



PHOTOS BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Police Lt. Derrick Foxworth gets a haircut from Paul Knauls Jr. of Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber-Beauty Salon on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Success on the Boulevard

Naming Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. after the civil rights leader started economic renaissance

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Business has been "beautiful" for Paul and Geneva Knauls since they opened Geneva's Shear Perfection Barber-Beauty Salon on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, 12 years ago.

During that time, more than 100 new businesses have sprouted up along what was once a seedy strip with little foot traffic.

The decision to rename the northeast Portland street after the slain civil rights leader was the deal-making factor for the shop's location. To the Knauls, the name change meant a renaissance and an asset to their business.

While Geneva's specializes in hair—all hair—Knauls says people know they have found an ethnic barbershop when they look in the phone book and find the salon on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

"It's just sparked joy and pride in the community."

"A woman called, asking if we did ethnic hair. I said we did, and asked if she wanted to talk to a stylist," Knauls said. "I called out, 'Carmesha!' Now she found a stylist named Carmesha on Martin Luther King Boulevard. She knew she had called the right place."

— business owner Paul Knauls on the positive change since Union Avenue was changed to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

From the vivid decor, family atmosphere and publicity photos of greats Cab Calloway, Sammy Davis Jr. and Ray Lampkin from the Knauls' past lives as nightclub owners, the Knauls family knows what it means to cut hair on MLK.

"Next to the church, the barber shop is a place where people meet and greet and talk to their barber about their situation. The barber becomes a psychologist," Knauls said.

And while Geneva's is committed to making its clients look good—Geneva herself recently retired after a 40-year long career as a beautician—the stylists also care about how their clients feel.

Paul Knauls Jr. is one of only five stylists participating in a pilot program, the only one in the country, designed to eliminate some of the health disparities affecting the African American community. After six weeks of training through

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The Portland Police Bureau supports the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

City of Portland Police Bureau



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*Honoring
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

"Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

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"We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope."

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)

Though he suffered through disappointments, Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy to us all is the invaluable gift of hope. NW Natural proudly stands with our African American community in celebrating Black History Month.

