

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING AND THE NEGRO WAGE EARNER IN OREGON

By Mark A. Smith, Civil Rights Division Administrator - Bureau of Labor

As unemployment mounts in the nation, and the competition among workers for jobs increases, the impact on Negro workers tends to grow increasingly severe. For, yet, in many job categories, they are the last to be hired and the first to be fired.

It is at this time that complaints of discrimination because of race and color generally increase, also.

Because there is a past history in Oregon, as in the rest of the nation, that many of the apprenticeship training programs have done an effective job of barring or by-passing almost completely non-white workers, the criticism of these programs continue long past evidence that progress is being made in opportunities for apprenticeship training for non-white workers in the skilled trades.

Despite the existence of some weak spots, the State of Oregon's Fair Employment Practices program has stimulated a favorable change in racial integration in the work force including employment and training.

To charge the Oregon State Apprenticeship program with racial discrimination is distorting the picture.

In the first place, the Oregon State Apprenticeship Council does not employ apprentices. Its basic responsibility is to set up the program for the apprentice according to state standards. The employer does the hiring of apprentices. Of course, the State Apprenticeship Council assists management and labor in the development of training programs and training techniques. Our experience reveals that the opportunity for Negroes to acquire skilled trade training compares unfavorably with whites in this respect. But, the fault lies largely with the employer. Apprenticeship opportunities are as available as management and labor desire them to be.

One of the handicaps involved is that management has to be sold and re-sold on the advantages of apprenticeship as the best practical method for training future craftsmen in the perpetuation of the trade skills.

In regard to the Negro apprentice, there is, also, a great need for an effective student counseling and vocational guidance program, designed to motivate more desire and search for apprenticeship training on the part of the Negro apprentice, himself.

In spite of the Urban League activities such as Career Conferences, Vocational Opportunity Day, the Back-to-School program and similar activities, few Negro wage earners are actually knocking at the apprenticeship doors.

There are several reasons for this situation:

- (1) Apprenticeship has been a marginal mode of skilled craft preparation since the American industrial revolution.
- (2) Negroes have had better opportunities for skilled training outside of the registered apprenticeship programs.

- (3) Trade union policies and practices tend to link the number of apprentices to the number of journeymen. Even under this system the opportunity to employ apprentices is oftentimes not exercised.
- (4) The traditional resistance of indenturing units to the training of non-whites.
- (5) A large percentage of employers place an absolute ceiling on the number of apprentices employed.
- (6) Certain apprenticeship agreement formulas limit or absolutely prohibit the hiring of apprentices by one-man business operations.
- (7) Few employers hire as many apprentices as union rules permit.
- (8) Because Negroes are disproportionately concentrated in the metropolitan areas of the state, apprenticeship opportunities outside of the concentrations are not normally accessible to the vast majority of young Negroes.
- (9) The ambitious young Negro is more likely than the white youth to shun manual occupations and to overestimate the importance of achieving status through white collar or professional employment.
- (10) Negroes more often do not have the financial support needed to augment the low apprenticeship wage and to sustain them through the early stages of the apprenticeship training program.
- (11) The seasonal character of employment in some skilled trades tend to discourage some youths from undertaking apprenticeship training.
- (12) Negro youth are seldom exposed to the influence of a successful counterpart in his own race which can encourage him to embrace the training. In fact, the more frequent successes in other fields tend to lead him away from rather than toward the skilled crafts.
- (13) The lack of equal access to apprentice opportunities information.
- (14) Actual denials of opportunity because of race and color.
- (15) Lack of confidence in the Civil Rights Division to protect their rights to equal apprenticeship opportunity. No complainant has filed a complaint alleging discrimination in the apprenticeship field in the 11 years of the Oregon F.E.P. Act.

There are other factors that limit apprenticeship training opportunities in Oregon. The consistent pattern of in-migration of skilled wage earners, that has continued during and since the war years, presents natural problems which may not be considered racial. One such disturbing factor is the nearing point of saturation in jobs and a growing unemployment condition.

In the few short years since enactment of Oregon's F.E.P. Act, Oregon businesses and industries have absorbed an outstanding number of Negroes in diversified occupations with an equally favorable result.

At the same time, there has been an increasing progress in apprenticeship training opportunities for Oregon's racial minorities. The following are some examples of this trend:

1951

(Oriental)	Roy Coe, Pressman		Portland
(Oriental)	Robert F. Wong, Furniture Frame Maker		Portland
(Oriental)	Victor Hinatsu, Radio Repairman		The Dalles
(Oriental)	Don Fong Yent, Dinner Cook		Pendleton

1952

(Negro)	Silas Williams, Body & Fender Repairman	Tonkin Motors	Portland
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1956

(Negro)	Joseph Myers, Shoe Repairman	Manning Shoe Repair Shop	Portland
(Negro)	Robert L. Neal, Electrician	Greiners Electric Co.	Portland
(Oriental)	George Kim, Optician	Paramount Optical Laboratory	Portland
(Oriental)	Alfred T. Ando, Body & Fenderman	Estacada Motors	Estacada
(Negro)	Samuel Chester Daniels, Tool & Die Maker	Screw Machine Products Co.	Portland
(Oriental)	George Kishi, Auto Mechanic		Ontario
(Indian)	John Alfred Barkley, Carpenter		Pendleton

Color, creed are no bar to apprentice training

(From the Oregon Apprenticeship Newsletter)

Oregon is justly proud of the accomplishments made in intergroup relations under its Fair Employment Practices Act, which prohibits discrimination in employment because of race, religion, color or national origin. The State Apprenticeship Council has helped further these objectives by cooperating with the Bureau of Labor's FEP staff in developing training opportunities for members of minority groups.

The apprenticeship system gives full recognition to the importance of bringing equal training opportunities as well as those of equal employment to every citizen.

It operates on the principle that every young man should not only be permitted but encouraged to acquire the best qualifications he can for the occupation for which he shows ability and the interest to learn.

Apprentice openings for Japanese and Negroes have been made even in the most technical trades and include such programs as that of tool and die maker, optical technician, auto mechanic, boot and shoe repairman, and inside electrician. The apprenticeship committees, representing management and labor in these and other industries, are to be commended for their sincerity of purpose in bringing the opportunity to learn a trade to anyone who can present the necessary qualifications.

Page 8 - Oregon Labor Press - June 8, 1956

1957

(Oriental)	Charles B. Ishimaru, Body & Fenderman	Otto Byers Pontiac Co.	Hood River
(Oriental)	Yick Lee, Cook	Temple Coffee Shop	Pendleton
(Oriental)	George Imai, Auto Mechanic	Garrabrant Chevrolet Co.	The Dalles
(Negro)	Arthur J. Shankle, Carpenter	Westward Ho Construction Co.	Eugene

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Suggested Resolution for action of SAC: (State Apprenticeship Council)

Whereas, the Portland City Club Bulletin of April 19, 1957, reports that the Apprenticeship program has not made sufficient progress in helping Negroes to receive necessary trade training; and

Whereas, the City Club Bulletin asks the administrators of the apprenticeship program to take a more determined stand with both the union and management representatives for equality of employment opportunity; and

Whereas, the policy of the State Apprenticeship Council against discrimination is apparently not sufficiently well publicized; and

Whereas, equality of opportunity has long been held in the Apprenticeship program to be essential justice; and

Whereas, discrimination is expensive to management because industry thereby fails to use the best talent available regardless of race; and

Whereas, discrimination fosters undemocratic practices and attitudes among wage-earners; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the State Apprenticeship Council encourage integration of races, creeds, colors and national origins in the apprenticeship programs of all trades, and, be it further

RESOLVED, that the field staff of the Council and the Federal Bureau of Apprenticeship be specifically instructed to foster the entry of qualified minority group workers into Apprenticeship.

C
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Baker, Oregon
February 1, 1960

Mr. George LaVatta
Area Supervisor, Welfare-Placement
U.S. Department of Interior
Indian Service
Portland 18, Oregon

Dear Mr. LaVatta:

Its my pleasant duty to notify you that John Barkley at Route 1, Box 304, Pendleton, Oregon has successfully completed his carpenter apprenticeship and completed as a journeyman carpenter as of January 8, 1960. Mr. Barkley is a Indian fellow from the Klamath Falls Tribe I believe.

It is worthy to note that he has shown outstanding ability, will, and desire to become that best possible carpenter. This has lead the Pendleton Carpenters Trade Apprenticeship Committee to recommend him as the outstanding carpenter apprentice from Eastern Oregon. With hopes that financial arrangements can be forth-coming so that Mr. Barkley may be entered in the State of Oregon Carpenter Apprenticeship Contest to be held later this year.

This may be the break-through that we discussed several years back in hopes that we could register Indian Boys in the Apprenticeship Program. Possibly we could use Mr. Barkley as the guiding light, so to speak, for future purposes, to this end.

Please feel free to call upon me or the agency if we may be of assistance to you or your people. Also to discuss the above case and future plans. With best wishes I am,

Yours truly,

Fred V. Koehler
Apprenticeship Representative

Oregon State Apprenticeship Council
2651 Court Avenue
Baker, Oregon

cc: C. D. Hoffman