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first from Oregon. Part of the reason that I was motivated to accept this position is that Portland has changed a great deal since I was a kid, and not for the better, unfortunately. And that's really difficult for me, especially given that we're sitting on the corner of Williams and Russell and I went to middle school two blocks away. I know this neighborhood, and I know the city. Folks love it, and they have reasons to love it, but the things that I loved about it most aren't here anymore. So I think what my childhood experience does is allows me to be a mythbuster when it comes to, "Oh, well, Portland is so great now; it's so much better than it ever was before." That's not true for a lot of Portlanders.

I think the other thing that growing up here allows me to do is to help hold some people accountable when they talk about blighted neighborhoods or begin this litany of all the ways that gentrification and business development and urban renewal have improved our town, and they edit out the parts about how quality of life has not improved for black and brown people. I am in a position to hold them accountable for statements like that and for the work that's necessary to make them feel like it should be for everyone in our communities.

A.G.: One thing that the League seeks to change is (low) civic engagement among black Portlanders, so I'm wondering what empowered you and inspired you to get into politics that maybe kids today don't have in Portland.

N.H.J.: There's something funny about that for me. Growing up here, my police chief was black; my superintendent of schools was black; the man who ran the parks was black; my state treasurer was black; I was represented in the State Legislature by a black woman. Folks who ran our city and our county, there were black folks in that mix. And even though there were far fewer African-Americans in Portland then than there are now, I've come home to find there are just a few of us and we are so glad to have those few. It's very strange for me because of the experience that I grew up with. It was easy for me to

be engaged because that was just a part of my life growing up. It was how it worked in our community. So that's another reason why I was excited to accept the job at the Urban League, because I see our ability to participate in the city, black folks in this community, differently than some folks because I've seen it happen before. I know the richness that we have lost, and I'm not sure why that has happened, but I know that we can reach that point again. We can have levels of participation that are more than consummate with our percentage of the population here. And I think it's important that that happen.

To me, this community felt more vibrant before, this community felt more integrated before, and that's everything from the arts to politics. And when young people see that – and not just young people, quite frankly; adults see that – it's encouraging. Success begets success, so to speak. If you see folks who are already there, who look like you, who are talking about something, it encourages you to become engaged yourself. And if you don't see people who look like you, there's this thing that happens that's terrible really. You think, huh, that must not be for me. As you operate in your community, just in your day-to-day life, that sort of thing seeps in and gives you the sense that this isn't for you. Portland is for somebody else. The county, state government, whatever it is is for somebody else but not for you. It's sad. But there is a way to turn that tide because we've been there before.

A.G.: When you are done being CEO and president (of the Urban League), what is your vision for your time here?

N.H.J.: That we made the Urban League better for the people in this community and that we made it stronger for the folks who will occupy these positions after us. That's important to me. We're caretakers of the Urban League during this space, however long it is that we're here, and I want part of my legacy at the League to be that I did a good job taking care of it.

You can download a copy of the complete State of Black Oregon 2015 at the Urban League of Portland's website, www.ulpdx.org

Time to Apply

by Ron Sanford

I don't need to read a book to deal with repression
I don't need psychiatry to tell me what is right
But the technical aspect could never hamper me.
Once you know what you're doing, you will see the light.
You don't need astrology to plan for the future.
You don't need psychology to interpret your dreams.
There's scatterbrain texters trolling around us.
They come to Portland, you see the diversity.
But people I trust have come from every walk of life
It is called second nature, spiritual sight
You will never see it apart from your freewill
Look! Look! The kingdom of God is within you!
You have been given so much – Now it's time to apply!

Paralyzed Paradise

by Lazola Palmbo

The road is paralyzed,
but I am far from sharing my impediments,
with the public,
It never takes a year for the world to discover,
nor another century in time,
The cracks are there,
waiting to be covered,
I close my eyes,
but only for a second,
I see a path divided by wild stallion horses,
False identity approved,
but with a price of course,
if you not worth ten million dollars,
Pounds or Euros,
the man with the keys,
drops you down the balcony,
and heads off to the nearest restaurant,
to eat lobsters and shrimps,
with a crooked smile.

Better health here for you

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Together we are health share

Health Share of Oregon

www.healthshareoregon.org

Gary Cobb
Community Outreach Coordinator,
Central City Concern

Are you a **Veteran** experiencing or at risk of becoming homeless?

Transition Projects

Please call 855.425.5544 or visit 650 NW Irving Street