

Activist Advances Local, Political Causes

Keeping progress on justice issues in focus

By CHARITY PRATER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jo Ann Bowman, 49, sits in her office thinking for a moment about her upbringing, her experiences, and her appreciation for Dr. Martin Luther King.

"It wasn't until adulthood when I really began appreciating MLK. I was always more of a Malcolm X fan, only because I couldn't imagine being abused and not having a right to strike back," Bowman says. "Nowadays, we are still fighting racism, just during a different time of war."

Bowman is the associate director of Oregon Action and has been since 2004. There, she is committed to educating low income people and advocating, politically and otherwise, for their best interest.

"We are focused on getting people connected and excited about our political system," Bowman says.

Oregon Action is a membership-based organization that frequently works on combating local issues.

"One member of ours is an immigrant and spoke about getting pulled over by the police four times in a short period of time," she says. "And to address that we held community meetings so the police could share their policies with the community and the community could share with them their viewpoints."

Along with addressing racial profiling, Oregon Action works to register new voters during election times, and advocate for low income people who other-



Community activist Jo Ann Bowman (left) and Turiya Autry, professor of Black Studies at Portland State University, attend a fall seminar on racial profiling and resistance in Portland.

wise might think that they have no effect on influencing their local community.

Bowman was born and raised in Baltimore, Md. and for a brief period of time attended the University of Maryland. She soon left her college career to join the Navy. She spent four and a half years traveling in the service.

"The most amazing place we stopped at was Mombasa, Africa (along the Kenya coast)," she says. "It was the first time I had ever been to a place where a majority of the people looked just like me. It was incredible."

Bowman's parents' generation lived through segregation and she remembers them telling her about it. Sadly, she believes that her generation has, in a sense, protected their children from the history of racism by not passing the stories down.

After the Navy, Bowman worked in real estate and decided to move on after she noticed that the real estate industry was on a downward swing.

She moved to Oregon in 1990, from Oakland, Calif. She wanted to be able to afford her own home and still be close to the

water and mountains. "It was a toss up between Denver and Portland," she says,

"I chose Portland because I knew one person here that I could stay with until I got a job."

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Remembering Those Who Passed In 2006:

Harper, Miracle (Baby) 1-1-06 (11 cases in Jan)	McCool, Cherry 4-6-06	Williams, Lee Andrew 9-30-06
Williams, Artha Mae 12-17-05	Kemp, Barbara 4-6-06	Smith, Tommy R. 10-3-06 (11 cases in Oct)
Cross, Gerie 1-4-06	Rashad, Deborah 4-12-06	Williams, Katie 10-4-06
Moore, Christine 1-4-06	Turcotte, William 4-14-06	Dawson, Martha 10-4-06
King, Josephine 1-7-06	Williams, Lois 4-14-06	Cheesman, Arthur 10-6-06
Johnson, Jimmie 1-10-06	Parker, Fannie 4-18-06	Pittman, Edna 10-7-06
Hall, Eunice 1-16-06	Merrisweather, Lola 4-22-06	Sloan, Galen 10-7-06
Locke, Lurilla 1-20-06	Blandford, Gloria 5-3-06 (3 Cases in May)	Jackson, Marguerite 10-13-06
Carter, Christopher Darryl John 1-23-06	Bradley, Deborah 5-7-06	Udoka, Vitalis 10-17-06
Alexander, Loretta 1-26-06	Howard, Richard 5-14-06	Foote, Hope Marie 10-17-06
Willis, Sivanderbil CD 1-28-06	Moore, Carolyn 5-31-06	Scates, Raymond 10-18-06
Garnett, Ray 2-2-06 (15 cases in Feb)	Akres, Sharlotte 6-2-06 (7 Cases in June)	Bunn, Allah Rashawn 10-19-06
Townsend, William 2-3-06	Warren, Harold (Sr.) 6-11-06	Warren, Elizabeth 10-25-06
Glass-Moffett, Sherry 2-4-06	Diamond, Tracie 6-14-06	Woodley, Antonia 10-25-06
Williams, Robert B 2-4-06	Harrington, James 6-18-06	Mitchell, Doris 10-26-06
Hudson, Louise 2-5-06	Smith, Eicca 6-18-06	Ducure, Troy 11-1-06 (3 case in Nov)
McPherson, Reginald 2-6-06	Johnson, Paula 6-28-06	Logan, Allen 11-4-06
Bonner, Eugene 2-8-06	Gamble-Armstrong, (Baby) Zaquiah 6-30-06	Kimmons, Grady 11-4-06 (89 case here)
Campbell, Frank 2-8-06	Smith, Wade 7-7-06 (3 Cases in July)	Brant, Shirley 11-9-06
Mandley, Elijah 2-14-06	Rahsaan, Abdul Halim 7-14-06	Bell, Bennie 11-15-06
Smith, John L. 2-15-06	Shannon, Roy Charles 7-27-06	Harcvey, Oneida 11-20-06
Sanders, Twilder 2-16-06	Johnson, John 8-2-06 (12 Cases in Aug)	Verner, Lizzie 11-24-06
Edwards, Irma Jean 2-17-06	Askev, Michael 8-2-06	Cook (Jr.), George 11-26-06
Harrington, Myrtle 2-17-06	Frison, Lennell 8-4-06	Standafer, Eugene 11-27-06
Jones, Sharon 2-22-06	Turner, Kelsie 8-6-06	Kelsaw, Frank 11-28-06
Wilborn, Alma 2-22-06	Warren, Lavene 8-12-06	Kelsaw (Sr.), Eugene 12-27-06
Williams, Pandora 2-23-06	Mothudi, Baby Khadra Auhkan 8-13-06	Strickland, Edward 12-30-06
Mouton, Alphonso Jason 3-1-06 (9 Cases in Mar)	Johnson, Alberto 8-17-06	
Streeter, Willie (III) 3-1-06	Wilson, Charles 8-20-06	
Williams, Paul 3-6-06	Baker, Olivia S 8-23-06	
Cannon-Blocker, Bessie F 3-7-06	Patton, Margaret 8-26-06	
Gilliam, William (Sr.) 3-12-06	Alexander, Janice 8-28-06	
Grace, James 3-14-06	Rice, Gregory Lamar 8-28-06	
Mott, Curtis (Jr.) 3-14-06	Jessie, Leonard 9-3-06 (5 Cases in Sep)	
Spain, Mary 3-15-06	Johnson, Jennifer 9-9-06	
Smith, Otis 3-22-06	Williams, Bennie 9-13-06	
Fortham, Albert 4-6-06 (8 Cases in April)	Jackson, Decovan 9-29-06	

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— Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929 – April 4, 1968)

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"When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men would seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice."
—Martin Luther King, Jr.

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