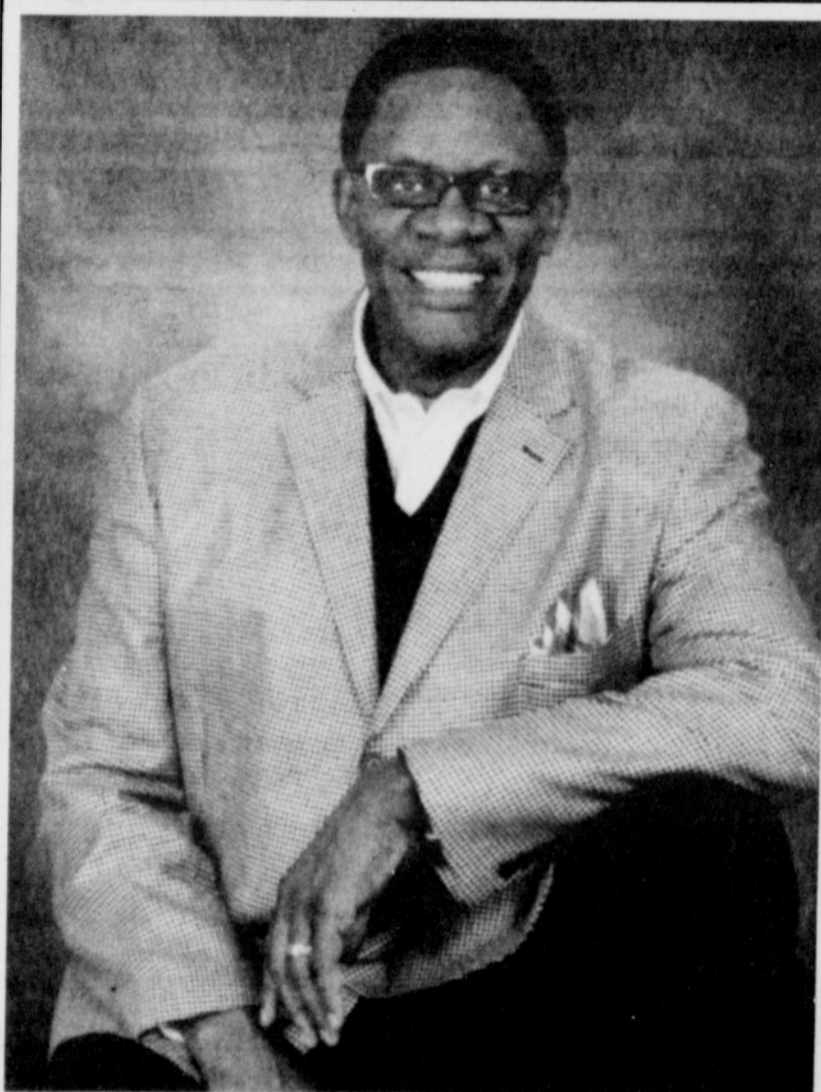
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