

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

The Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) is a nonprofit, statewide corporation committed to improving the status of Blacks in Oregon. It was founded on April 9, 1977, and is registered with Oregon Corporation Commission. Its purpose is to improve the political, educational, social, legal, and economic status of Blacks in Oregon. It is nonpartisan, but political. Any person who is in accordance with the principles and policies of OABA may become a member.

Perhaps there were two events which had significant impact on the establishment of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs. They are the 1975 CALMAX SYMPOSIUM: "The Status of Blacks in Oregon" and the January 22, 1977 Call-To-Action Leadership Conference. These events were held by the Calmax Corporation, owned by Calvin O. L. Henry.

The CALMAX SYMPOSIUM recognized that the economic and political climate of the United States made it imperative that Black people begin to examine where they were in 1975. It acknowledged the fact we were experiencing a Second Reconstruction Era where Blacks were not involved politically and were constantly losing job opportunities. It noted the observation that most people in Oregon seem to have written off Blacks in Oregon as a viable, political group which is willing to address its problems in Oregon. The CALMAX SYMPOSIUM recognized that "understanding the status of Blacks in Oregon is a critical step in the process of averting another era of economic and political losses." It addressed the need for Blacks to come together to make a written assessment of the status of Blacks in Oregon.

On August 23-24, 1975, thirty-five Blacks attended the CALMAX SYMPOSIUM which was held at Nendel's Inn, Corvallis, Oregon. These Blacks heard and discussed six papers on the status of Blacks in Oregon. The following papers were presented: "Junction for Deliberation" by J.M. Gates (Mrs. Osly J. Gates); "The Need for Political Maturity and Activism Among Blacks in Oregon" by Calvin O. L. Henry; "Modern Bondage: From Iron Shackles to Invisible Shackles" by Sylvia Gates; "A Proposal for the Development of Information Systems in the Black Community" by William M. Harris; "Like the Sound of Crickets in a Tropical Rain Forest---Homogeneity Persists" by Wilbert Gamble; and "Un-Unified" by David A. 24X Davis and William M. Pollard (in absentia).

On January 22, 1977, the first Call-To-Action Leadership Conference was held at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon. This conference was organized by Calvin O. L. Henry. The purpose of this conference was twofold which was (1) to examine the Oregon Legislative process to determine how it affects Blacks in Oregon and to decide ways in how Blacks could impact it, and (2) to scrutinize the plight of Blacks in Oregon to determine directions which should be taken, and to decide course of action that could be collectively taken. Among the issues discussed at this Call-To-Action Leadership

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

Conference were employment, education, politics, legal counsel, criminal justice system, news media accessibility, affirmative action, housing, and religion.

Participants of this January conference were: Bernadette Artharee, Greg Batiste, Jan Batiste, David Burgess, William A. Denton, Hattie Finley, Ronald Finley, Barbara Friday, Jerry Fuller, Herbert S. Golliday, Pearl Spear-Gray, Ernest E. Hartzog, John F. Heflin, Gwen W. Henderson, Calvin O. L. Henry, Lucious Hicks IV, Jim Hill, Kenneth Holmes, James E. Jackson, Charles Jordon, Andre' Kimboko, Victoria Liston, Moncia Little, William A. Little, Jacqueline Loville, Razz McClay, Gladys McCoy, Phil McLaurin, Nina Powell, George Rankin, John E. Rodgers, Sharon Shaw, Abbie M. Simmons, Harry Thompson, Florice Walker, Kaye R. Webb, Jonathan West, Myra Willard, Ray Willard, Harold Williams, Zoe A. Wilson, Jackie Winters, and Carl Zenon.

At the January Call-To-Action Leadership Conference, the participants recognized the need for some organizational structure and they established the conference as an interim organization to examine the possibilities of establishing a permanent one. Calvin O. L. Henry was elected to head this interim group, named Call-To-Action Leadership Conference. Also the following committees were set up: Steering Committee, Political Process-Legislation-Religion; Education-Media; Affirmative Action and Employment; Legal Counsel-Criminal Justice System; and Housing. These subject committees were to report at the next meeting of the temporary organization which was held February 26, 1977.

The Steering Committee, whose purpose was to draft the constitution of the permanent organization, consisted of Barbara Friday of Portland, Gwen Henderson of Corvallis, Calvin O. L. Henry of Corvallis, James Hill of Salem, Reverend James E. Jackson of Eugene, Charles Jordan of Portland, and Ron Finley of Portland (Resource person). The compositions of the other committees during this interim organizational period were as follows. POLITICAL PROCESS-LEGISLATION-RELIGION COMMITTEE: Phil McLaurin, Portland; Jan Batiste, Portland; William Little, Portland; Razz McClay, Eugene; Herb Golliday, Salem; and Jim Hill, Salem. AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EMPLOYMENT: Greg Batiste, Salem; Monica Little, Portland; George Rankin, Portland; Carl Zenon, Salem; Sharon Shaw, Corvallis; and Harold Williams, Portland. EDUCATION-MEDIA: Lucious Hicks, Portland; John Heflin, Portland, Florice Walker, Portland; Harry Thompson, Salem; Jerry Fuller, Portland; Ernest Hartzog, Portland; William Denton, Portland; Nina Powell, Salem; and Jacqueline Loville, Salem. LEGAL COUNSEL-CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: Norm Monroe, Portland; Kaye Webb, Salem; and Bernadette Artharee, Portland.

Jacqueline Loville prepared the minutes of this January conference and Nina Powell compiled the evaluation of the conference.

The interim organization, Call-To-Action Leadership Conference, met on February 26, 1977. Participants of this meeting were: Greg Batiste, Jan Batiste, Jacqueline Beal, Daniel Boggan, James O. Brooks, David Burgess, William A. Denton, Hattie Finley,

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

Ronald Finley, Barbara Friday, Herbert S. Golliday, Eric Harper, Natalie Harris, John F. Heflin, Gwen W. Henderson, Calvin O. L. Henry, Chalmers Jones, Charles Jordan, Thomas Kennedy, Andre' Kimboko, Victoria Liston, William A. Little, Jacqueline Loville, Razz McClay, Lee E. Moore, Nina Powell, Abbie M. Simmons, Elizabeth A. Taylor, Harry Thompson, Linda Torrence, Florice Walker, Spurgin Waters, Kaye R. Webb, Myra Willard, Ray Willard, Zoe A. Wilson, and Jackie Winters.

At the February meeting, the participants discussed at length the name of the permanent organization, and adopted the name of the permanent organization to be the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS. Also, at this meeting, portions of the proposed constitution for the permanent organization were adopted.

The next meeting of the interim organization was held on April 9, 1977, at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon. Participants of this meeting were: James O. Brooks, David Burgess, William A. Denton, Hattie Finley, Barbara Friday, Herbert S. Golliday, Calvin O. L. Henry, Jim Hill, James E. Jackson, Chalmers Jones, Thomas Kennedy, Monica M. Little, William A. Little, Jacqueline Loville, Razz McClay, Lee Moore, Philip Murray, Bernard Richardson, Harry Thompson, Linda Torrence, Ray Willard and Jackie Winters.

At the April meeting, the participants reviewed the adopted portions of the proposed constitution from the February 26, 1977, meeting, Articles I through III inclusive. Discussion was then held on proposed Articles IV through XIII. They were amended and adopted, except for Section 5 and 7 of Article IV. These sections were referred to the Steering Committee for definition of the standing committees and revisions. Those two sections were presented and adopted at the organizational meeting.

On April 9, 1977, it was moved by Barbara Friday of Portland and seconded by Jim Hill of Salem that the Call-To-Action Leadership Conference adopts the proposed constitution for the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS (except for Sections 5 and 7 of Article IV). The motion passed unanimously.

Also, at the April meeting, May 21, 1977, was set as the date for the organizational meeting of the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS. Participants who attended two of the first three meetings of the Call-To-Action Leadership Conference (January 22, 1977, February 26, 1977, April 9, 1977) would be eligible to vote and to be elected to office under the constitution of the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS. The Steering Committee was asked to present a slate of officers at the organizational meeting. Jacqueline Loville was designated as the person to collect dues. All organizing and chartering persons were asked to pay their dues by May 21, 1977.

On May 21, 1977, the organizational meeting for the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS was held in Salem. Thirty-five of the participants in the meeting were eligible to become organizing and chartering members of the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS.

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

Sections 5 and 7 of Article IV of the Constitution were, discussed, amended, and adopted at the organizational meeting.

At this May meeting, an interim Board of Directors for the Assembly was elected. This Board was to serve until December when a full-term board of directors would be elected. Members of this interim Board of Directors were: Calvin O. L. Henry, President, Corvallis; Reverend James Edwin Jackson, Vice-President and Membership Committee Chairperson, Eugene; Barbara Friday, Secretary, Portland; William A. Denton, Treasurer and Finance Committee Chairperson, Portland; James Brooks, Economic & Community Development Committee Chairperson, Portland; Nina Powell, Education Committee Chairperson, Salem; Lee Moore, Employment Committee Chairperson, Portland; Razz McClay, Housing Committee Chairperson, Eugene; and Herbert Golliday, Political Action Committee Chairperson, Salem.

During this interim period, the Assembly placed its emphasis on educating the Black Community and the public about its goals and objectives, on improving the images of Blacks in Oregon by working with the news media, on increasing its membership and on planning for the 1978 Oregon Black Political Convention.

Since its establishment, OABA has worked with other organizations, serving the needs of Blacks in Oregon, in building a better Oregon for the Black Community. It was not created to replace any other organization. OABA encourages Blacks to become involved in local and state issues relevant to the Black Community.

In 1977, 1979, and 1981, OABA held Call-To-Action Leadership Conferences. These conferences are held on odd-numbered years, and are designed to bring together persons concerned with the political development of Black people of Oregon, to inform them on pertinent issues which affect the vital interests of Black Oregonians, and to prepare a legislative agenda.

In 1978 and 1980, OABA hosted the Oregon Black Political Conventions. The purpose of the Oregon Black Political Convention (OBPC) is to endorse candidates for public offices during the primary elections and to establish through resolutions, the positions of the Black Community, collectively, on issues and conditions affecting it. The next OBPC is April 7-9, 1982.

Objectives Of The OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS

1. To support and promote the development of competitive quality Black businesses whenever and wherever economically feasible.
2. To research the economical and community conditions of Blacks in Oregon, and recommend ways to improve such conditions.

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

3. To work for equal education opportunities for Blacks at all levels, and to eliminate all unequal education opportunities and inferior educational programs.
4. To research the availability of and disseminate information on employment opportunities at all levels.
5. To research the availability and financing of housing for Blacks.
6. To encourage Blacks to understand, participate in, and affect the political process at all levels of government.
7. To serve as a community liaison between elected officials and the Black Community.
8. To host an Oregon Black Political Convention during the spring of election years.
9. To encourage public officials to become more accountable, responsive, and productive to the Black Community.
11. To build a better Oregon for the Black Community.

OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS Committees

The work of the OREGON ASSEMBLY FOR BLACK AFFAIRS is done through its committees. Below are the descriptions of OABA committees.

1, ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Supports and promotes the development of competitive, quality Black businesses whenever and wherever economically feasible; develops the means to influence and audit the affairs of government at all levels to assure equitable treatment of Black business; ensures availability and adequate delivery of health and social services in the Black Community; seeks ways to improve the economic status of Blacks by working to eliminate discriminatory employment practices in industry and government, securing the enactment of state and federal fair employment practices legislation, and working to end discriminatory practices in labor organizations; works to increase the overall income level of the Black Community, and revise the economic value of the Black Community; informs the Black consumer of the available goods and services of Black businesses; researches the economic and community conditions of Blacks in Oregon, and recommends ways to improve such conditions; and reviews zoning, land use patterns and practices, use of community development funds, prison systems, police practices and day care centers, plus determines how they affect the Black Community.

2. EDUCATION: Works for equal education opportunities for Blacks at all levels, and to eliminate all unequal education opportunities and inferior educational programs; promotes and encourages multicultural education programs; studies statewide educational

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

conditions affecting Blacks; and, keeps informed of school conditions and strive to correct abuses where found.

3. **EMPLOYMENT:** Researches the availability of and disseminate information on employment opportunities at all levels; works actively with other organizations involved in promoting equal employment opportunity, and supports the development of affirmative action hiring programs which seek to assist Blacks in gaining access to employment; makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on legislation affecting equal employment opportunity; and, investigates employment discrimination complaints brought to the committee, refers employment discrimination complaints to appropriate agencies and provides assistance to the complainants in having their complaints handled expeditiously.

4. **FINANCE:** Prepares the budget of the Corporation and develops ways to raise the funds to meet the requirements of the budget; evaluates projects referred by the Board of Directors and recommends approval or rejection of the projects; and plans and conducts fund-raising activities, including entertainments and other projects, for purposes within the scope of the Corporation programs.

5. **HOUSING:** Researches the availability and financing of housing for Blacks; monitors and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors on legislation affecting housing; works with other organizations concerning housing issues; and, investigates housing complaints brought to the committee, refers complainants to appropriate redress agencies, and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors for further action on housing complaints.

6. **MEDIA COMMUNICATION:** Monitor local media to ascertain whether positive activities and events in the Black Community are given coverage and ensure FCC compliance; works to eliminate racial stereotypes; encourages Blacks to use all means of communications to improve the image of Blacks in Oregon; encourages broadcasting and advertising industries to upgrade and improve the quality of children's television, particularly as it relates to the diffusion of racial tension and isolation; works for employment opportunities for Blacks in television, radio, cable television, and other media communication industries; and, encourages Blacks to become owners of media franchises.

7. **MEMBERSHIP:** Reviews application for membership in the Corporation and makes recommendation to the Board of Directors for further action; works throughout the year to maintain and increase the membership of the Corporation; plans and organizes annual membership campaign; and, solicits new members and membership renewals.

8. **POLITICAL ACTION:** Encourage Blacks to understand, participates, and affect the political process at all levels of government; develops a plan of action designed to create a political awareness within the Black Community aimed at alleviating the existing apolitical condition; implements programs to educate the Black Community about the

History of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs

By Calvin O. L. Henry

October 17, 1981

most fundamental aspects of local, state, and federal government; mobilizes Black participation in the political process, by a statewide voter education program and follow through with a vigorous statewide voter registration drive; serves as a community liaison between elected officials and the community; encourages Blacks to become a viable force within the existing political system, operating from an independent power base; to promote unity in voting practice; works for the enactment of municipal, state, and federal legislation designed to improve the political, educational, social, legal, and economic status of Blacks in Oregon; recommends the endorsement of candidates for public office who are supportive of affairs of the Black Community; establishes a political relationship on a statewide basis with all minority groups to form a viable coalition of mutual concerns; and, hosts an Oregon Black Political Convention, during the spring of election years.

