

Juneteenth: Celebrate Freedom

By Helen Silvis
Of *The Skanner News*

For almost 300 years, African Americans were forced into slavery in the United States. That shameful era came to an end with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. It set a date for ending slavery: Jan 1, 1863. Too bad, nobody bothered to tell Southern Blacks. It wasn't until two years later on June 19, 1865 that the news reached Galveston, Texas. Now, the message of freedom was impossible to ignore because it was brought by Gen. Gordon Granger—and 2000 armed federal troops.

Imagine those celebrations: the singing, the feasting, the soaring joy. That's the essence of Juneteenth.

"The spirit of Juneteenth is jubilation," says Doris Rush, chair of the Portland Juneteenth Committee. "It's happy. It's a celebration of freedom, and it's about freedom for everyone, not just African Americans, because slavery still exists in the world."

Celebrated at first in the South, and now across the nation, Juneteenth is recognized as a holiday in 37 states. The Juneteenth Worldwide website records celebrations as far away as Japan, Nigeria and Korea.

"It blew my mind," Rush says. "So many Americans don't know about it, yet it is

celebrated worldwide. That's amazing."

This year Portland's Juneteenth celebration will return to Jefferson High School's sports field, not available last year. The Freedom Trail Parade will assemble on Saturday morning, May 18, at Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Jarrett Street. At 11 a.m. the parade will start out heading north to Killingsworth Street, before turning west toward Albina Avenue. The celebration will run from noon to 6 p.m. at Jefferson High School.

The 2011 Grand Marshal is Bernie Foster, Publisher of *The Skanner News*. He says he is delighted to be a part of an event that symbolizes so much to the African American community, and everyone descended from slaves. Also on the playbill are: City Commissioner



Three members of the Juneteenth Committee, clockwise from top left: Doris Rush, Ora Lee Green, and Clara Peoples

Amanda Fritz; Multnomah County Commissioner Jeff Cogen; Portland State University Professor Harold Briggs; the Buffalo soldiers; longtime business owner Paul Knauls; as well as classic cars, marchers and dancers.

At Jefferson, a 'huge' children's area will include arts and crafts; tables where children can make father's day gifts; bouncy houses and games. Harriet Tubman Middle School will be holding a times tables math challenge from noon to 2 p.m.

On the main stage, the

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Breaking Ground in 'Mary Poppins'

By Lisa Loving
Of *The Skanner News*

The Fred Meyer Broadway Over America series presents *Mary Poppins* – with the musical production's first-ever African American featured actress.

In an interview with *The Skanner News* this week, actress Q. Smith said she exults in her edgy role as Poppins' vicious nemesis, Miss Andrew (as well as two other parts, Queen Victoria and Miss Smythe). Producers of the rollicking musical describe it as "not just a fluffy copy of the movie."

Smith's past shows, most of which have toured, include "Les Miserables" on Broadway; and "Fame," "Smokey Joe's Cafe" (two productions, one starring Gladys Knight and the other with Rita Coolidge), "Aida," "Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat," all off-Broadway; and more.

The Skanner News: Which was your favorite



Q. Smith as Miss Andrew in 'Mary Poppins'

role?

Q. Smith: I love this role. If you're looking for the movie, you'll be able to see most of the movie in the show, but also most of the book is incorporated in our stage production of it. It's a combination of the book and the movie together. It's very in your face, it'll bring you to a whole new level of appreciation for the movie.

I would say that the role of Miss Andrew is probably by far my favorite role ever. Also my favorite

show ever was *Les Miserables*, I did that on Broadway.

TSN: One thing I'm going to be curious about is how this Portland audience will respond to – what is actually a more accurate portrayal of Victorian England – a lot of people don't think about African descendents there. Can you just talk a little bit about that? Did it throw you for a loop? Or do you really dig into it or what is your feeling about it?

QS: On two levels – I mean historically and artis-

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JUNETEENTH OREGON

Freedom Trail Parade

Grand Marshall Bernie Foster
Begins at 11am

SAT. JUNE 18TH, 2011

Free Community Festival

Includes music by The Kirk Green Band
Children Activities, Merchant Marketplace
Jefferson High School - Sports Field
Noon to 6:00pm

Speakers Includes:
Dr. Harold Briggs

Commissioner Amanda Fritz *Ricky Muhammad*

PROUDLY PRESENTS: THE 2ND ANNUAL PARENT SYMPOSIUM

BREAKING THE CYCLE

RELEASING THE DREAM

Saturday, June 18, 2011, 8am - 5pm
Concordia University
2811 NE Holman Street, PDX 97211
Hagen Campus Center

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu
Youth Workshops by Y.O.U.th
Free brunch and refreshments
Community food & art vendors

Childcare provided by Village Childcare Inc. for ages infant to 8 years

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