

PDC Under Fire

Institutional racism targeted by activists

The city agency designed to reverse blight in urban Portland is under fire from African American leaders, who say they've been neglected in the Portland Development Commission's agenda.

More than 90 people attended the agency's board last week to press the issue of what Sen. Avel Gordly called "institutional racism". Gordly was joined by Portland Urban League president Marcus Munday, Dr. LeRoy Haynes Jr. of Allen Temple Church and former PDC executive Baruti Artharee.

Charles Wilhoite, a PDC board member, said that as an African American he appreciated the group's concerns, and that he shared their opinions.

The outspoken leaders represent a community unsatisfied with Portland's attempts to spread its prosperity into their neighborhoods with construction projects overlooking minority workers, and a home-ownership gap that leaves African Americans lagging.

PDC's annual budget is \$247 million this year — money for projects like recreating the outer southeast Portland community of Lents and developing the high profile South Waterfront Project and Pearl District.

Historically, African American



Sen. Avel Gordly



Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes Jr

communities have felt the short end of the stick when it comes to urban renewal. Frustrations have increased since African Americans were moved out of North Portland to make way for Legacy Emanuel Hospital & Health

More and more people have told me PDC means People Don't Count.

— Baruti Artharee, former PDC executive

Center's expansion in the early 1970s, followed by an upheaval to make way for Interstate 5 and Memorial Coliseum.

The activists want to see public dollars start to work more in the favor of African American neighborhoods. They say that

starts with more representation in agency staff. PDC, already lagging behind in employee diversity, recently lost three African Americans in a public departure — Tyrone Henry in contracting and Allyson Spencer and Rita McCain in housing.

Based on voluntary information provided by employees, PDC says about five percent of its staff, or 10 of 185 employees, are African American. None of the agency's executives is African American. About six percent of Portland's 514,000 people are African American, according to a 2005 estimate by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Artharee gave a sobering example of the agency's reputation, telling the board that "more and more people have told me PDC means People Don't Count".

"This isn't about any single issue," he said after the meeting. "It is one of being ignored and not caring."

Portland Broadcasts Scheduled

Two public gatherings to hear from Nation of Islam leader Minister Louis Farrakhan are scheduled this weekend in Portland.

Open Eyes Productions will host a widescreen DVD broadcast of Farrakhan's State of the Black Union Address, with host Tavis Smiley, on Friday, Sept. 22 at Reflections Coffee/Talking Drum Bookstore, 446 N.E. Killingsworth St.

The free broadcast begins at 6 p.m. and is followed by a discussion.

On Sunday, Sept. 24, Farrakhan will address the community via DVD in a speaking



Minister Louis Farrakhan

engagement titled "The Abuse of the Female", broadcast at University Park Community

Center, 9009 N. Foss in St. Johns. Doors open at 1 p.m. and admission is free.

Woman Named to Supreme Court

Gov. Ted Kulongoski appointed Martha Lee Walters to the Oregon State Supreme Court Monday, adding a woman to the all-male panel to fill a vacancy created by the retirement of Justice R. William Riggs.

Walters has close to 30 years' experience in civil litigation, labor law and municipal law.

She is widely acclaimed for her representation of disabled professional golfer Casey Martin in his lawsuit against the PGA Tour over the Tour's refusal to allow Martin to use a golf cart. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that federal law required the PGA to accommodate Martin by allowing him to ride the golf cart.

"Ms. Walters is an outstanding



Martha Lee Walters

legal analyst who comes from a unique background, and we are lucky to have her serve on the court," the Governor said. "She is a real person who has a sense of what is happening on the ground, and she cares deeply about Oregon, the laws and the people.

Kulongoski said he was also pleased to appoint a woman.

"It is important to have judges of varied backgrounds and experiences. We need to continue to strive to diversify both the bar and bench in Oregon so they better reflect the population they serve," he said.

Walters resides in the Eugene area and is married with two grown children.

Sickle Cell Annual Telethon Upcoming

More pledges and entertainers needed

Join the fight against Sickle Cell Disease by calling in your pledge during the Annual Sickle Cell Telethon, Saturday, Sept. 30 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Metro East Community Media Studio, 829 NE 8th in Gresham. The fundraiser will air live on channel 21.

Sickle Cell is an inherited blood disorder primarily affecting more than 70,000 African Americans but frequents Hispanic, Greek, Maltese,

Caucasian and other races. This painful and disabling hereditary disease often results in early death.

The Sickle Cell Anemia Foundation of Oregon still seeks volunteers of all kinds to help with entertainment for the telethon. For more information or to donate or provide entertainment, call the foundation at 503-249-1366 or 503-667-7555.

Located at 4936 NE Skidmore, the foundation offers free testing, limited financial support for those suffering from the disease, free counseling, parent education and support groups.



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