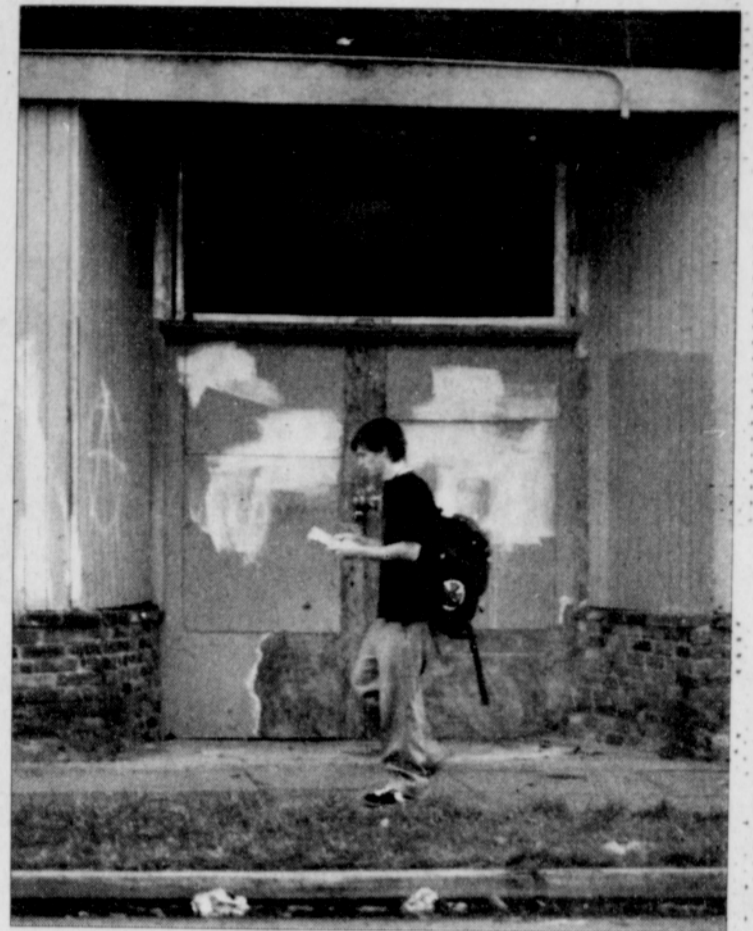


Emma Gaston has lived above Joe's Place since 1978. She has seen first hand the transformation of Alberta Street and likes what she sees, but worries that African American businesses and renters may eventually be pushed out.

PHOTO BY WYNDE DYER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER



Empty store fronts like this one once lined Alberta Street. Now the revitalized cultural neighborhood boasts dozens of restaurants, coffee shops, boutiques and galleries.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

ALBERTA STREET Tapestry in Transition

continued ▲ from Front

"Moving is terrible," she said. "I wish I could stay here."

Jones says the dilemma is mostly a "class issue" but race ties in because many people of low income are people of color. Those people, she said, won't be able to afford Alberta's rising rents and cost of housing.

Even Fondren said houses that cost \$130,000 just a few years ago are priced at \$197,000. But he is okay with the increase as long as there are still affordable stock available.

He disagrees that minority businesses are being displaced, calling Alberta one of the most diverse communities in Portland.

"We have African American, Hispanic, and Korean businesses," Fondren said. "The mom-and-pop establishments still have a chance over here."

He is concerned, though, about outside investors coming to Alberta to get rich quick. He thinks their interests might betray the interests of the people that live and work on Alberta.

"Some people are coming strictly to invest," said Fondren. "That worries me a little."

Fondren said that although progress can't be stopped, hopefully it can be guided with smart growth that keeps locals employed and rents affordable.

He said Sabin CDC has scooped up apartments, houses and duplexes along Alberta to rehabilitate and make more affordable to low income families.

Fondren and others have been adamant about preserving the multiculturalism and down home flavor of the Alberta business com-

munity. Fondren does not want to see Alberta Street develop into another Northwest 23rd. Neither do the Sisters in Action.

Jones thinks that if the course of progress isn't checked, the demographics along Alberta may become very similar to their neighbors across the river.

"I don't want to imagine that," she said. "All the people of color would be gone."

But Reggie Petry, an African American owner of the Alberta Arts Pavilion, a gallery and community space at 2315 N.E. Alberta thinks 23rd might not be far off, and might not be a bad idea after all.

Petry agrees that people of color who live in the community should have employment opportunities along Alberta and that is why he

Petry once thought that the businesses on Alberta would be capable of addressing the employment needs of local African Americans, but said those businesses are staffed by owners too busy thinking about their own survival.

"Hawthorne has done it," he said. "They have a few corporations and they haven't destroyed the neighborhood. Grassroots in and of itself cannot be the answer, we need jobs here."

Petry points to the success of the New Seasons Market on Northeast 33rd Avenue. He thinks they have done a pretty good job of being good neighbors by hiring a diverse staff.

"When you walk in there you see a pretty good blend of people," he said.

Though even Petry agrees that once the floodgates are open, the ideal course of development might be hard to manage.

"There isn't yet a strategy that is innovative enough to support cultural integrity and economic development, all at the same time," he

A lot of people say revitalization is good for the community, but a lot of people are being displaced by revitalization. People from higher incomes are benefiting. People from lower incomes aren't.

— Camille Kent of Sisters in Action for Power

thinks economic development that opens its doors to bigger businesses would create more jobs for African Americans in the area.

"Maybe outside corporations aren't such a bad idea," he said. "Maybe a McDonald's or a Gap should be given a green light to placement on Alberta Street."

Those businesses, he argues, are traditionally more financially secure and therefore better equipped to hire greater numbers of people.

"I don't think we're getting a lot of employment for people of color with the businesses that are currently on Alberta," Petry said.

Joe's Place is the only black owned tavern in Oregon and has been an icon on Alberta for years.

Emma Gaston has been a bartender there on and off and has lived upstairs from the bar since 1978. She thinks the change on Alberta is good, but adds that revitalization has come with a price.

"We are one of the only black owned businesses still here," Gaston said.

Shorty Gilliam lives just down the street from Joe's Place and comes in just about everyday to play pool. He is taking the new look



Dora Montgomery has been cutting hair at her small shop on Alberta for over seven years. She says the rising cost of rent on the street is making it hard for her to stay in business. "I can't afford six or seven hundred a month for a place along Alberta," she said.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

and changing atmosphere along Alberta all in stride.

"It's great the way they are building up the street," he said.

"It's been fun to see how they've redone things."

He says rising costs of housing are a fact of life anywhere you have

revitalization.

"You're not ever going to stop that," he explained. "Everything goes up but the wages."



REACH

Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health
A program of the African American Health Coalition, Inc.
Sponsored by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Wellness Within REACH: Mind, Body, and Soul Activity Calendar

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Matt Dishman 77 NE Knott					Old School Dance 6:30-7:00pm Kendrick	
Salvation Army 5325 N Williams	Aerobics 6:30-7:30 pm Nickerson	Water aerobics 2:00 - 3:00pm Hampton	Aerobics 6:30-7:30 pm Nickerson	Water aerobics 2:00 - 3:00pm Hampton	Aerobics 6:30-7:30 pm Nickerson	Weight Training 10-11am Hampton
Nature's 3535 NE 15th		Yoga 7:30-8:30 pm O'Rourke				
Peninsula Park 700 N Portland		Walking Group 6-7 pm Nickerson				Walking Group 12:30 pm Nickerson

**Must be 21 or older to participate. Please check with AAHC before showing up to the first class 503-413-1850. Please receive approval from your doctor before beginning exercise class. All classes are free of charge!

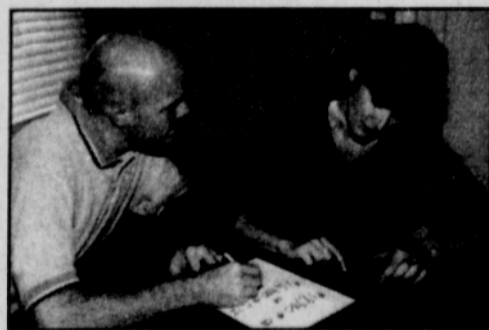


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