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## Book Reviews

by Kam Williams  
 Special To *The Skanner News*

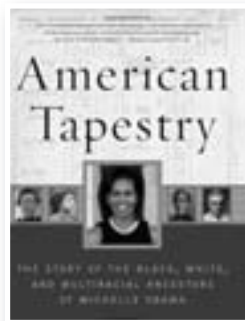
### American Tapestry: The Story of the Black, White, and Multiracial Ancestors of Michelle Obama by Rachel L. Swarns

"On November 4, 2008, Michelle Obama stood before a crowd of thousands of roaring, singing and weeping supporters in Chicago's Grant Park... It was Election Night and her husband had just become the first African-American

President of the United States...

Like many African-Americans... Mrs. Obama knew her grandparents as a girl, but only bits and pieces about the relatives who came before them. She had grown up hearing whispers about white ancestors in her in her family tree, but no one knew who they were...

— Excerpted from the Introduction (pgs. 3-15)



inside the White House.

The First Lady's lineage as a most-intriguing, multiracial mosaic.

### The Black Chicago Renaissance Edited by Darlene Clark Hine and John McCluskey, Jr.

Since the Harlem Renaissance, New York has been considered the unofficial capital of black America. However, that designation might be undeserving when one reflects upon Chicago's considerable contributions not only culturally, but socially and politically.

For example, the Windy City sent its first African-American to Congress sixteen years before the Big Apple which only elected Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. in 1944. Furthermore, half of the six black U.S. Senators in history represented Illinois, and I know I don't have to tell you that President Obama hails from Chicago.

In terms of the arts, the city boasted such icons as novelist Richard Wright, choreographer Katherine Dunham, and poets Arna Bontemps, Margaret Walker and Gwendolyn Brooks during its heyday. What's ironic is that at the very same time they were promoting positive images of African-Americans, Amos 'n' Andy, a minstrel radio show originating in Chicago, was doing just the opposite.

The white stars of that popular program did demeaning impersonations featuring "mispronounced words, garbled grammar and characterizations of black women as bossy and black men as clownish." Meanwhile, A. Philip Randolph was organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters into a union to demand a living wage from the Chicago Pullman Car Company, "the single-largest employer of black people in the United States."

An impressive history lesson and compendium of fascinating factoids proving that the so-called Second City need not take a back seat to New York, at least when discussing the achievements of its African-American intelligentsia.



## We honor the many accomplishments of African Americans.



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, and to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to help people achieve the American Dream. This dream that workers can hold dear regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, creed, or religious beliefs.

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### Interstate Bridge Partners:

PCL Civil Constructors, Inc., American Bridge Company, Fluor Enterprises, Inc., URS Corporation, would like to invite DBE firms in the A/E/C Industry who are interested in partnering opportunities on the Columbia River Crossing Project (CRC) to join them for a networking open house. Information will be available from OMWESB and OMWBE about certification in OR and WA.

Please plan on joining The Interstate Bridge Partners at one of our Open Houses:

September 18, 2012  
 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

at the  
 Red Lion Hotel  
 Vancouver at the Quay, WA

September 19, 2012  
 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

at the  
 Red Lion Hotel  
 Bellevue, WA

Please RSVP to Jamie Thornton at (425) 394-4200 or at [JLThornton@pcl.com](mailto:JLThornton@pcl.com) by Friday, September 7, 2012.

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