

Neighborhoods Calling for an End to Violence

Fifth-annual march; first since murder solved

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An unsolved murder spurred on an annual march against violence for four years, but organizers will not stop marching now that the mystery is solved.

With neighborhood shootings surging last weekend, marchers saw reason to continue until real change comes.

For years, nobody came forward with enough information to solve the Nov. 20, 2002 murder of Asia Bell, a 23-year-old mother of four, by at least 17 bullets fired onto the porch of her home on North Mississippi and Jessup Street, also permanently blinding

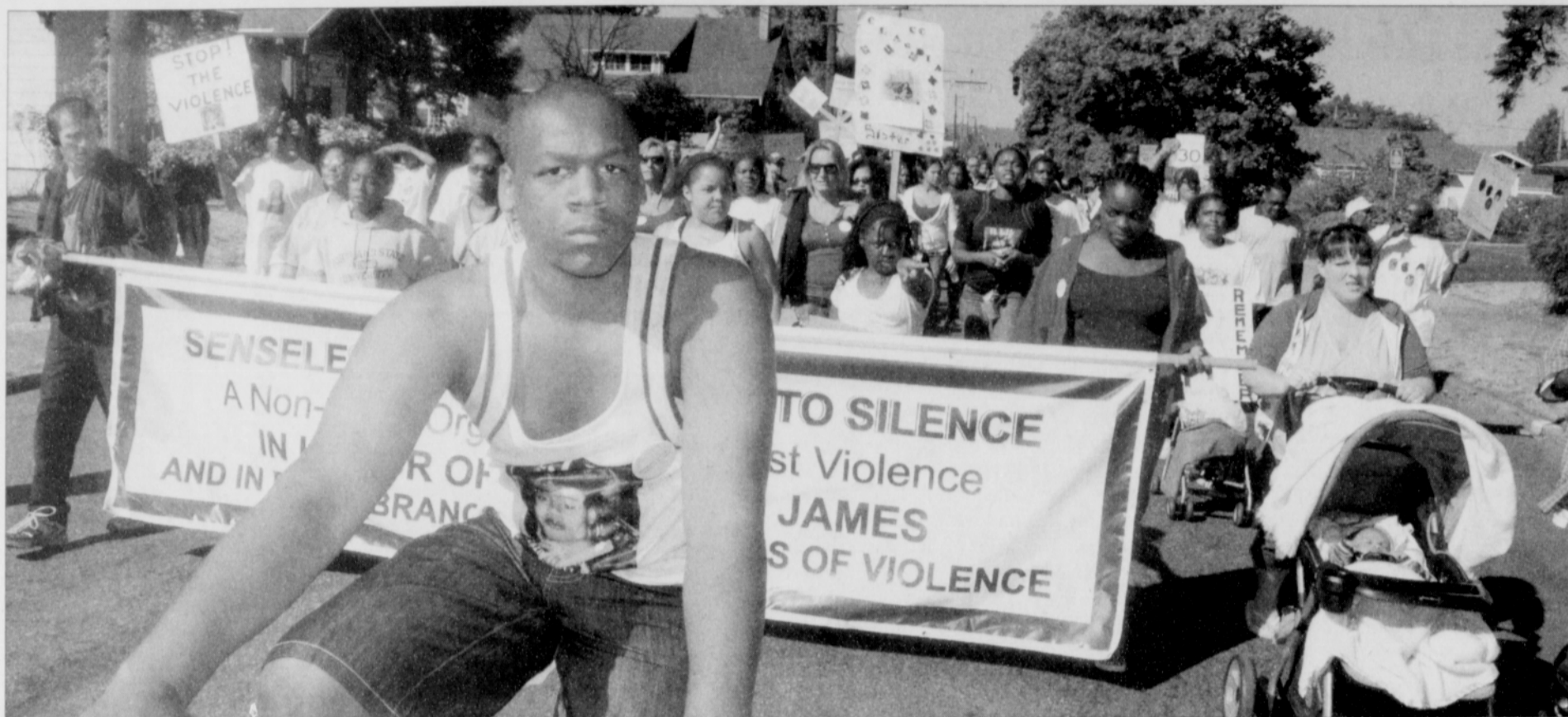


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Fifteen-year-old Kawontaye Bell, orphaned by the 2002 murder of Asia Bell, leads a march on Killingsworth Street to prevent violence.

her husband Tyrone James and wounding their friend Robert Millhouse. But, on March 9 of this year, four arrests were finally announced.

The victims' mother, key in organizing the march, experienced renewed confidence in the mission to bring about justice and an end to

violence.

"Now we really know why we're marching," says Perlia Bell, head of the grief-counseling group that organized the fifth-annual march. "It wasn't a sense of completion, but a sense of purpose."

Bell was especially distraught by the wave of violence over the

weekend, and her group Senseless Violence Leads to Silence already plans to march again next year on Sept. 6; call 503-421-0078 to volunteer.

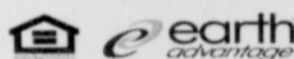
"It's time for people to be accountable, and for people in the community to come out and say enough's enough," Bell says.

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Obama Hits Big Locally

Touches on key national issues

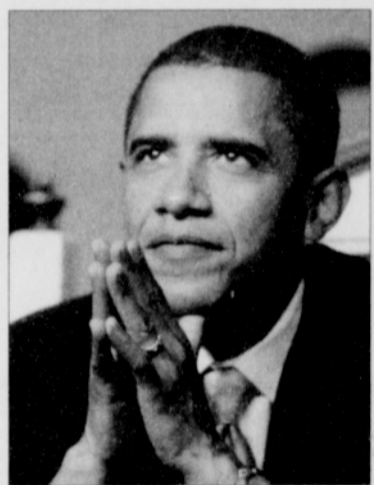
(AP) -- In his first Oregon visit since declaring his presidential candidacy, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama stressed the big themes with a few veiled jabs at rivals.

Making about \$200,000 for the campaign, the Oregon Convention Center visit drew an enthusiastic crowd of about 3,400, each paying at least \$25, others paying between \$250 and \$2,300 apiece for a pre-event fundraiser.

Obama avoided direct references to Oregon-specific issues during Friday's rally, hitting instead on broader themes, such as universal health care, a swift end to the war in Iraq, stricter fuel efficiency standards, an end to the genocide in Darfur and investments in early-childhood education.

And he repeated his plea for a move away from partisan politics and the red state/blue state divide.

"What we need is a transformation -- we need something entirely



Sen. Barack Obama

new, a new chapter in American history," Obama said.

Democratic and Republican administrations alike have failed at making real health-care reform, he said, invoking one of the high-profile setbacks of a rival, New York Sen. Hillary Clinton.

The next day, Oprah Winfrey rolled out the red carpet for him in California at a gala fundraiser attended by 1,500 high-wattage stars, each paying \$2,300.

Obama used his Portland stop to address charges that his experience, limited to three years in the Senate, is not enough to be president.

"Time served does not guarantee good judgment," he said. "A long resume doesn't speak to character."

He said he would seek to repair what he called America's damaged image after the Iraq war.

"A strong president is not afraid to talk to our adversaries and tell them where America stands," he said.

His Portland appearance drew a generally younger crowd, some saying they were devoted to Obama and others saying they weren't yet sure.

A group of black female educators from Portland grabbed spots in the front row, decked out in Obama T-shirts.

"We love Hillary, don't get me wrong, but we need to move beyond that," said Cynthia Harris, principal of Jefferson High School. "Obama is a breath of fresh air, not the same old, same old."

Interstate Name Change Studied

City commissioners voted Thursday to study a possible name change for Interstate Avenue.

Meetings next month provide an opportunity for public input on the name change, which is controversial for both the choice of the road and the new proposed name of civil-rights activist Cesar Chavez.

The New Seasons Market on what would be the corner of Cesar E. Chavez Boulevard and Rosa Parks Way (recently changed from Portland Boulevard) is supportive,

but some business owners along Interstate Avenue are opposed to the name change, because it would require them to change their busi-

ness names, letterhead and advertisements.

Urging people to learn about Chavez' contributions to worker rights in Oregon, proposition backers say renaming the street for the civil-rights leader would send a positive message to the young community.

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'Jena 6' Charged Reduced Amid racism, unequal justice protests

(AP) -- Prosecutors reduced an attempted murder charge against another of the "Jena Six," a group of black high school students in Louisiana whose criminal charges after the beating a white classmate drew protests of racism and unequal justice.

Robert Bailey Jr. pleaded not guilty Monday to aggravated battery and conspiracy to commit aggravated battery.

He was among five of the six teens originally charged as adults with attempted murder. The sixth was charged in juvenile court.

Mychal Bell, the only member of the "Jena Six" to be tried so far, was convicted of aggravated battery; the judge threw out his conspiracy conviction. Prosecutors also dropped the attempted

murder account to battery last week in the cases of Carwin Jones and Theo Shaw when they were arraigned.

That left Bryant Purvis the only youth yet to be arraigned and still charged as an adult with attempted second-degree murder.

The victim of the Dec. 4 beating, Justin Barker, was treated at a hospital for injuries and released the same day. The motive for the attack was never established, but it came amid tense race relations in Jena, a mostly white town of 3,000 in north-central Louisiana. Three nooses had been hung in a tree at the school earlier, a part of the campus students said was reserved for white students only. The students involved were briefly suspended.