



# The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

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## Week in The Review

### Standing Up for Equality

Tens of thousands of protesters rallied Thursday in Jena, Ark., against what they see as a double standard of prosecution for blacks and whites. The plight of the so-called Jena Six became a flashpoint for one of the biggest civil-rights demonstrations in years. See story, page A2.

### Protests in Myanmar

Thousands of people protested against the military government Myanmar Tuesday, the eighth day of street demonstrations in the country which was formerly known as Burma. President Bush announced new U.S. sanctions accusing the military dictatorship of imposing "a 19-year reign of fear" that denies basic freedoms of speech, assembly and worship.

### Minimum Wage to Rise

Oregon has announced a 15-cent-per-hour cost-of-living increase, effective at the end of this year, for minimum-wage workers. The increase to \$7.95 an hour is significantly higher than the federal minimum wage of \$5.85 an hour. See story, page A3.

### Food Bank Hurting

The Oregon Food Bank is hurting for donations as its warehouse shelves go empty. In the last few weeks, weekly offerings have dropped by 25-75 percent and statewide deliveries are down 200,000 pounds per week, officials said. See story, page A11.

### Shoe for American Indians

Nike Tuesday unveiled what it said is the first shoe designed specifically for American Indians, an effort aiming at promoting physical fitness in a population with high obesity rates. The company says the Air Native N7 is designed with a larger fit for the distinct foot shape of American Indians, and has a culturally specific look.

### School Theft Ring Busted

A Portland Public School District employee accused of an insider theft ring pleaded not guilty in court Tuesday. Police arrested Cristan Mocan, 24, as he got off of a plane returning from a honeymoon in Fiji last week. Two others also faced charges in the case.

### Race for the Cure Record

The Koman Race for the Cure drew nearly 50,000 people Sunday, a record for the annual Portland event raising money to fight and prevent breast cancer.

## Vanport Square Near Complete

### 24-Hour Fitness next in line for major MLK development

BY LEE PERLMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

"At this moment, things are looking great," Ray Leary says.

The reference is to the local African-American leader's Vanport Square, a major development of minority-owned business in the heart of northeast Portland's black community.

The first store coming to an entirely remolded block at 5225 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. will be the beauty supply outlet Living Color, set to open this month. Fourteen other commercial spaces in the block's 30,000 square foot structure have been sold and are expected to open by the end of December.

In addition, demolition has begun on what will be the site of Phase II of Vanport Square: the Pacific Northwest's first Magic Johnson 24-Hour Fitness facility, a signature sports fitness endeavor owned by the former Los Angeles Lakers star. It will take up an entire block north of Alberta Street on MLK with two gymnasiums and full line of athletic equipment.

Other businesses waiting to open in the first phase are Marco Shaw, owner and head chef of Fife restaurant, who will establish his new Hard Shell restaurant in Vanport; Alem Grebrehiwat, owner of the Queen of Sheba Ethiopian restaurant; Edwardo Norell, who will move his Norell Design bilingual sign business from his garage to Vanport; Laurie Cary Design; Nghi Tran's State Farm office; C.P.A.

Rick Harris; and Hung Kim's Living Color.

In a pioneering move, most of the new businesses will also own their sections of building, making Vanport Phase I, a commercial condominium.

Vanport Square is a triumph for Leary and his partner, northeast Portland resident Jeana Woolley, but a hard-fought one. When the Portland Development Commission selected them to develop the site in 1999, they were part of a development team that featured the Gerding-Edlen Co., creator of the Pearl District's five square block Brewery Blocks project, and one of the city's largest and most prolific developers.

The original plans were for a 500,000 square foot mega-project that included rental housing, town homes, retail and office, and a 60,000 square foot grocery. At the time, Leary wasn't even an independent agent; he was an employee of Adidas, for whom he had helped an outlet store on Northeast MLK and Alberta Street.

But when no major grocery or other anchor could be found, Gerding-Edlen dropped out. When Leary and Woolley secured a calling center to occupy the space, neighbors who had bought into the original concept felt betrayed; not only did they oppose the new plan, but some of them called for Leary and Woolley to be replaced as developers.

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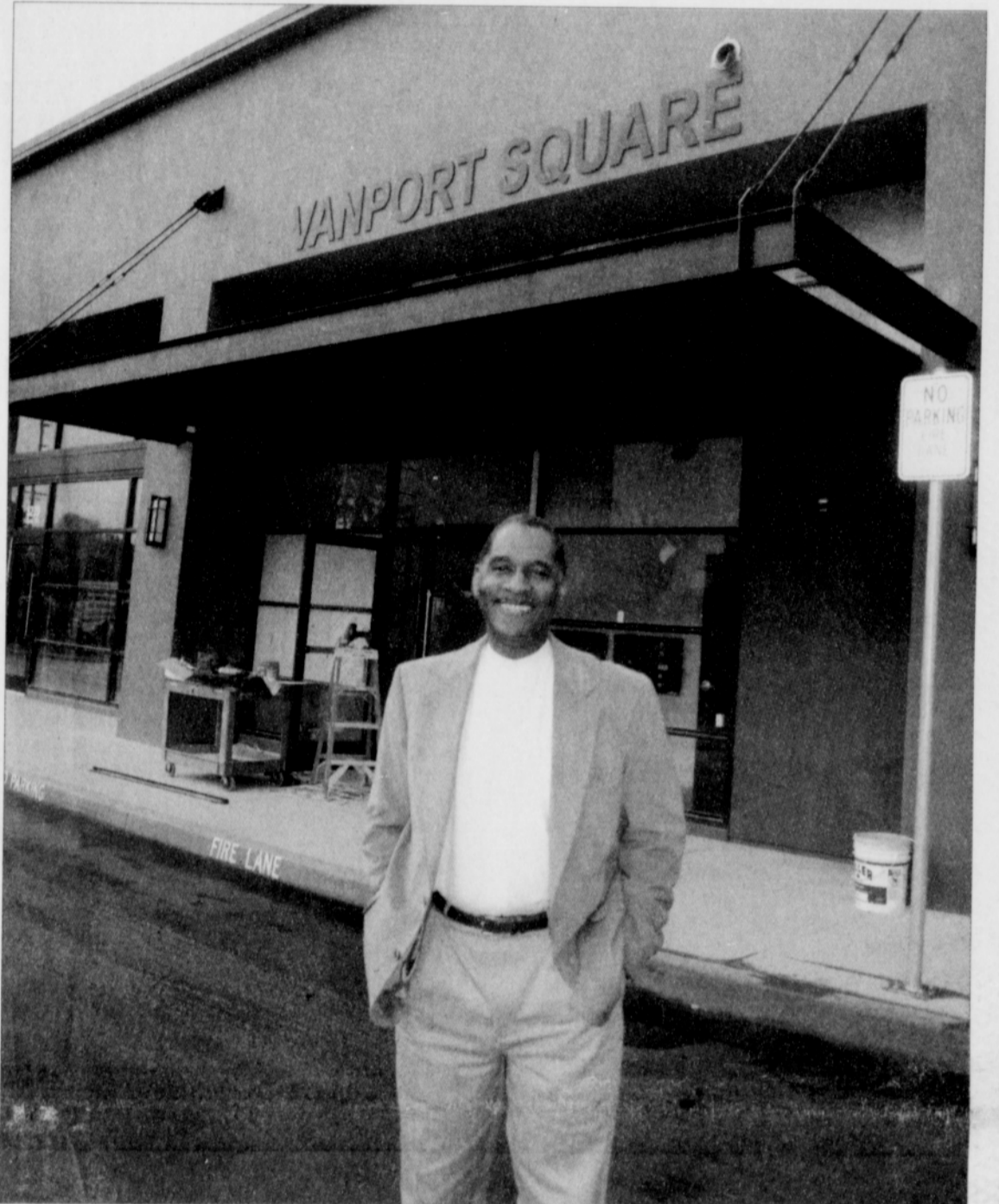


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Ray Leary stands next to his major development "Vanport Square," soon to open on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in the heart of the African American community.

## Diversity Embraced on Killingsworth

### Three new minority-owned restaurants open

BY RAYMOND RENDELMAN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's difficult to find two minority-owned businesses within a few blocks of one another these days on Mississippi Avenue or Alberta Street, havens for the African-American community a decade ago. But on North Killingsworth Street this year, a bumper crop of minority-owned restaurants has appeared.

The harvest of restaurants there is no accident, either. Harold's Barbecue owner Harold Harrison moved closer to the city center to take advantage of business-loan deals. E'Njoni Café owner Sonya Damtew sees Killingsworth as Portland's premiere area to celebrate immigrant community and Jamal's Café hopes to use the street to repeat the success of a similar restaurant that the family runs in a diverse part of Cleveland.

Numerous factors thus contribute to the surge in minority ventures, including targeted investment through organizations like the Portland Development Commission, a strong legacy of diversity in the area and still relatively low rents compared to the amount of pedestrian traffic.

Restaurants hope to attract a high volume to overcome large overhead costs associated with such a rapidly gentrifying area, and the newcomers to Killingsworth are off to a decent start.

Harold's drew the most immediate success, probably because Harrison had already tied his name



Wael and Atef Mousa welcome customers to their new restaurant, Jamal's Café, located at 300 N. Killingsworth St.

PHOTOS BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER



Harold Harrison, owner of Harold's Barbecue, 902 N. Killingsworth St., uses real smoke and fresh, natural meats to keep customers coming back.

with great barbecue in St. Johns. The enthusiastic customer comments that he proudly posts on his website don't misrepresent what you'll hear most people say as they leave the restaurant.

Although the neighborhood already has many popular barbecue spots, Harrison attributes his success to finding a street that lacked a "tribologist" who uses real smoke and fresh, natural meats.

Business has been slower for Jamal's over the past half year, the same amount of time Harold's has been open.

"So far it's going good, but we need more customers," says Jamal's Wael Mousa, whose uncle owns the restaurant. "People are coming back, though, because they like the food."

A small group of diehards has already discovered the impressive list of eight fish on the back of Jamal's menu. On the front menu, you'll find the standard set of Midwestern hot sandwiches and hamburgers that Mousa expects to be his bread and butter during the school year.

Money seems to be almost a non-issue for Damtew, on the other hand, as she opened E'Njoni's doors for the first time last month. Saying that if she earned anything, most of it would go to charity, she started the restaurant mostly as an experiment in community building.

After working with African refugees for 10 years, Damtew became sick of the formal natu-

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