

## **602 AFRICAN-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS TO EARLY OREGON**

Instructor, Bob Zybach



*New!*

African-American visitors and settlers had a significant impact upon the history of Oregon between 1788 and the civil war. This course will examine the specific roles such influential individuals as Edmund Rose, George Bush, Winslow Anderson, and York and Letitia Carson had upon the exploration, settlement and establishment of this state.

Tues., 7:15-8:30 p.m.

1/24-3/21

Max. Enroll: No Limit

Material Fee: \$5.00

## **African American Contributions to Early Oregon History (1774-1860)**

Proposed Course Outline: MU 215, Tuesdays, 7:15 P.M.  
Bob Zybach, Instructor: January 17-March 7, 1989

This course will attempt to perform three functions. First, it will try to illuminate African American influences upon early Oregon history by concentrating upon the contributions and experiences of key black individuals. Second, it will try, by example, to place the roles of other contemporary minorities (particularly Indians, Metis, Hawaiians, and Chinese) into a better historical focus. Finally, it will attempt to show the value of historical information in regards to current individual opportunities and long term community planning.

The following outline is for a weekly lecture/discussion accompanied by a mix of proposed readings drawn from current books and magazines and from historical records such as journals, correspondence, newspapers, and memoirs:

January 17: Course Outline and Objectives. The initial meeting will be used to state the objectives listed above, describe the outline listed below, assign texts, and to ask and answer basic questions. Select current and recent events - such as urban gang problems, the Jackson campaign speeches in Corvallis and Jacksonville, and the opportunity of trade with China - will be discussed within the context of specific information to be covered during the course. If time permits, a rudimentary outline of early Oregon history will be given.

January 24: Legends and Explorations (500-1806). This meeting will concentrate upon the importance of the sea otter trade to the exploration of the northwest and upon the claims of Russia, Spain, England, and the United States to the area first named "New Albion." The current legal definition of the "natural" environment found along the Oregon coast and the western part of the Columbia River will also be examined. Personalities to be discussed will include Marcus Lopus, York, and Kilchis.

January 31: Mountain Men (1807-1833). This meeting will discuss the transition from otter to beaver as the medium of exchange in the northwest, the importance of Mountain Men to eventual American control of the western United States, and the joint occupancy of the "Oregon Country" by England and the U.S. The lives and careers of Edward Rose, James Beckwourth, and Moses "Black" Harris will be outlined.

February 7: Pioneers (1834-1849). This meeting will discuss the decimation of western Oregon Indians by disease, the settlement of the Willamette Valley by French Canadians and Americans, and the changes in local vegetation brought about by the replacement of wildlife populations with domestic livestock. The contributions of Winslow Anderson, George Washington Bush, and Letitia Carson will be highlighted.

February 14: Settlers (1850-1856). This meeting will examine the settlement patterns of Americans arriving in the Oregon Territory over the "Oregon Trail," the "expulsion" laws of the Provisional and Territorial governments, the creation of Washington territory, and the after-effects of the 1848-49 Gold Rush to California upon Oregon's economy. The careers of George Washington and Reuben Shipley will be emphasized. [Oregon's birthday; 130 years as a state!]



February 21: Black Slavery and the Oregon Constitution (1857-1860). This meeting will discuss the effects of the Oregon Donation Law upon minority settlement in Oregon, the status of black (as opposed to Indian) slavery in the new Territory, the extent of racist rhetoric in local and state-wide newspapers, and the effect of existing "black laws" upon the language of the Oregon Constitution. The earlier landmark legal case of Reuben and Polly Holmes will be examined.

February 28: Railroads and African American Migration to Oregon. African American historian Michael Grice has agreed to show his 1985 30-minute videotape, "Black Families And The Railroad In Oregon And The Northwest: An Oral History" during this meeting. He will then lead a discussion regarding the importance of the individuals who migrated to Oregon in this fashion. The period covered will be from the Civil War until World War II, with special emphasis placed upon the time between the two world wars. [This date marks the anniversary of the first American railroad charter, in 1847.]

March 7: The Recent Past, the Present, and the Future. Doctor Darryl Milner of the Portland State University Black Studies Program has agreed to lecture the group concerning the impacts of World War II and the flooding of Vanport upon the current African American community in Oregon. This presentation will lead to a brief summary of the course, a rudimentary analysis of its successes and failures, and a final discussion concerning the applications of history to our individual lives and community plans.

#### Reading Materials:

Whenever possible, suggested readings will be drawn from contemporary journals, letters to the editors of local newspapers, correspondence, and other primary sources of information. These materials will supplement general histories drawn from the following sources:

Anderson, Martha, Black Pioneers Of The Northwest: 1800-1918. 1980.

Carey, Charles H., A History Of The Oregon Constitution. 1926.

Carey, Charles H., General History Of Oregon. 1971.

Katz, William L., The Black West. 1973.

McLagan, Elizabeth, A Peculiar Paradise. 1980.



# Speakers recall black experience in Oregon

Editor's note: What follows is a brief summary of two recent guest appearances at OSU, part of the February observance of Black History Month. Due to an oversight, the presentations were not covered by this newspaper, which regrets the error. The following summaries, though, were provided by someone connected with the events. Again, we apologize for the oversights.

By BOB ZYBACH  
for the Barometer

"Pay your bills and be a man"—that is the slogan of the Oregon Railroad Senior Citizens Association, a dwindling group of African-American men with an important stake in Oregon's history.

Three members of the association, led by Michael Grice, "Oregon's youngest senior citizen," conducted a Feb. 28 seminar for the ASOSU Experimental College class that has been studying African American Contributions to Oregon History this past term. The date was particularly timely as it was both the last day of Black History Month for 1989 and the anniversary of the first American Railroad charter in 1847.

The focal point of the seminar was Grice's 30-minute videotape *Black Families And The Railroad In Oregon And The Northwest: An Oral History*. Although he is only 40 years old, Grice joined the railroad association as a replacement for his father, Chappie Grice, who died a few years ago.

The 1985 videotape consisted primarily of interviews conducted with African American men that had migrated to Oregon before World War II. These men were employed by the railroad during the depression and constituted the core of the largest pre-war black migration to the Pacific Northwest.

Of particular interest were the observations that none of the membership of the railroad association were on public assistance, 90 percent owned their homes, and the retention of

personal dignity was essential to the men who served and associated with the successful white businessmen, politicians, entertainers, and royalty of the depression era. Not only were these men successful by most minority and white standards during the 1930's and 1940's, they also formed one of the most influential and powerful political unions of their time.

Accompanying Grice were Lawrence Alberti and Elias Greene, also members of the Railroad Senior Citizens Association and close friends since their childhoods together in the Portland of the 1930's. Both men related the stories of their family's migration to the Northwest, with Alberti dwelling on his recollections of travel to Colorado by covered wagon in the 1920's.

They included memories of discrimination while applying for jobs following graduation from Benson High School and in attempting to join the Navy during World War II. The men agreed that employment with the railroad was about the only escape from poverty open to black men in the northwest before the advent of Civil Rights legislation in 1964.


Following the presentations, OSU participants from the ASOSU Experimental College, the ASOSU Ethnic and Minority Affairs Task Force, and the OSU Educational Opportunities Program questioned the men concerning their personal views and experiences. Grice offered the opinion that, while their husbands were away for days and weeks at a time, the wives of the railroad workers were able to make great strides in obtaining equal rights and opportunities because Oregon whites didn't "feel comfortable trying to intimidate women."

Alberti, also a former high-ranking postal employee from Lake Oswego, encouraged the youth of today to "get all the education you can, because they can't take that away from you, no matter what." Despite all of the progress he had witnessed in the past half-century, Greene cautioned that the black youth of today "can't be complacent, there is still much to do."

This seminar was the seventh in a series of eight, and built upon a base of discussions that had covered the period from Drake's alleged sighting of the Oregon Coast in 1574 (with a crew including at least two black men and a black woman), until 1880 and the completion of the first railroad to Oregon from the east. Historical African Americans such as Markus Lopus, Edward Rose, Winslow Anderson, Letitia Carson, and Reuben Shipley and their respective contributions to Oregon State and Benton County history and culture have been the primary focus of the seminars. In addition to his abilities as a film-maker and

historian, Grice is also the only black member ever to have served on the Oregon Arts Commission, being first appointed by Gov. Atiyeh in 1985 and again by Gov. Goldschmidt in 1988. He is also Chairman of the Board of the World Arts Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving African influences in American arts, a founding member of the Coalition of Black Men, and a research and Evaluation Specialist for the Portland Public School System. A native Oregonian, he received a B.A. in philosophy from Cornell College, an M.A. in Education from Reed College, and is currently working on his doctorate at PSU.

**Finals Week**  
**March 13-17**  
Turn your  
**BOOKS**  
into  
**BUCKS**





## Black history lecture slated tonight

Dr. Darrell M. Millner, a nationally recognized authority on ethnic studies, will deliver a lecture on Oregon black history in MU 206 at 7:30 tonight.

His presentation will cover the period from World War II until the present, and will focus on recent African American contributions to the Oregon community. All interested OSU faculty and students are invited to attend the meeting.

Millner's lecture is the highlight of an eight-week ASOSU Experimental College seminar focusing on individual African American impacts on early Oregon history and their influences on current social and cultural attitudes within the state. This lecture is the last in a series of presentations and discussions about Oregon black history from 1574 through 1989. It will be an opportunity for interested OSU students

and faculty to gain additional insight into the multicultural fabric of modern society.

Millner is an associate professor and chairman of the department of black studies at Portland State University. He has attained recognition from such national leaders as Coretta Scott King, and from a variety of educators and researchers concerned with ethnic studies.

He began his work at PSU in 1974, received his doctorate in English instruction from the University of Oregon in 1975, and was co-founder of the Willamette Valley Racial Minorities Consortium in 1980. His long list of credits, awards, research grants, and publications include "Early Oregon Black History 1787-1860" (1978), and *Afro-American History - Baseline Data*, for the Portland Public Schools Desegregation Department in 1982.



# History of Oregon racism recounted

By KEN HILE  
of the Barometer

Up until the cold war, the state of Oregon had made definite steps in its legislation and society to discriminate against blacks, and in order to understand this discrimination, one must learn black history, according to a professor from Portland State University.

Richard Miller, chairman of the department of black studies at PSU and a nationally recognized authority on ethnic studies, spoke to a sparse crowd of about 15 people in MU 206 Tuesday night. His speech covered black history shortly before World War II up until the Cold War with Russia in the late fifties and early sixties. It was the eighth and last lecture of a series honoring black history this month.

It was not until the U.S.S.R. made an issue out of racism in America that legislators in Oregon began taking a look at the long history of discrimination against blacks in Oregon, Miller said.

In 1844, the Organic Law of Provisional Government forbade blacks from settling in Oregon during the pioneer period. In 1850, an act of congress was passed in Oregon prohibiting blacks from inhabiting free land given to settlers. In 1867, a prohibition of marriage between races was adopted, which lasted until 1950.

According to a census, there were 2,600 blacks in Oregon in 1940, 2,000 of which lived in Portland. Miller said the black population was small in 1940 because of regulations governing them and blacks understood that this was a fact of life at the time.

In 1940, 96 percent of black males worked on the railroads in Portland. Typically, females were domestic servants. The blacks lived mainly in a community located where the Memorial Coliseum now sits. According to real estate laws, blacks could

not live in certain neighborhoods because it would lower the property value.

At the onset of WWII, most white males were committed to military service, which left a large demand for shipworkers and other war industry jobs. This triggered an immigration of blacks, where trainloads of workers were brought in from southern regions, like Alabama. In 1945, there were more than 26,000 blacks in Oregon. The influx of "new blacks" caused tension with "old blacks" who lived in Oregon before the war because white people were beginning to take notice and became more hostile, Miller said.

"The new blacks made blacks more visible, and thus an issue. The old blacks held this against the new blacks and there was a division," Miller said. "There were also cultural differences, which worsened the problem."

Miller said WWII was a war against racism conducted by a racist country, and Oregon, especially, had developed a reputation for being racist.

After the war, many blacks were unemployed as whites took their old jobs back. But more good came out this war, the civil rights movement, and the Cold War than is realized, Miller said. After that time, legislation dealing with blacks became positive. A law was passed that prohibited discrimination against blacks in employment. Blacks were also allowed to attend vocational schools, from which they previously had been banned.

Miller said the increase in blacks during the 1940s created a 'baby boom' of sorts. The new generation of black adults had new ideas about their race.

"Children from earlier times grew up and in the 1960s had different ideas on what being black in Oregon really meant," he said.

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In a Feb. 17 memorandum to OSI faculty and staff, Ed