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## Serving the minority peoples of Portland

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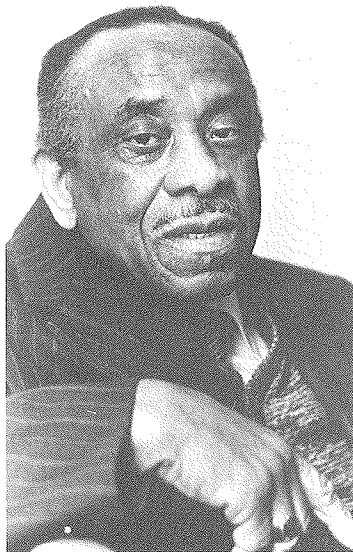
Recent publications have begun to fill the gaps in our libraries and in our national awareness of the contributions of African Americans to the history and development of this country. Such items as the print and audio *Remembering Slavery*, the standard reference work *The Civitas Anthology of American Slave Narratives* (editors William Andrews and Henry Gates, Jr., et al.), and the CD-ROM encyclopedia *Encarta Africana* (coeditor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.) are fulfilling the vision of W.E.B. Dubois, who announced 90 years ago his intention to create

an encyclopedia about Negroes. Added to these publications are some local collections of materials now in development that will expand our understanding of the history of Oregon and the region, and shed light on the population of African Americans who have lived in Oregon from its territorial days to the present.

Many other Americans, African American families and individuals have created collections of personal letters, documents,

and photographs. Some of these items collected by the Portland Black History Project more than 20 years ago were eventually donated to the Oregon Historical Society. Many of these remain uncataloged. Local African American newspapers have been archived at the Oregon Historical Society, the University of Oregon, and other locations, but no single library in the state currently has a complete collection of all the black newspapers published in Portland.

Rev. John H. Jackson  
from Archives of Community History Center, Portland Community College, Cascade Campus



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## Serving the Minority Peoples of Portland

*Challenge to the Local Libraries*

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In response to the spotty collections of materials and limited access, members of Portland's African American community approached Dr. Mildred Ollee, the Executive Dean of Portland Community College's Cascade Campus, to say that the personal and professional papers of an important member of the community were in need of a home.

The papers of the Rev. John H. Jackson, long-time minister at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church and significant leader in Oregon's civil rights movement, were available to be donated to an institution in the Portland area so that they would be preserved and accessible to people interested in the history of Oregon's African American Community. Although such an archive is unusual for a community college library, Portland Community College, Cascade Campus, is the only public institution of higher education located on the east side of Portland, and people were certain they did not want these materials to leave their community. Additionally, other local individuals in the community had papers, letters, photographs, journals and documents to donate, and personal stories they wished to preserve. Many of these individuals had moved to Portland during the Second World War or shortly thereafter; others had been in Portland even longer, since the 1920s and 1930s and before. Some important members of the community, such as the Rev. Jackson, had already died, and others were frail, so there was some urgency in the request to establish a safe place for historical documents.

The community members expressed particular interest in finding a home for their documents in a center they hoped would be developed within North/Northeast Portland. Creation of such a center, they felt, would represent a significant achievement for people whose history had suffered past neglect from the wider historical community. Dr. Ollee, therefore, in consultation with the college community as well as the neighborhood surrounding the campus, accepted the donation of the Jackson papers as the keystone collection of the Cascade Campus Community History Center. The Center is envisioned as a repository for historical documents, a place for future activities related to recognition of the contributions of African Americans to the city, and an educational resource for students of the college as well as for private citizens. It will, along with the Black Resource Center at the North Portland Branch of the Multnomah County Library, and the recently founded African American Museum project of the Black United Fund, help to fill in the story of minority peoples in Portland and in Oregon. The Black Resource Center will be located at Portland Community College Cascade Campus Library during renovation of the North Portland branch to ensure continued accessibility.

The Jackson collection (consisting of more than three decades-worth of sermons, correspondence, photographs, organizational papers from local non-  
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## Service to Residents

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Pierce Library staff is committed to eastern Oregon libraries and the patrons they serve and will continue to provide access, as well as the physical resources, as long as funding permits and the need exists in eastern Oregon. ☐

### REFERENCES

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## Serving the Minority

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profit agencies, and a library of approximately 1300 volumes) will soon be available for use by students and scholars. The Community History Center has presented two symposia, the "Jackson Forum" an annual event featuring presentations of scholarly papers on selected topics relating to African American History. One Jackson Forum presented papers on the Vanport Community, the disastrous flood of 1948 and subsequent relocation of African Americans in the Portland area. Future symposia will focus on minority employment in the Portland area and on displacement of minority neighborhoods by the Portland Coliseum, Lloyd Center and the Emanuel urban renewal project. The Center has also collected more than fifty oral histories, other collections of historical documents and newspapers, and has the promise of personal papers from other notable African American leaders in Oregon, including Margaret Carter (recently retired from the Oregon legislature), and State Senator Avel Gordly.

The Community History Center has received support from Portland Community College, the community,

and grants from the Black United Fund, Oregon Community Foundation, and Kaiser Permanente.

The Center, in addition to other recent publications and projects, greatly expands the available base of information about the African American experience in Oregon, and fills in many missing particulars about the history of the area. Materials may be accessed by appointment. Future plans include Internet access but that is not envisioned for the next biennium. ☐

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