

Week in
The Review

Economy Plunges

The Federal Reserve unexpectedly slashed a key interest rate by a bold three-fourths of a percentage point on Tuesday, responding to a global plunge in stock markets that heightened concerns about a recession. The Fed signaled that further rate cuts were likely.

Record Set Straight

Presidential candidate Barack Obama tried to correct a misconception that he's a Muslim at a rally in South Carolina Monday, setting the record straight from an attack designed to play into prejudices and fears of terrorism. See story, page A3.

Thousands Honor King

From Highland Christian Church in Portland to the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, thousands of Americans gathered for Martin Luther King observances Monday, honoring the civil rights leader's commitment to peace and equality and noting the importance of his legacy in this election year.

Noose Cover Outrage

Ten days after a Golf Channel anchor was suspended for using "lynch" in commentary on Tiger Woods, an editor was fired Friday for illustrating the controversy with a noose on the cover of Golfweek magazine. See story, page A2.

Terrorism Conviction

Jose Padilla, a Brooklyn-born convert to Islam who became one of the first Americans designated "an enemy combatant," was sentenced to 17 years and four months in prison by a federal judge in Miami on Tuesday for his conviction on charges that he conspired to help Islamic terrorists around the world.

Calorie Counting Ordered

Reworking a rule for compliance, the New York City Board of Health voted Tuesday to revive a plan struck down by a judge last September to force restaurant chains to post calorie counts for their foods right on the menu, hoping the fat-filled truth will shock people into eating healthier.

Australia Drenched

Monsoonal rains in Queensland, Australia have caused massive flooding over two thirds of the state, leading to estimations of up to \$1 billion in damages and the declaration of a disaster zone.

PRESORTED
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 PORTLAND OR
 PERMIT
 NO. 1610

Oregon Newspaper Project
 UO Library
 1299 University of Oregon
 Eugene, OR 97403-1299

Cutting-Edge Candidates

Young, minority voices represent change

BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland is lucky to see even one emerging black voice in many election cycles. But this May will bring at least three young African-Americans to contend for three seats opening in state and local politics.

The candidates share a progressive passion for social advancement and equal access, and a firsthand understanding of what it's like to be disenfranchised.

"To give a voice to the voiceless is one of those things that to me, is just common sense," says Harold C. Williams Two, who filed last week for a seat on the Portland City Council, to be decided in the May 20 primary. "If we don't do it, who will?"

In another Portland City Commissioner race, John Branam, 33, sees a political role for his bi-ethnicity and points to his professional experience as development director for Portland Public Schools.

"That's useful when you're talking about providing leadership for a diverse community," he says.

Cyreena Boston finds herself in the state's political arena as she seeks election to Oregon House District 45 in outer northeast Portland and Parkrose. She too doesn't shy away from forefronting her cultural background when relevant to advancing a cause.

"I'm confronted three ways, because I'm young and I'm a woman and I'm an African American, and what it does, is it creates a phenomenal opportunity to have conversations that ordinarily may not happen," Boston says. "It's time for that next crop of leaders to come forward (because) we have systems of government that can enact policies of discrimination and hatred just as quickly as policies that help people."

Boston, 27, shows that her youth doesn't signal any inability to affect change by packing her hours with social causes. She works for the county analyzing health policy and on Central City Concern's business advisory council to increase opportunities for lifting people out of poverty.

All three candidates promote better schools, health care and jobs.

Boston speaks of the need for diver-



PHOTO BY RAYMOND RENDLEMAN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
City Council candidate Harold C. Williams Two makes a point during an action meeting on the Portland and Multnomah County bill of rights for children.



City Council candidate John Branam answers a campaign call just outside the Albina Press coffeehouse on the corner of North Blandena.



Cyreena Boston is running for state representative.

sity in the Oregon Legislature, citing the situation becoming increasingly dire as African-American Sen. Avel Gordly will step down from office at the end of her term.

"If a candidate like me is not given a voice in the law-making process, many people that are young, many people that are of color and many people that are different will not have

a voice," she says.

Boston sums up her work ethic by saying, "I may not always be right or perfect, but you cannot question the love that I have for where I've lived my life."

In his City Council race, Branam says political leaders today need to understand the perspective of trying to make it as a young person, saying, "Our creative-class sector represents a tremendous opportunity for Portland to grow and prosper, and I think that it's that much more valuable to have someone on council who understands what that means."

He sees significant challenges ahead with respect to the equitable distribution of educational resources and services to the 95 neighborhoods that make up the city of Portland.

Branam credits Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's rapid rise to national prominence for giving

continued ▼ on page A3

Wealth Gap Makes Case for Reparations

To correct legacy
of housing
discrimination

Historic housing and lending discrimination against black Americans has created a significant discrepancy in their overall wealth — a gap that may take reparations to close, according to research published by two Oregon State University faculty members.

Jonathan Kaplan, associate professor and chair of the Department of Philosophy, and Andrew Valls, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, argue for a shift from viewing reparations in the framework of slavery to emphasizing relatively recent housing discrimination practices which continue to put people of color at a disadvantage.

The average black American has only about 15 percent as much wealth as the average white American, even

though black Americans earn about 60 percent as much as white Americans. And at every income level, white Americans have much more wealth than black.

Wealth is a measure of a person's total net worth — essentially, their assets

minus their debts. For people in the middle-class, homes tend to be by far the biggest asset. And a large fraction of the black/white "wealth gap" is related to the very different home ownership rates of white and black Americans, and

the differences in the value of homes owned by black and white Americans.

Kaplan and Valls argue that this situation was created by government programs that deliberately made it much more difficult for black Americans to acquire homes at the same time they made it much easier for white Americans to acquire homes.

Before the creation of the Home Owner's Loan Corporation in 1933 and its permanent successor, the Federal Housing Authority in 1934, relatively few Americans owned their homes. The FHA made home ownership possible for many Americans by introducing low down-payment, long-term fixed-interest, self-amortizing loans. In 1938, the creation of the Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae") provided a market for FHA loans, increasing liquidity and further decreasing lender risk.

As Kaplan explains, black Ameri-

continued ▼ on page A3



Extreme discrimination is documented by this World War II era photograph of a luncheonette sign in the Kenton neighborhood of north Portland. (Photo courtesy of the Oregon Historical Society)