

CANDICE ALICIA KING

1984-2025



Homeless advocate and leader of Eugene rent strike dies at 40

BY SAVANNAH BROWN

“I always introduced her as ‘the most radical person I know,’” says Antonio Gisbert, one of Candice King’s coworkers at Homes for Good and a fellow drafter of the Oregon Rebate Plan. “Like, the good sense of the word ‘radical.’”

He also called her “a force of nature,” which is a phrase many of her friends echoed to describe her. Other words and phrases that friends, neighbors and family used to articulate King to *Eugene Weekly* were “activist,” “anarchist,” “passionate” and “compass.” They also say she was “one of the most sophisticated thinkers I know,” “a brilliant, bright star who was always burning in a lot of different directions at the same time,” and “a revolutionary.”

Friends also talked about her laugh. It was frequently described as something loud and hollering that would spread like wildfire. “A beautiful sort of cackle with confidence laugh, just projecting joy,” Gisbert said.

King was a homeless advocate who worked with and pioneered a variety of projects and initiatives throughout Eugene that fought for opportunities and placement for unhoused people. She was passionate about social justice, cooking and making sure people knew their rights.

On Jan. 18, Candice King died. She was 40 years old.

In the summer of 2023, King organized the Almaden Rent Strike against R&R properties and her landlord who lived in San Mateo, California. When her rent was raised and her rental assistance ran out, King stopped paying rent, offering multiple times to buy the home from her landlord. She was rejected and was ordered to leave. Instead of moving out, however, she occupied the house with her family and invited friends, neighbors and strangers to join her in protesting house hoarding in a city that is filled predominantly with renters, and Oregon’s history of systemic racism. For 96 days, her house on Almaden Street was occupied 24/7 by a revolving door of people who stood beside her.

She was ultimately evicted at the end of the summer, but though she left her home, the occupation formed “a really strong community of a lot of people who support each other, and continue to stand up to the city and predatory landlordism to this day,” neighbor Penny Grady says. “So there were a lot of wins in it, too. We worked really hard.”

King was born on May 2, 1984, in Wichita, Kansas. Being a “military brat,” as her son describes, she lived abroad as a child, mostly in Germany and spending

some time in Japan while her father was stationed in those places. By the age of 14, she was back in the states, and out on her own. As a teenager, she couch surfed and worked two jobs. After working as a grocery bagger for some time, she found a job as a cook, and eventually as a chef, which she worked for 12 years.

When she was 18, she had her first daughter Marieca Hare with her husband, Nathan Hare, who she married in 2002. Five years later, she had twin sons, Gordon and Thurgood. “She definitely had some things to say about having twins at age 23,” Gordon Hare says. “It’s not easy raising two infants at once, and it’s definitely not easy to breastfeed two infants as well.” Hare laughs, “After she reiterated doing it multiple times, I was like, ‘Alright, I got you, dude.’” King and Nathan Hare divorced in 2009.

In 2011, King was heavily involved in the Occupy movement, along with several other social justice movements at the time. Occupy originated with Occupy Wall Street, which started on New York City’s Wall Street, protesting corporate greed and economic equality. It was through Occupy that she met her second husband, Eric King.

King and Eric married in 2012, and moved the family to Kentucky, where Candice attended Berea College and achieved her degree in international political economy. “To be accepted to Berea as a non-traditional student is so competitive,” Lesley Sneed, a friend from college says. Berea was the first integrated college in the South, and the first to have Black educators. It promises free tuition, but has a very stiff acceptance policy. “It’s not all about grades. They judge you on your level of passion, your level of wanting to change the world, to be involved in community service,” Sneed says.

From 2013 to 2016, while King was in college, she was deeply involved in many initiatives that combated low income and environmental issues. Sneed tells *EW* that on top of being a full-time student and mom of three, she was one of the first people at Berea to push for a student union. Sneed says she also contributed to peace and social justice talks and events, “she participated in every protest that was going on in Berea,” volunteered for the local radio station and worked for the peace and social justice department at the school. “I was just like, ‘You are doing too much.’” Sneed says of King’s activities. “She did this all on her own time.”

King won many awards and national scholarships — several scholarships that allowed her to do an agricultural economist internship in Bolivia, and she also made the dean’s list on multiple occasions. Sneed says King’s free time was spent creating community, whether it be by integrating the international students in with the rest of the students, or gardening and cooking with her family and friends.

After graduation, King received an offer from the University of Oregon to complete her master’s degree. In 2017, she packed up and headed over to the Pacific Northwest, pregnant with her fourth child, Leslie. It didn’t take her long to get involved in the homeless community when she moved here. She worked with Homes For Good, where Hare says “she had single-handedly

housed about 5,000 people by being able to advocate and give them information that was being withheld from.”

She also worked with Eugene Housing & Neighborhood Defense (HAND), created the Housing Navigators Collaborative, ran for Eugene City Council in 2020 and helped found Ward 9: The Homeless Neighbors association, among a smorgasbord of other efforts to advocate for her homeless community.

“I feel like when you become such a prominent figure, you’re the problem solver for people. It can become that you don’t even realize that you don’t see [your own problems] anymore,” Hare says. “She was the kind of person that helped so many, that she really struggled to advocate for herself.”

In 2022, Eric died suddenly, and her job was difficult to hold on to. In 2023, she was evicted for the first time, sparking the rent strike. During this period, the community assembled to stand with her. To the people who attended the occupation, the land was known as “Possum Kingdom.” Jetty Ety, a homeless advocate who is known in the community by her pseudonym, described the scene with the smell of Candice’s cooking always wafting from the constantly stocked food area, kids playing and people hanging out. “We had a pool area. We had a medical station. We had a rad little library. Bands came and played. It was just incredible. It was a really beautiful experience.”

When *EW* asked King’s friends about their favorite memory with her, the resounding answer was “I can’t say.” Jenny Moore, a friend and “possum mom” who devotedly attended the Almaden occupation added, “I can tell you it was fucking fun, and I’ll never forget it.”

Brittany Raine of CORE Eugene says of her, “That was Candice — unapologetically brilliant, vibrant, fierce and impossible to ignore. Her energy made you want to be around her.”

King loved oysters, death metal, Fiona Apple, mycology and making and giving art. Grady says, “Her house was full of handmade art, and they would often give their friends little gifts.” Many also considered her an emotional anchor. “If I was struggling, she would welcome me with open arms, into her house, into her kitchen... ‘Just come here. Come here and hang out with me. Come here and cry on my shoulder,’” Moore says. “Her capacity to care and to give care was unmatched.”

After the rent strike, King and her kids lived in Airbnbs and hotels, before living in the Janet Smith House for about a year. During the last three weeks of her life, King stayed with a friend in a house that she helped place them in during her work at Homes For Good. King’s official cause of death has not been released.

King spent her life bringing people together, regardless of who they were or what they believed. “We’re all a little problematic,” Grady says was one of King’s signature catchphrases.

“She was really into loving people for Being,” Grady says. “Even when they’re complicated or messy. She loves people for their whole selves.”

A public memorial service will be held noon Feb. 22 at The Lavender Network, 440 Maxwell Road in Eugene. Friends and family ask that attendees wear red to honor her memory.