

Year in Review

The Portland Observer looks back at some of the top stories of 2009

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First black President marks eventful year

continued **▲** from Front

ing for an overhaul of the nation's healthcare system. The nation still faces high unemployment; is embroiled in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and its budget deficit is mounting.

In the state that helped push him over the edge to victory in the Democratic Party primaries, Obama's young presidency has changed the way some Oregonians think about their country. For others, it has confirmed what they knew all along.

"I think that there is a shift in perspective," says Melissa Kerry, a conservation coordinator for Portland Public Schools.

Kerry said having Obama in charge has allowed more innovative ideas to spring up. She thinks that cities have better opportunities to take initiatives with resource conservation and more environmentally-oriented design, knowing that they have a partner in Washington.



'I don't really think race matters.'

— Matthew Cheramy

'Country has made incredible strides'

— Geoff Kelly



Sitting at a bus stop on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Dennis Hudson says that he feels nothing has changed. Holding a plastic bag with a hand set in a cast, he explained that he feels

that not enough is being done for people in the U.S., and too much for immigrants and people overseas.

"There's a lot of people here that need help," Hudson says. "You can't get housing if you have a record."

Walking up the same street while carrying bags of food, Huey Martin and Rita Pierce are still clearly in Obama's corner.

"He is making change," says Martin. "But it's a long process," adds Pierce.

"We love you Barack Obama," exclaims Martin before scurrying along.

A few blocks over on Northeast Alberta Street, Matthew Cheramy explains that, for him, Obama's election didn't change the way he sees his country. Instead, he sees the election of the first African American president as a fulfillment of the rapid change the U.S. has undergone in recent decades.

"I don't really think race matters," he says.

Geoff Kelly says that having Obama as president signaled to him that the country, or at least parts of it, had made incredible strides on racial progress.

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