

Spiritual Freedom in the County Jail

continued from Front

Penitentiary, and state prisons in Umatilla, Salem, Pendleton and the Dalles.

At first the OICO's services were not widely utilized. Rasheed said he remembers the days when he would drive 100 miles to counsel one or two inmates. His Friday Jummah service at Inverness started with only three or four inmates.

"Now between 15 and 20 people come," Rasheed said. "It's a wonderful blessing. Sometimes we even get deputies and jail administration in for service. Once, the state's head chaplain came."

Jummah is held each Friday at 1 p.m. Dressed in a white robe and cap with Qur'an in hand, Rasheed checks in to Inverness and gathers white towels for inmates to kneel on. Then he begins by signaling the ahdan, or the call

to prayer, as inmates dressed in blue scrubs file in the door of a meeting room-turned-mosque. They remove their plastic sandals and wash their hands in the traditional manner before kneeling to pray to Allah during the hour-long service.

The OICO chaplains do their best to get correctional staff to accommodate the special needs of Muslim inmates, like the provision of halal meals, time for prayer five times a day and special head coverings for female inmates.

Rasheed said at first October Lewis, the woman arrested with four men on suspicion of forming a Portland-based terrorist cell, was not allowed to wear her traditional head garments. During a counseling session, he encouraged her to talk to her lawyer about the problem and jail officials later allowed her to wear the required covering.

"I saw how that really impacted her," Rasheed said. "She was very upset to be seen in public without it."

Born in Detroit and raised in Portland, Rasheed said he was a devout Christian until he became Muslim at the age of 15. His brother

liver. He said the attracting power was the uniqueness of the religion and the way of life it embodied. The rational concepts appealed to his desire for stability and peace. For the first time in his life he understood that God had a plan.

"It gave me this sense of assurance that no matter what the destiny is, it is in the hands of God," he said. "I had this tremendous faith in the unseen, the possibilities of tomorrow and the presence of a loving and endearing Creator."

Rasheed takes that experience with him into the jails each day. When he met Darryl Wilson, a Christian inmate at

Inverness who was curious about the Islamic faith, Rasheed said he remembers Wilson was afraid he would have to give up Christianity to become a Muslim. He explained to Wilson that the Islamic faith was an extension of Christianity,

based on the belief that God's final message was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad.

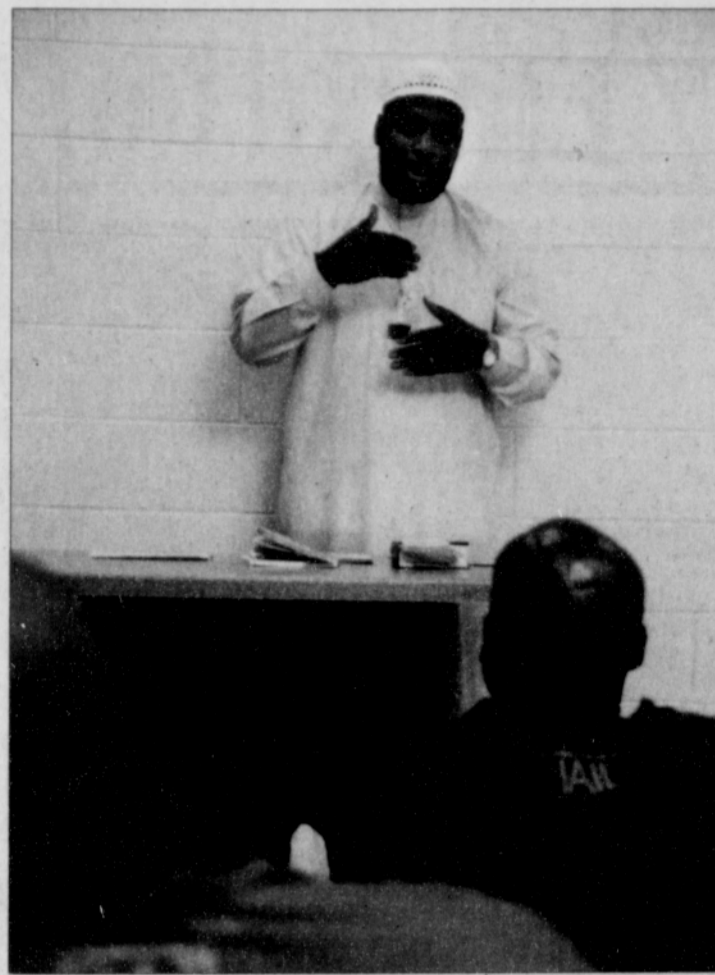
"He told me that if I was a good Christian, I would be an even better Muslim," Wilson said.

After consulting with Rasheed for almost a year, Wilson decided to convert. Since then, he said he feels better able to deal with jail, the justice system and life in general.

"It's a spiritual escape," Wilson said. "Instead of thinking just about jail, which has very little happiness in it, I have the joy of peace of

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—Darryl Wilson, a Muslim inmate at Inverness



Derek Rasheed leads inmates in the Friday Jummah service.

PHOTOS BY WYNDE DYER

who speaks their mind in disagreement with the status quo.

Rasheed said it will be God's place to judge the acts of terrorists, not his or America's.

"To me, these acts seem un-Islamic and desperate," he said. "But I can vote, I haven't lived a life of oppression and I haven't seen three generations of my family killed. I live in the lap of luxury. I like driving my nice car and living in a good country. I have no problem being a good Muslim and a good American citizen. I trust the government and I don't like to think about what goes on in the dark. But one day I hope things will become more balanced because right now there is no innocence in this equation."

How does Rasheed defend Islam? By being a chaplain. Although they hope to someday get a contract with Multnomah County, the OICO currently funds all of their services out of their own pockets. Rasheed also works as an on-call emergency chaplain through a trauma intervention program in association with local police and fire departments in Oregon and Washington.

"It is my way to give back," he said. "If God wills it, we will be rewarded."

According to Imam Shabazz, the OICO is already reaping rewards—in the form of new members. They just graduated four new chaplains, including two non-Muslims, from their 10-week certification course. The course counts for college credits to be used towards a four-year degree.

"It's growing, it's alive," Shabazz said. "The possibilities are endless."

This year Rasheed hopes it will be possible for him to make his first real pilgrimage to Makkah.

For more information on the Oregon Islamic Chaplains Organization, call 503-295-2095 or email islamicchaplain@yahoo.com.

Keeping Minds Strong

Cultural competency strengthens local mental health clinic

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jackie Strong was born and raised in northeast Portland and has lived here for most of his life. As a private mental health practitioner for over 25 years, he knows the community and the urgency of those in need.

"Mental health issues are around us every place we turn," he said.

As the new director of NE Cascadia Behavioral Health Care, Strong will spearhead new programs that bridge the gap between the African American community and competent mental health care.

"People in a crisis seem to respond more readily to someone that looks like them," Strong said. "They tend to be able to work through the issues a lot more successfully."

Armed with a masters' degree in social work from the University of Washington, and decades of private practice and consulting experience, Strong plans to challenge past practices that have ignored the cultural component of behavioral health care.

"Historically there have never been enough services for the Afri-

can American population," he said, adding that other ethnic groups have suffered as well.

"Project Respond" is Cascadia's answer to that dilemma. Five top-notch cultural specialists working in cooperation with the county's acute care system will oversee cultural policy and provide in-field services to African American, Russian & East European, Asian, Native American and Latino populations.

Former director Marylin Sims passed the reins to Strong so she could get settled into her new role as the African American Cultural Specialist.

"We have a higher number of people of color providing services here to make sure we are sensitive to clients," she said.

Five intake centers across Portland provide maximum accessibility to localized clients covered under Verity or Verity Plus—Multnomah County's low-to-moderate income mental health insurance plan—or the Oregon Health Plan.

The Mobile Crisis Response Team supplements services provided on-site by handling crisis intervention at hospitals and police calls. The team can be dispatched on location to provide counseling or to transport a client to a clinic or hospital for treatment.



Portland native Jackie Strong is the new director of NE Cascadia.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL

"We're out in the community meeting the needs of homeless clients or people that for some reason can't make it to the office," Sims said.

Outpatient services cater to more highly functioning clients. Patients get counseling from trained mental health therapists as well as access to a psychiatrist or nurse practitioner that can prescribe medication.

All clients are assisted in navigating the social service system, which sometimes means access to basic needs such as shelter and food. Therapists and case managers can help members enroll for treatment through an intake process and some times a referral is all a client needs to get started.

Whatever the case, Cascadia is confident its specialists will find what works for everyone.

"Cultural competency is inte-

grated throughout the Cascadia philosophy," Sims said.

Adult outpatient services provide case-by-case individualized therapy to help clients address long-term issues.

"A lot of state hospitals have closed down, some of those people have such intense situations they wouldn't be able to function by themselves," Strong said. "The goal at Cascadia is to provide services to clients in recognition of their own strengths, world views, and philosophies."

I'saac Owusu spends about 20-30 hours a week at the NE center. He was referred to the center after major depression gripped him following a traffic accident that left his thinking abilities clouded and unreliable.

"This is what I do to keep myself above the water," Owusu said. "This helps me to communicate."

Owusu counts on Cascadia's support groups and services, which he says have helped him redevelop his concentration as well as his confidence.

"I don't think I could have come this far if I didn't have this place to come to," he said. "It's really accessible, a lot of people in the community need the services that Cascadia provides."

Racism Deleted

continued from Front initiative process.

"I didn't feel any opposition to it at all," Michael Leighton, editor of the black-oriented Portland Observer newspaper said.

"Maybe it's the 30 percent of the people who will vote against anything," he said. "I would hope people didn't vote that way because they want racist language or because they support racism."

"Oregon's national liberal reputation was challenged by (failed) gay rights initiatives in the 1990s and somewhat by this vote as well," said political analyst Jim Moore. "The state's national reputation has always had a hole in it."

He noted that the state somewhat reluctantly in the 1960s removed real estate covenants that could block resale of property to Asians and blacks. A constitutional provision barring Chinese from owning property in the state remains and was not affected by Tuesday's vote, he said.

He said some who voted for Measure 14 may have done so because it seemed to negate the history of the state.

Chet Orloff, director emeritus of the Oregon Historical Society, said some of the people who voted "no" may have felt the constitution should stand as a historical record. But not all of them.

"Five or 10 percent, maybe more, of the people who voted it down have some racist attitudes and this is being reflected," he said. "This is giving them an opportunity to express it in a secret way."

The measure passed in all 36

counties but had its toughest opposition in sparsely populated and usually conservative rural counties such as Harney, Lake, Wheeler, Malheur, Klamath and Crook.

Discriminatory language once was rampant in Oregon's legal codes and constitution. Much of it that lasted was moot, overridden by amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Many of Oregon's early settlers were disenchanted Southern whites, who brought their ideas, and in some cases their slaves, with them.

Many more displaced by the Civil War followed, often settling in the Rogue Valley, which was isolated by poor roads from the rest of the state until fairly recently. There, attitudes grew and prospered, generally unleavened by what was going on around them.

However both Rogue Valley counties of Jackson and Josephine passed Measure 14 handily.

The Ku Klux Klan, an anti-Catholic movement in Oregon, was instrumental in the 1922 election of Gov. Walter Pierce.

In that year Oregon voted to close all Catholic schools in the state, a decision thrown out by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1925.

"There was a segment of the population that was active in the Klan," said Oregon State University political analyst Bill Lunch.

"Those people aren't around anymore, but their children and grandchildren are," he said, adding that political, cultural and social attitudes often are inherited.

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African American Catholic Community Oregon Mission Revival 2002 Features Fr. Joseph McGowan

The African American Catholic Community of Oregon (AACCO) will host its annual revival on

November 18-20 at St. Andrew Catholic Church located at 806 NE Alberta St. The revival theme is "Who Are the Disciples Among Us?"

This year's Revivalist is Fr. Joseph McGowan, parochial vicar at the Religious Education Convention sponsored by the Archdiocese of Seattle. His presentation topic, "The Gospel of Mark and Themes for

Preaching in Communities of Color." Fr. McGowan is a recipient of the Outstanding Religious Leader Award presented by the City of Seattle Jaycees and he received the Outstanding award at Seattle University. Fr. McGowan is one of only a handful of African-American Jesuits in the Northwest. Throughout his career he has focused on social justice and education.

The AACCO sponsors this annual revival as a way of spreading the good news of the gospel in the African-American tradition. The revival is sponsored jointly by the Archdiocese and three inner-city parishes (St. Andrew, Holy Redeemer and Immaculate Heart) and will be held at St. Andrew Catholic Church each of the three nights beginning at 7 p.m. Parish choirs will be featured. Participants of all denominations and cultural backgrounds are invited. A good will offering will be taken.