

New Documentary Highlights the Life of Whitney Young

Bruce Poinsette
Of The Skanner News

With partisan politics showing no signs of fading, some say the time couldn't be better to highlight the story of Whitney Young.

"He was a bridge builder between races and economic groups," says Bonnie Boswell, Young's niece. "He was determined to find common ground. People in the future are going to need to be able to do this in a multicultural world."

Boswell has produced the film, "The Power Broker: Whitney Young's Fight for Civil Rights," which will debut on PBS on Feb. 18. The film highlights the civil rights legend's ability to negotiate and the lesser acknowledged role he played in making numerous civil rights advances.

He may not have a household name like Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks but Boswell says Young deserves the same respect. She notes that in addition to being overlooked in favor of louder public figures, Young was also derided by some in the Black Power Movement for being an "Uncle Tom" and part of the "establishment."

Boswell says that Young's upbringing helped him deal with these accusations from people who had similar aspirations as he did. He was raised in Kentucky during Segregation, which taught him the restraint required for survival, she says.

"They (his parents) taught him and other young people how to not get mad and get smart," she says. "To not let anybody drive you so low as to hate them."

Young continued to develop his temperament when he went to work in a segregated army as an aviator. According to Boswell, constantly dealing with white officers helped him in his life's work to maintain his composure.

Washington D.C. could learn a lot from Young, says Boswell.

Partisan bickering has been a staple of President Barack Obama's tenure in office so far. For example, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell proclaimed the GOP's primary

goal was to make Obama a one term President, Standard & Poor's downgraded the U.S. credit rating and placed much of the blame on Republicans' unwillingness to phase out the Bush Tax Cuts, and Congress famously received a lower approval rating than cockroaches, Ghengis Khan and Nickleback.

This displays intolerance for dialogue, suggests Boswell.

During his day, Young received heavy criticism from both sides of the political spectrum.

"He wasn't concerned about being popular," says Boswell. "I think you can learn a lot from the self-control that he had to have to not get swayed by his emotions. The kind of confidence he had to not try to play to a crowd."

"In any social movement, you need a complexity of voices at the table. Whitney Young, because of his background, was able to approach corporate leaders as well as political leaders.

"There were people who were louder and protested more but you also needed someone like Whitney Young, after the protests were over, to go in and negotiate with people who



Whitney Young at the White House

Civil Rights figure was known for his ability to negotiate with people from all over the political spectrum

had power to be able to provide the kind of access so people could get better jobs, get better education, get better housing. It's not a one solution kind of situation."

Boswell says that Young's lesser known role in the civil rights movement made it challenging for her to get the film out. Specifically, she says it was hard to convince people of

the validity of the work because of the complexity of the subject matter. The idea for the film originally came to her in 2002 and she began fulltime work on it in 2008.

Boswell hopes "The Power Broker" will help encourage people to look into their own family histories. She says Young, like many prominent civil rights figures of the day, gets overlooked because of our insistence on narrowing down large movements to one or two people. We often overlook integral figures in our own families because we're distracted by entertainers or other people's stories, she says.

"Everybody is touched by the times they live in," says Boswell. "For use to be able to go back, for young people to go and ask the elders about their stories, is really important."

"I think this is a film about hope. While some might be tempted to look at this in purely historical terms, I think it really is a guide in terms of the values, all told, to make this a better world and a peaceful world."

Guns

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gun laws on the floor with a Smith & Wesson semiautomatic jammed into his shoulder holster.

The Kent Republican, who died in 2003, was advocating a measure to allow gun owners to leave firearms in their cars.

Pullen later recounted that he told his fellow legislators he had no choice but to carry his gun until the measure passed. "I never saw a bill move so fast in my life," he said.

The National Conference of State Legislatures in 2009 studied which state capitols had firearm restrictions.

Of the 42 states that responded to the survey, only Washington, Texas and Kentucky indicated they had no restrictions on carrying weapons at their capitols. Eight states allowed people with concealed-weapons permits on campus, and the rest restricted firearms to law-enforcement and security staff.

No one tracks how many Washington lawmakers carry guns, and concealed-weapon permits are kept private under state law.

However, in addition to Taylor, Reps. Mike Hope, R-Lake

Stevens, and Christopher Hurst, D-Enumclaw, recently said they occasionally carry guns in the statehouse.

Anecdotally, lawmakers say there are many more legislators who carry concealed weapons.

Hope is a Seattle police officer and Hurst is a retired police detective.

Rep. Ross Hunter sees no need for guns at the Capitol given that armed state troopers patrol

Hurst, who spent 25 years in law enforcement, said he's carried a weapon on the floor when "there were debates that were going to bring out people with such passions that there was enough of a concern."

State Sen. Pam Roach, R-Auburn, said she has a con-

cealed-weapons permit but does not carry a firearm at the Capitol. But Roach said she picked a desk on the Senate floor that's beside a marble pillar, so she can duck behind it should anything happen.

Hurst said that legislators who do carry guns should keep in mind they can become a target if they ever pull out their weapon in self-defense.

"Any legislator who is carrying a weapon should consider the possibility that displaying that weapon and coming in contact with a uniformed police officer who does not know them, might find themselves shot and killed almost immediately," he said.

Hope agreed and said he'd like to see the Legislature ban guns on campus. "I would love to see it set up just like a courthouse, where we have to go through security in order to get to the chambers," he said.

Rep. Ross Hunter, D-Medina, also sees no need for guns at the Capitol given that armed state troopers patrol the campus. He said he'd like to see a statehouse ban, but does not expect it.

"We have had agonizing discussions about whether we're going to allow guns on the Capitol campus many times over the last 10 years, and we've never had enough votes," Hunter said. "People get all hissy about it. It's like one of these: 'This is my right.'"

All that said, Hunter and other lawmakers said this could be the year the Legislature passes a gun-control measure.

Hunter noted that Hope, who has an A-plus rating from the NRA, signed onto Pedersen's bill for universal background checks.

"Everyone should support the bill," Hope said. "It will impact those who are bent on committing crimes."

It's not clear yet if Hope is an exception among lawmakers with high marks from the NRA.

A majority in the chamber — 55 members — have a NRA rating of B or better, including House Majority Leader Pat Sullivan, D-Covington.

The NRA characterizes a B rating as "generally pro gun" and an A as "solidly pro gun."

Sullivan has an A rating from the NRA and he embraced that distinction in an interview, saying he has a "strong Second Amendment position."



The League of Education Voters Foundation Presents

Suspended

Out of school, Out of luck

In Washington State, students missed over 70,000 days of school in the 2009-2010 school year due to exclusionary discipline practices like expulsion.

Students of color, low-income students and students with disabilities are far more likely to be removed from class and/or suspended.

Suspensions add up—many students with a pattern of discipline problems lose credits, fail courses and fall behind in school due to their time out of class.

Students can't learn if they aren't in class. Join League of Education Voters, Washington Appleseed and TeamChild for a presentation on these findings and more:

February 21, 2013
7-8:30pm

New Holly Gathering Hall
7054 32nd Ave S Seattle

*Come at 6pm for food and a resource fair!

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