

## For the RECORD

A compilation of facts, large and small, about our community

According to the most recent census figures, the average unemployment rate for whites in Oregon: 8.7 percent

The average unemployment rate for African Americans in Oregon: 18.4 percent

Percentage of Oregonians over age 25 with a 4-year-college degree: 29

Number of winter shelters and emergency shelters in Portland and Multnomah County: 36

Additional beds in winter shelters available during the winter season: 342

Emergency shelter beds available year-round: 636

Height of Douglas Fir being lit in Pioneer Square: 75 feet

Number of tubas played in unison at the 23rd Annual Tuba Christmas Concert in Pioneer Square: 250

Number of turkeys consumed on Thanksgiving and Christmas: 86 million

Average number of pounds of turkey consumed per person in 2012: 16

In Multnomah County, average monthly number of SNAP participants in 2012: 148,694

Amount of local economic activity created by \$1 of SNAP benefits: \$1.79

Amount of dollars brought in by SNAP to the state of Oregon per year: \$1 billion

Sources: Portland Housing Bureau; Oregon Employment Department; U.S. Census Bureau; University of Illinois Extension.

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teachers. A series of laws were passed in Chicago and then California that basically cut the public school system wages to the bone. They were young teachers at that time, so they moved to Portland where it was still a good place to be a teacher. That was how we ended up in Northeast Portland when I was 4 years old.

**S.Z.:** You went to Grant High School. Were either of your parents teachers there when you were there?

**M.B.:** No. I also went to Fernwood Middle School, which I think is now Beverly Cleary. My dad was what you call the "student management specialist" – basically the disciplinarian. He worked there, but he left the year before I went there. My parents and I had an unspoken agreement that I would never go to a school they worked at.

I grew up knowing guys that didn't do so well in life who were in and out of correctional facilities. They said, "You're dad was always cool." My dad would sit them down and ask them what was going on with them. Anytime I tell my dad that, he gets kind of sad, like he failed a kid.

The prison system dilemma – it's so plainly obvious what needs to happen and people just don't want to deal with it. They don't want to understand that there are reasons for things. It's like, just punish the hell out of them. If a market for building prisons that profit certain individuals happens along the way, whatever.

I got a DUI 10 years ago. I went through the deferral program and I haven't done that since and it was a massive life lesson. I was pulled over for driving too slow. I was driving and I was like, oh man I'm wasted.

I went to AA as a part of the program – the thing that stuck with me is that generally speaking, alcoholics don't say I'm never going to drink again because that's way too much to even fathom. What you say is, I'm not going to drink today.

Just think about all you have, which is today.

**S.Z.:** I read that you do therapy every Monday. What kind of therapy?

**M.B.:** I have a therapist. We took this week off, but I feel like we all have issues and I'm lucky enough to have health care through the Screen Actors Guild. If you have access to help, you should take that opportunity. People think of it as a weakness sometimes, but I just think we all have issues we don't even realize we're dealing with. It's better just to confront them head on.

I'll put it this way. It's kind of like getting on stage. There are times when it's the last thing I want to do. And I think, "I don't want to go to fucking therapy. I don't want to talk to this dude. I hate it." But I always leave feeling better.

Anytime I don't want to do a show and I think, "Uh, why did I say yes to this bullshit show in this bar?" You always learn something. It's always worth it.

**S.Z.:** We talked about your DUI. You've written a screenplay about the time that you were here in Portland working on the deferral and living with your parents.

**M.B.:** I just finished the fifth draft and all my reps think it's good enough to take out, so now I'm looking for financing to hopefully come back to Portland and shoot it there.

It's about the deferral. The thing is, I thought it was like the worst thing that could ever happen to me. I left Chicago and went home for two weeks and was off to L.A. to seek my fortune and then did a boneheaded thing like drive drunk.

I was basically stuck there (in Portland); I was sentenced by the courts to live with my parents for four months as an adult. I left home when I was 17 or so. It was a massive blow to my ego. I felt like such an idiot. But I got to know my parents in a way that I never did when I was a kid. That's the heart of it. Obviously there is nothing funny about drunk driving and I don't make that funny.

But afterward, for instance, I was left in a holding cell by myself, still cuffed behind my back and I tried to snake the cuffs over my feet. I, of course, got as far as my knees and I was stuck. (Laughter) The cop came and opened the cell and said, "Well, what happened here?"

**S.Z.:** You co-founded the Bridgetown Comedy Festival. Tell me about how that came about.

**M.B.:** Andy Wood and Kimberly Brady came after a show and said, Hey we're thinking of starting a comedy festival and I was all the way in. I like coming to Portland and doing shows and being with my folks. I had a friend who used to book rock clubs. The bands didn't start until ten, so I would ask to have the club from eight until ten. My job with the festival for the first couple of years – I'm way more involved now – but my job for the longest time was just to ask my famous friends to do it.

**S.Z.:** I dare say that you and your co-conspirators have marked Portland as a spot on the comedy map. What is it like to foster that in your hometown?

**M.B.:** It's kind of a no-brainer. Just forLaughs is the SXSW of comedy. It's so industry heavy.

The cool thing about Bridgetown is we get the famous people who want a free trip to Portland and want to be in Portland. We take them on field trips to various Portland things. But we also get people, who no one's heard of, that are so funny!

We watch a lot of online content. We book them because they're funny not because they are going to be a big draw come pilot season. It's just really funny people. The

only thing we run into that is ironic is that there are way too many white males doing comedy. I come up against that all of the time. We have to kind of have to Affirmative Action that shit. So much comedy is just white dude, white dude, white dude, white dude.

The great thing about Bridgetown is we do whatever we want. We don't have anybody's agent breathing down our neck saying, "Oh you've got to book this guy," or whatever. It's just great. It's just about Portland and about the audience.

**S.Z.:** Have you any connection to homelessness?

**M.B.:** I grew up always knowing that homelessness exists. It wasn't that idea of a cartoon hobo idea that most people think of. My parents are very active in social issues

and they actually operate of the food bank I grew up in. Now that they're retired, that is kind of like their vocation.

**S.Z.:** Which church do they work out of?

**M.B.:** St. Andrews in Northeast Portland. It's a pretty sweet church. It's the most progressive Catholic church I've certainly ever heard

of. The church was actually burned down in the 1930s because they welcomed black parishioners. It was rebuilt, of course.

It just doesn't get any worse than being homeless. It's one of those things that people really should think about, especially in this economic climate. To me, it's immoral. If any property is costing upwards of a few million dollars, that's just gross.

I think people think homelessness is something that, like when you get a sickness like a cancer, you always think it's not going to happen to you. And you just never know, you know.

**S.Z.:** What is the value of comedy as you see it?

**M.B.:** It lets us theme out. My job is to make people not concentrate so much on their troubles. It's almost like when you have a headache and you pinch a nerve in your hand and you feel pain in your hand and your headache goes away.

Comedy is a break. Anytime you laugh, you are letting go of stress and you are getting closer to where you should be which is a state of well-being and a state of enjoyment and love.

Everybody likes to laugh. It feels good and it's a natural human response.

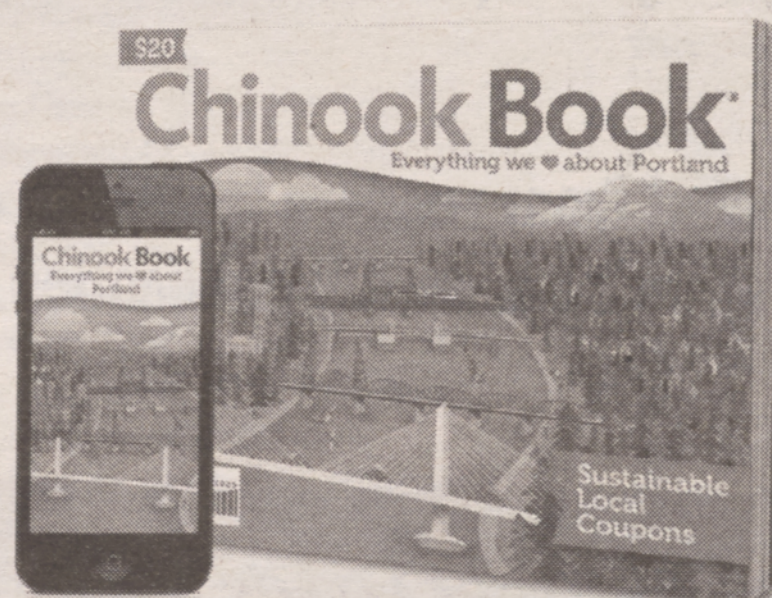


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