

**PAN**  
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# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## Facing Wartime Challenges:

### While labor demands bring opportunity

World War II was both an intense challenge and a significant opportunity for blacks in Portland.

Acute labor shortages and a booming wartime industrial job market expanded Portland's African-American population from 2,565 in 1940 to 25,000 in 1944. The demand for labor, along with the wartime Fair Employment Practices Commission, buffered to some extent the racism that permeated Portland's private industry and local unions.

In her memoirs, Kathryn Hall Bogle, recalled her wartime experience working as one of the first black women to hold an office position in government at the U.S. Employment Office.

There, Hall witnessed wartime racism as well as new opportunities offered blacks in the public sector. For instance, Hall recalled blacks being turned down for specialized jobs they had worked all their lives including stevedores, truck drivers, and laundry workers because of union laws that did not allow blacks to join



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Signs similar to this one in 1943 across the street from the Kenton Theater in north Portland popped up all around town during World War II.

their ranks. At the same time, blacks were hired freely for common labor and in all shipyards except the Albina Shipyard, which was privately owned. Training programs for shipyard skills and shipyard crafts were also offered to blacks and whites alike.

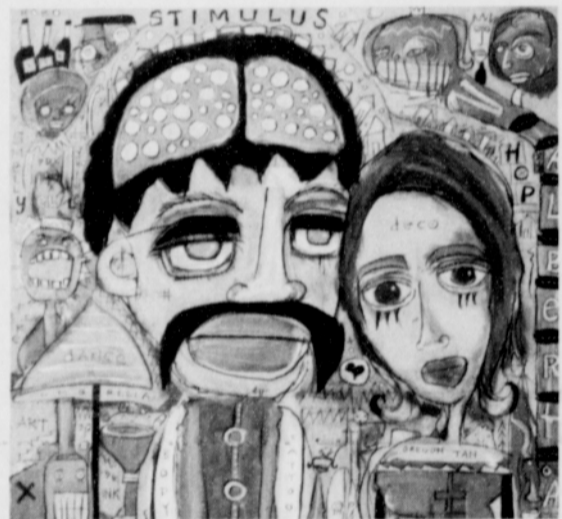
Racism against blacks contin-

ued through the wartime era in the job market and in urban housing standards. Blacks did not sit by idly, however.

Several agencies, including the Portland branch of the NAACP, the Urban League, the Office of Vocational Opportunity, and the Committee on Inter-Racial Principles and Practices, established and contin-

ued to operate already established institutions in Portland that sought to provide a voice for Portland's black residents. Through today these groups continue to represent Portland's black community through education, employment programs, legal representation, and the promotion of equality and civil rights.

## GUARDINO GALLERY



February Show: Chris Haberman, Jennifer Mercede & Mario Robert

Paintings & Mixed Media Assemblages  
Pictured: Chris Haberman's "Alberta Art Hop"

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## Novel Depicts Horror of Lynching

### 'Incognegro' goes undercover

It's become a cliché to say that both lynching and "passing" are parts of the African-American experience most Americans, including and perhaps especially African Americans, would like to forget.

However, the recent Jena 6 case—in which nooses were found under a tree where black teenagers were allowed to sit near a Louisiana high school—have brought up the ugly history of lynching again.

"Passing"—in which light-skinned African Americans would,

in effect, secretly cross enemy lines, disguising their true identities—has, interestingly enough, found new currency in post-modern America, with famous light-skinned blacks now being able to publicly claim their intra-racial "diversity," in effect refusing to take a side in the classic divide.

Taking a side is what this graphic novel, a fictional tribute to NAACP leader Walter White's death-defying lynching investigations almost a century ago, is all about.

Harlemite Zane Pinchback's secret identity is "Incognegro," the muckraking investigative columnist for the best black newspaper in



town, The New Holland Herald (an obvious play on The New York Amsterdam News). He's light-

skinned enough to "pass," so he can investigate lynchings close-up, literally risking his neck in the process. Although he wants to place his real byline into the Harlem Renaissance vortex swirling around him, he's summoned back to wear the mask one more time to free his brother, who's been framed for the murder of a white woman.

Author Mat Johnson beautifully alternates humor and horror, turning even a profanity-filled phrase as easily as blood flowed from the lynching trees. Illustrator Warren Pleece's simplicity in draftsmanship keeps attention on the story and characters, not pretty pictures.

## 'The Inspirational Legacy of Al Forthan'

continued ▲ from Metro

thought to check his car before he sped away.

"The experience knocked me so off balance," Forthan said, "my body went into some kind of shock. I couldn't stop shaking for days

afterwards. I knew then that things were out of control in my life. It was time to get some real help."

Several months later, while once again in jail, an intake coordinator and counselor from the Men's Residential Center of Volunteers of America Oregon entered Forthan's life and he was admitted to the treatment program.

During the next few intense months, the training he received helped him recognize how his false perceptions about himself and his world had distorted his thinking. For the first time in his life, he began to see hope for recovery as he found the understanding and strength to make some permanent changes.

After completing the program, Forthan enrolled in the Portland Community College and earned an Associates degree in Alcohol and Drug Counseling.

He was a model student, on the honor roll and the dean's list. He

did his internship at MRC and on Dec. 23, 1996, he received an early holiday gift—he was the first MRC alum to be hired as a fulltime Certified Addiction Counselor.

"The Inspirational Legacy of Al Forthan" film premiere on March 13 is a fundraiser for the Al Forthan Memorial Recovery Scholarship. Three \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded this year, one specifically to a senior from Jefferson High School (Forthan's alma mater) and one specifically to a senior from Centennial High School. The third is open to all Portland Public high-school seniors.

Ticket admission price is \$10 (sliding scale if you're in treatment) and includes refreshments. Doors will open at 7 p.m. with the movie beginning at 7:30 p.m. The Hollywood Theatre is located at 4122 N.E. Sandy Blvd. Tickets can be purchased at the door or by calling Julia at 503-802-0299.

## Empowerment Center

continued ▲ from Metro

poverty, violence in general, racism, and inequities of class, gender, and sexual orientation."

Rotary President Dick Clark said the club is deeply committed to creating "a center that will be a legacy of caring for the most vulnerable among us—those who are not safe in their own homes because of the violence that lives there with them."

The Interstate Corridor of

North Portland, with its easy access to public transportation, has been identified as the first choice for the location of the center.

A property has not yet been found, but a search committee is working to explore all options for a space expandable up to 15,000 square feet.

To get involved in making this center a reality, contact the Bradley-Angle House at 503-238-1672 or the Rotary Club of Portland at 503-228-1542.

## Have you seen me?

1-800-THE-LOST

Endangered Runaway



JESSICA BANKS MOHAMMUD

Current Age: 15 Date Missing: Feb. 9, 2008  
Missing From: Ingleside, IL Both photos are of Jessica.



JANICE BOZEMAN

Current Age: 15 Date Missing: Feb. 9, 2008  
Missing From: Chicago, IL Both photos are of Janice.

If you have any information please contact:  
The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678)

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by the Portland Observer Newspaper.



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