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**School Chiefs Move From Dismal to Abysmal**

School board and administration change little for children in Portland's worst schools

*Editor's Note: The Crisis Team, a diverse group of community residents, including the Hispanic Parents Association, New Party and Black United Front, is ending a two month demonstration moratorium. The team is criticizing the Portland School Board and Administration with failure in boosting achievement at low performing schools. The following is a statement from Ronnie Herndon, a member of the team and a longtime community activist.*

The Crisis Team will resume school board demonstrations on May 21. Discussions during the moratorium have produced few if any changes that will help thousands of Portland children being crushed by board and administration intransigence and indifference. The board talks a good game about closing the achievement gap, their actions ensure it will never happen.

Nothing has been done to recruit effective teachers to poor performing schools. Nothing has been done to move effective teachers into principal positions in poor performing schools.

Nothing has been done to ensure that the Portland public schools special education department complies with federal laws. Nothing has been done to ensure that English as a second language students receive desperately needed services (92 percent of 10th graders are not at

math benchmarks and 98.4 percent are not at reading benchmark). Nothing has been done to ensure black, Hispanic, Native American and low income white children receive instruction in the highest level of math and

And alarmingly, an administration, aside from a lame duck superintendent, that has become nearly all white. So much for the board's fabled commitment to diversity.

The board sanctions and ap-

closing the achievement gap while its actions demonstrate increasing ease at genuflecting before academic and institutional

racism. In the words of William H. McClendon, the board has moved from the "Dismal to the Abysmal."



Portland's Ronnie Herndon (second from left) with other members of The Crisis Team.

science. Nothing has been done to eliminate disciplinary abuses (percentage wise, black children receive three times as many disciplinary referrals as white children). The board would have us entrust the lives of children, already failed by the public school system, into the hands of an administration that does not have one person that ever significantly closed the achievement gap between affluent and poor children or white and minority children.

plauds the personnel decisions of its human resources department, including principal hiring and placement. This department does not have single individual that ever turned around a poor-performing school. We are asked to trust the judgment of those who hire for that they have never been apart of, a high achieving school with a student body composed of primarily low income and minority students. The board continues giving lip service to

**Justice is Finally Served in Birmingham Case**

Kweisi Mfume, president and chief executive officer of the NAACP, said that with the guilty verdict of former Ku Klux Klansman Thomas Blanton, Jr. "Justice has finally been served in one of the most vile and violent murders this country has ever seen." However, Mfume said: "We're mindful that this verdict

will not bring back the lives of the four little girls who were senselessly killed in the 1963 bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama church. Nor will it ease the collective pain that this nation has lived with for the last 38 years. I hope their deaths will remind us of how hate can destroy when left unchallenged."

An Alabama jury last week found Blanton guilty of first-degree murder in the deaths of four black girls, killed in one of the most shocking crimes of the civil rights era. Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson and Addie Mae Collins, all aged 14, and Denise McNair, 11 died in the blast of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church.

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