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Writing from the Heart

A writing workshop helps adults and others break out of isolation and other barriers

See Arts & Entertainment, page A7

Use of Force Audit

A report on the use of force by Portland police draws both praise and alarm

See story, page A3



The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

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Week in The Review

Born in the USA



State officials in Hawaii on Monday said they have once again checked and confirmed that President Barack Obama was born in Hawaii and is a natural-born American citizen, and therefore meets a key constitutional requirement for being president. Pundits like Rush Limbaugh keep claiming that Obama was born outside the U. S.

Court Nominee Advances

The Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday voted to approve Sonia Sotomayor as the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice over nearly solid Republican opposition, paving the way for a historic confirmation vote next week. See story, page A2.

Bank Branches to Close

Bank of America will soon cut about 10 percent of its 6,100 branches across the country, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday. Bank officials said that as more people bank online and through their cell phones, fewer physical branches are needed.



Hall of Famers Inducted

Former left fielders Jim Rice and Rickey Henderson were inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y. on Sunday along with the late Joe Gordon who grew up in Portland graduating from Jefferson High School. See sports, page A9.

Vick Reinstated to NFL

Former NFL Quarterback Michael Vick, free after serving 18 months in prison for running a dogfighting ring, was reinstated with conditions by NFL commissioner Roger Goodell on Monday. He could participate in regular-season games as early as October. See sports, page A9.

Former Prosecutor Sentenced for Theft

A former Multnomah County prosecutor has been sentenced to two years in prison for stealing a dying woman's house. Randy Richardson was convicted of aggravated theft by deception and one count of obtaining the execution of a document by deception.

Jackson Doctor Investigated

Authorities searched the sprawling Las Vegas home and medical office of Michael Jackson's personal doctor Tuesday, seeking documents as part of a manslaughter investigation into the singer's death.

Hot! Hot! Hot!

PDX records fall as temps hover past 100

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Portland metro area has been hit with one of the worst periods of high summer heat in decades.

Monday's high of 103 degrees beat the old record of 102 set in 1958 and an expected 104 degrees was forecast for Tuesday with 105 degrees or even 107 degrees possible for Wednesday. The all-time Portland high is 107.

People were scrambling for shady spots, air conditioned buildings, and tall glasses of fluids.

The National Weather Service issued an excessive heat advisory. It urged people to drink fluids, stay out of the sun, and look out more vulnerable people who could be adversely affected by heat stroke and other health related problems.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Sara Ryan stays cool with her son, Lochlan, at the fountain in Peninsula Park in north Portland as temperatures hover near 100 degrees.

At Peninsula Park in north Portland, children and adults found relief by walking through fountains.

For Lisa Grisby, coming to the park is a familiar way to beat the heat. She used to take her own daughter to the park whenever the temperatures shot up, and on Monday was doing the

same for her grandchildren. "Just find a tree," she said, lounging in the shade while watching her three grandchildren. "When it gets too hot just

move to another tree." Her 6-year-old granddaughter, Jaliyah Elliott, swatted flies

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Urban League Reports Disparities

Inequities grow worse, study finds

Seven months after the inauguration of the first black president, a statewide report on the condition of African Americans in Oregon reveals that black Oregonians remain at or near the bottom of every meaningful social and economic measure.

African Americans in Oregon have significantly higher infant mortality rates, are more likely to live in poverty, have higher levels of unemployment, are half as likely to own their own homes and are far more likely to die



Marcus C. Mundy

of diseases such as diabetes than their white counterparts.

The State of Black Oregon was published Monday by the Urban League of Portland for the first time in 17 years.

The report contains a stark inventory of statistics that

show a persistent gap in living standards between black and white Oregonians — a gap that is growing wider as a result of the current economic downturn.

"During the last eight years, the poverty gap in America and in this state has continued to grow," says Marcus C. Mundy, president and chief executive officer of the Urban League of Portland.

"If there's a poverty gap for Americans generally, the African-American poverty gap widens to chasm proportions. This flies in the face of the ideals our country stands for, and simply should not be acceptable here in Oregon or anywhere else."

Among the reports findings:

• Median income of households headed by blacks in Oregon is less than two thirds that of white households — showing virtually no improvement since this study was last compiled in 1990.

• 38 percent of Oregon's African-American children live in households with incomes below the poverty level; and 60 percent live in households with income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.

• Black children born in Oregon are 50 percent more likely to suffer from low birth weight; and infant mortality in the state is 50 percent higher for children of black mothers.

• Drop out rate in Oregon high schools is about twice as high for African-American students, with drop-out rates approach-

ing 7 percent for black students, vs. three percent for white students. Additionally only 68 percent of black student graduate on time from Oregon high schools, compared to 85 percent of white students. Another alarming statistic: during the 2007-08 school year, black high school students were nearly twice as likely as white students to be expelled or suspended from Oregon schools.

• Although African Americans represent just seven percent of Portland's population, a disproportionate percentage of the city's homicide victims are black (45 percent compared to 35 percent of homi-

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Justice Anchored in Culture Native women get life back

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

While serving a 60 month sentence for assault, Elisha Big Back used to watch Native American women cycle in and out of the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville.

Often unable to meet their basic needs on the outside, the inmates fell into the same bad habits that landed them in prison in the first place.

Incarcerated Native American women only account for small amount of the state's prison population, only 41 women in total, but the challenges they face on the road to recovery are hefty. Luckily for them, there's help.

For nine years, Red Lodge Transition Services has been there to help native women reestablish their cultural foundations and set them on the right path.

Red Lodge was started by volunteers administering Native American religious services at Coffee Creek who realized that it was crucial that these women have a support network when they got out prison, lest they



Drew Lowley and Jessica Rojas help out with an art show as volunteers with Red Lodge Transition Services, a non-profit group that helps incarcerated native women reestablish their cultural foundations.

fall again, according to Carma Cocoran, a board member for the organization.

"I think the biggest message about Red Lodge is that we're about restorative justice in everyway," said Cocoran. "We want to bring them back to com-

munity, back to tradition, back to culture, back to spirituality."

Any inmate who does a long stretch in prison can have a hard time adjusting to the outside world.

Cocoran remembers one woman she picked up who had

just finished a lengthy sentence who nervously clutched the door handle as a world that had changed dramatically zipped past her in the car ride from prison.

Red Lodge provides women with a positive social

network they can rely on as they navigate a world very different from prison. It helps them secure housing, find clothing, get food boxes and other temporary services, and begin the process to regain custody of their children.

"The overall goal is to one not to return to prison, but also to gain self sufficiency," said Cocoran.

Big Back points out that having a transition service for Native American women is vital because of their unique circumstances.

Other transitions services have a religious component, which is a non-starter for natives raised traditionally, she said. Also, Native American women typically don't have a steady family or social network to fallback on that isn't rife with domestic abuse and alcoholism, she added.

"They come out with all these ideas of how they are going to do better," she said of released women. But without support they founder, she added. "It's

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39 years of community service