

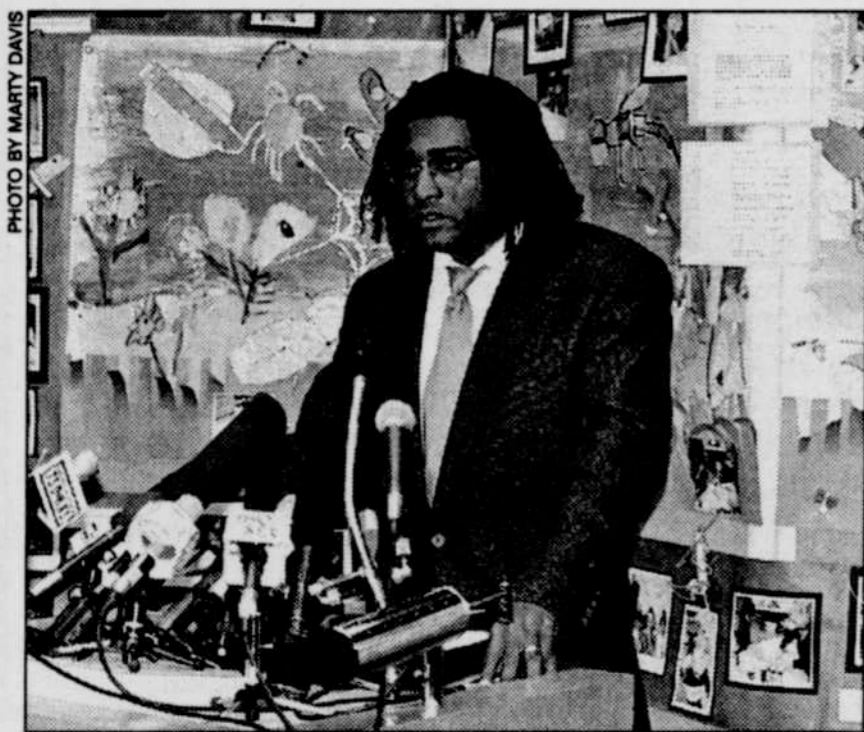
**NORTHWEST news**

**Derry, Derry, quite contrary**

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Among Jackson's comments printed July 21 in the *Oregonian*: "I do not see the Jews struggling to get over the achievement gap. I do not see the Jews struggling to feed their families.... In fact, I see the Jews running everything.... This is a group that came into this country equal to, if not less than, African Americans. And today they run the country."

Board chairwoman Debbie Menashe denounced Jackson's comments July 23, promising that the district strives for achievement for all "regardless of race, color or religion." She made no mention of sexual orientation in her statement.



Derry Jackson apologizes July 25 at the Blanchard Education Service Center

Jackson called a press conference July 25 to respond to the uproar. Although he apologized for the comments, he didn't retract his remarks and implied that the *Oregonian* misquoted him.

"My first obligation is to the quality of education provided to all of our children and to the importance of the respect for diversity that is our strength," Jackson said. "I sincerely apologize to the Jewish community for any statements that may have been construed as divisive or in any way damaging to the hard work that has already been done to bring the Jewish and African American communities into a cooperative relationship."

Outside the Blanchard Education Service Center, a Jackson supporter called the matter a conspiracy orchestrated "to continue to not

educate the kids." Helen Sherman likened the Holocaust to the current state of inner city Portland.

"There's genocide right now in my neighborhood," she said, adding that Jackson has been targeted because he is African American. "Everything black people do is taken out of context."

Jackson's comments put Mayor Vera Katz in a position similar to the one she faced last fall when old anti-gay statements made by Police Chief Mark Kroeker came to light. She stuck by Kroeker—who she had hired just 10 months earlier—throughout the controversy but responded differently after Jackson's apology.

"I know a sincere apology when I hear one," Katz said in a statement July 25. "Mr. Jackson's statement does not cut it. His future is now in the hands of the voters."

Avrel Nudelman serves as co-chairman of the Jewish Gay Men's Group, which meets regularly in Portland. He said Jackson's comments have caused irreparable damage and would like to see the school board member resign.

"I felt concerned that someone in a position like his would hold those views," Nudelman said. "I think when you have that kind of thinking you shouldn't be in a position of responsibility, especially when it involves children and the schools."

Jackson referred all questions to his political consultant, Chad Debnun, who called the board member a young politician who needs an opportunity to grow. He maintained the "lifestyle choice" comments were not anti-gay.

"People tie black causes with gay causes," Debnun said. "As a black person he was saying, 'My issues are different.'"

For now, Debnun said Jackson wants to focus on his primary goal: closing the achievement gap. But his critics are not going to let the matter rest.

Portlanders Against Prejudice, a group of more than 30 community members, met Aug. 1 to begin organizing an effort to recall Jackson. "His comments...reflect a bigotry that is harmful to the groups he has targeted, to the community as a whole and to the children whose schools he is supposed to lead," they said in a statement Aug. 2.

According to Oregon law, a recall only can be filed once officeholders have served six months of their current term. Portlanders Against Prejudice announced their intention to file a petition as soon as legally possible. **JM**

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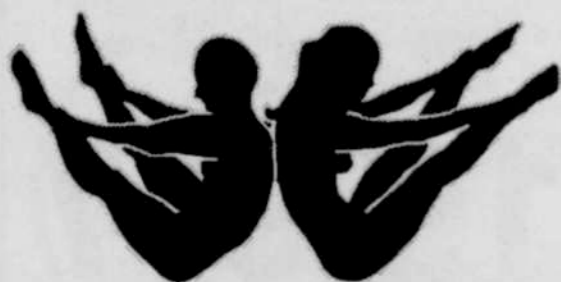
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