

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## Oregon Legacy of Education Advocacy

### African Americans draw attention to inequities

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Black United Front leader Ron Herndon stood on a desk at a 1982 schools rally, leading members of the African-American community in chants of "You'd better go home because we ain't." It was one of several similar demonstrations against the closure of Harriet Tubman Middle School. In this instance, school-board member James Fenwick picked up his papers and left, as they suggested.

Herndon, a 1968 graduate of Reed College, also organized a one-day boycott of the schools by 4000 African-American students to force the school board to allow Tubman to stay open. Leaders hoped that such protests would draw attention to the Portland Public School Board decisions that avoided addressing the needs of minority and low-income students. The problem was particularly irksome because low test scores plagued African-American students.

In the 1960s and through 1979, the Portland school board responded to education issues related to blacks by following the blatantly racist busing practices. Mandatory busing to distant schools affected African-American students who often traveled far from their homes to attend integrated schools; white students attended their closest neighborhood school.



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Ron Herndon leads a 1982 protest against the closure of Harriet Tubman Middle School to draw attention to racial inequities in Portland.

With busing, however, test scores did not improve significantly and continued to be a source of frustration for Herndon and other members of the community.

Since his Reed College days, Ron Herndon has drawn persistent attention to educational inequities in Portland. Among his recent accomplishments are directing the Albina

Head Start program and co-leading the Education Crisis Team, a citizen group that confronts the school board over the issue of academic achievement among low-income

and minority students.

In 2002, the Portland Tribune revealed that because of his activism Herndon was one of many activists on whom a Portland Police

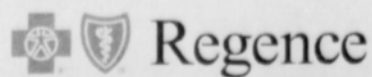
intelligence unit kept watch throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The intelligence unit maintained and updated these files long after it became illegal for them to do so.



Frederick Douglass,  
Rosa Parks and  
Martin Luther King, Jr.  
all had a dream that  
changed human kind.

We celebrate our local black heroes who live by this dream today. Regence recognizes their vision, passion and contributions to the state of Oregon.

May we continue their legacy of compassion and tolerance in celebration of Black History Month.



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