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Week in The Review

Students Oppose Jeff Plans

Jefferson students attending a school board meeting Monday opposed plans calling for school uniforms and separate programs for boys and girls, saying they discriminate and are unequal because they treat them differently from other kids in the school district. See story, page A5.

Music Icon Remembered

Funeral services are scheduled Friday in Los Angeles for Lou Rawls, the velvet-voiced singer who started as a church choir boy and went on to record such classic tunes as "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine" and "Lady Love." Rawls, 72, died Friday of cancer. See story, page A2.



Alito Questioned on Abortion

Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito said Tuesday he would deal with the issue of abortion with an open mind as a justice,

though he defended his 1991 judicial vote saying women seeking abortions must notify their husbands. In the second day of Senate hearings, Alito also said no president or court is above the law - even in time of war.

Heating Help Falls Short

Oregon receives emergency heating and energy funds from the Bush Administration, but local officials say the additional federal aid isn't enough to keep many low-income families warm. Thousands of Oregon families still face, quite literally, being left out in the cold. See story, page A5.

Journalist Kidnapped

Iraqi police were searching Tuesday for an American journalist who was kidnapped over the weekend when gunmen ambushed her car and killed her translator in western Baghdad. Meanwhile, the death toll of U.S. troops has risen to 2,201.

Obesity Hurts Heart

Northwestern University researchers, tracking 17,643 patients for three decades, found that being overweight in mid-life substantially increased the risk of dying of heart disease later in life - even in people who began the study with healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

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Following in the Footsteps

40 years after civil rights, focus stays the same

BY SARAH BLOUNT AND KHAYA DARKO
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland resident Kay Toran, the chief executive officer of Volunteers of America Oregon, is a living example of someone continuing Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s struggle for economic and social justice.

She has accomplished a life's work of addressing the needs of families and children.

Her deeds in public service follow the extraordinary strides for equality that were made by black Americans nearly a half century ago.

Rosa Parks galvanized Americans in a fight for justice by refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a bus. King professed, in his famous speech at the March on Washington, that African Americans were not yet free 100 years after the abolition of slavery.

Today, like King and Parks before her, Toran doesn't feel progress has developed quickly enough, and unapologetically calls for social change. She said the long legacy of racism against African Americans contributes greatly to poverty.

"There's still racial discrimination," Toran said, "but it's in different and in subtle forms, and there's institutional racism. We have to acknowledge that this still exists. Until then, people will be frustrated that they aren't able to live up to their potential. We're not there yet because of the denial and unfortunate practices that are hurtful and



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Volunteers of America Oregon Chief Executive Officer Kay Toran says the struggle for social and economic justice, celebrated in the lives of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, will continue until we fully acknowledge discrimination in all forms.

hateful."

Toran looks back to the men and women who helped raise awareness of these issues during her own life growing up in the 1960s. People like King, Malcolm X, President John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert F. Kennedy, each met their death through political martyrdom. Though their legacy is forever burned into our collective memory; the nation hasn't seen such dynamic leadership since.

"People will not take a stand like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. did," she noted. "Perhaps people value longevity over standing up for what they believe."

Toran, who has fashioned a career through working with children and families, believes the absence of role models has also contributed to social injustice. Our leaders need to be nurtured and sought out, she said, especially for single parent homes.

"Women are raising boys that are expected to someday be heads of households, yet there are very few male role models," she said, citing church, schools, family and organizations like the Boys and Girls Clubs as important models for our youth.

Toran believes these issues of economic justice and poverty belongs in the front pages of newspapers everyday. Recent headlines brought poverty and discrimination issues to the forefronts of our minds when Hurricane Katrina exposed an ugly reality to an unsuspecting public:

"An interesting thing happened right after Katrina," Toran said. "Rosa Parks died. It takes a national event to start a movement. It seems to me our highest priority in America ought to be our citizens."

When asked if the exposure of abject

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A Decade of Change on Alberta

Political power comes with King, but displacement comes with gentrification

BY BOBBY BURK
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Looking less like the "Soul of the City" and more like the suburbs, it's easy to see that northeast Portland is undergoing a radical transformation. The changes come with a population that is less black and with more money. And nowhere is all of this more evident than in the Alberta Arts District.

The cozy streets of Alberta show a vibrancy and vigor that comes with people wanting to live, commune and flourish, not just reside. A variety of local coffee shops, art galleries, restaurants and other unique businesses have blossomed and multiplied, causing one to realize that Alberta is a destination for the city at large.

The neighborhood has shed its "bullet zone" image from years of gang problems with the "rat-a-tat-tat" of drive-by shootings.

Beka Amblin, mother and small business owner, was lured to Alberta in 1992 by real estate prices she could afford while working as a bar maid. She faced a tough decision; either purchase a tiny house in the already trendy and expensive area of Laurelhurst or have a choice of a larger home in an economically-challenged neighborhood. Her northeast Portland castle turned out to be four stories and five bedrooms worth of cheapness.

"When we first moved here they wouldn't deliver pizza to our house," said Amblin, "we had to meet them at the Safeway because the pizza guy said we were a liability issue to come the extra 14 blocks."

Thirteen years later, Amblin owns a second home as well as a business in the heart of Northeast, her journey to prosperity paralleling that of the area.



PHOTO BY BOBBY BURK/FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Robert Williams adapts to changes in his neighborhood off Alberta Street.

For many though, and especially for the black community, the story of progress has not come without disruptions. Many people of color are left scratching their heads, troubled that a black community with deep roots in the Northeast is shrinking.

"We are witnessing what is essentially the deconstruction of what used to be Portland's black community," said Darrell Millner, Professor of Black History at Portland State University, who believes that a generational backlog of economic and racial factors have caused many to relocate to areas like Gresham, Hillsboro and Washington County.

To understand how Alberta lost its distinction as a mostly black community, one has to look back to a time when the true soul of the northeast was established amidst turmoil and strife.

As America moved into World War II, a wartime manufacturing industry blossomed in Portland and fell almost entirely into the hands of whites-only labor unions. These wartime laborers left many manual labor jobs vacant, and so black people were welcomed into Oregon from areas like Louisiana, Georgia and other areas in the South to fill these gaps in the labor market. The jobs were physically debilitating and paid very little,

making it difficult to achieve economic prosperity.

A prime example of the challenges people of color were facing at the time can be seen in arenas like housing, where, according to Millner, decisions about where blacks could buy homes, what kind of homes they could live in and how they could pay for and finance those homes were made by politicians and financial institutions.

Local African Americans were often turned down for mortgages simply because they were black. Landless and near penni-

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