



'Macbeth was a G'

West Roxbury school puts new spin on Shakespeare

Daniela Caride

"Welcome, sophomores and my beloved seniors," a beaming Anna Portnoy says to a crowd of 200 students at the West Roxbury Education Complex Auditorium. "Class of Oh-Nine presents 'Macbeth!'" she exclaims. The teenage audience goes crazy, cheering and whistling as the lights dim.

Portnoy, 30, teaches humanities to 11th-graders at Parkway Academy of Technology and Health (PATH), one of the four schools of the complex, and is directing more than half of her 60 students in the Shakespearean play. Some of them act, others handle the lighting, others play sound effects.

The production the teens are about to present — well, it isn't exactly your father's Bard.

The new school

On stage, after two boys tag a wall with graffiti reading "deception," "guilt" and "power," three witches in jean mini-skirts run past the audience towards the actors, cracking up like maniacs. In the spotlight, they tell an African American Macbeth that he will soon become king of Scotland.

A thrilled Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth, a Latina teen in a long green gown from The Garment District, plot regicide, then stab King Duncan in secret. The king's sons flee, fearing the same fate.

"In 'Macbeth,' you can see the evolution of this character, who starts as a regular guy and then becomes obsessed with power," says Portnoy. "And the first time that he kills in order to get that power, he is wrecked by guilt."



Brandishing a plastic sword and clad in crown and jeans, Parkway Academy of Technology and Health 11th-grader Marques Latimore plays Macbeth, the titular character in Shakespeare's legendary play, during a recent performance at the West Roxbury Educational Complex Auditorium. (Daniela Caride photo)

Just like the witches said, Macbeth inherits his throne — a blue armchair borrowed from the community center next door. But guilt and fear of betrayal poison the couple's minds; before you know it, Lady Mac-

beth has gone crazy and committed suicide.

Despite the updated dress codes, the teen actors are using the English of Shakespeare's day. To **'Macbeth,'** continued to page 20

Police Safe Homes plan leads to heated debates

Kyle de Beausset and Howard Manly

State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson had heard enough.

For the last hour or so, she had listened patiently while speakers talked about the ins and outs — mostly outs — of the recently launched Safe Homes Initiative.

The Boston Police Department (BPD) measure is an attempt to rid city streets of illegal guns, thus reducing the number of gun-related crimes. But critics of the program argue that Safe Homes is unconstitutional, largely because police officers are allowed to search homes without a warrant.

Wilkerson had no real beef with the police. After all, she explained, "They are doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing."

Her problem was with the community, of which she is a proud and vocal member. She described the initiative as akin to trying to fix a leaky sink by putting a bucket underneath to catch the water.

"You've got to go to the source," she said. "For adults ... this [initiative] is a total abdication of our responsibility. What we're saying is that, 'We couldn't figure it out, you have them.' Shame on us!"

Underneath the legal issues and widespread mistrust of Boston

police personnel lies a deep sense of shame.

Shame over the number of single-parent mothers.

Shame over the too-high number of high school dropouts, the too-low number of college graduates and the seemingly endless revolving door between the streets and prisons.

Shame over the senseless murders of young black men by other young black men.

And shame that here in Boston, it had all spiraled downward to the point where suspending the U.S. Constitution — specifically the Fourth Amendment, which protects Americans from illegal searches and seizures — seemed like a small price to

"No mother, no father says, 'I want to raise a killer' — no one. ... As adults, it is our responsibility to be responsible for these children."

— State Sen. Dianne Wilkerson

pay to stop the inner-city bleeding.

"No mother, no father says, 'I want to raise a killer' — no one," Wilkerson said. But, she repeated, "This is a total abdication of our responsibility. As adults, it is our responsibility to be responsible for these children."

Wilkerson made those remarks at a town hall meeting held last Thursday evening at the Dorchester offices of the Massachusetts Association of Minority Law Enforcement Officials (MAMLEO) organized by Jamarhl Crawford, a member of the New Black Panther Party and editor **Safe Homes,** continued to page 10

AN UNFILLED PRESCRIPTION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

Howard Manly

"... [S]egregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans. What white Americans have never fully understood — but what the Negro can never forget — is that White society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it ..."

Kerner Commission Report, Feb. 29, 1968

It probably was a pretty good idea at the time.

The cities were burning. Harlem in 1964. Watts in 1965. In Detroit alone, 43 blacks were killed, anywhere between 450

and 2,000 were injured, and 7,231 were arrested before the National Guard ended the bloody mess on July 25, 1967.

Before the end of "Burn, Baby, Burn," by one conservative estimate, 329 "important" racial disturbances took place in 257 cities between 1965 and 1968, resulting in nearly 300 deaths, 8,000 injuries, 60,000 arrests and property losses running into the hundreds of millions of dollars.

President Lyndon B. Johnson had a problem, and that problem was urban America in general, and Negroes in particular. Torn between his need to balance Southern votes and his ambition to leave a civil rights legacy greater than those of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy, Johnson proceeded along a very cautious path — he ap-

pointed the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders to study the problem.

The commission's mandate was at once simple and complex — define the problem, identify the root causes, and devise solutions to what could arguably be described as the result of 350 years of legal and societal discrimination.

Illinois Gov. Otto Kerner Jr., the commission's chairman, went a step further, asking his colleagues to "probe into the soul of America."



New Jersey national guardsmen patrol a street in Plainfield, N.J., on July 17, 1967. Twelve people were injured during the racial disturbances in Plainfield, one of an estimated 257 cities where such "disturbances" took place between 1965 and 1968. The Kerner Commission was called to find out why. (AP photo/Eddie Adams)

U.S. Sen. Edward W. Brooke, R-Mass., was one of the 11 members on the commission. New York Mayor John Lindsay and Roy Wilkins of the National Association



for the Advancement of Colored People were among the other members. **Kerner,** continued to page 18

What's INSIDE

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT . . . 13-15	LISTINGS	PERSPECTIVE	CLASSIFIEDS
BILLBOARD 15	BUSINESS DIRECTORY 22	EDITORIAL 4	HELP WANTED 26-27
	CALENDAR 28	OPINION 5	LEGALS 24-25
	CHURCH GUIDE 23	ROVING CAMERA 5	REAL ESTATE 25-26