

# EMPOWERING PORTLAND

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"We have been very very focused on those recommendations and working to implement those recommendations. We have also been focused on engaging and helping our community to have the capacity to advocate for themselves."

Annual State of Black Oregon policy briefs take a deeper look at the issues and update the data.

"Not much had improved, as a matter of fact, and in key areas, things had gotten worse. That really reinforced our resolve," she said. "We want policies in the city, the county and state that are focused on outcome, and improving outcomes for the African-American community, other communities of color and other vulnerable communities."



An archive photo from around 1945 shows Edwin C. Berry, the first Urban League of Portland executive director.

Purcell said all of these issues, including high unemployment rates, barriers to housing, health disparities, education, and the lack of youth jobs, are contributing to a real crisis that

must be dealt with immediately.

"We have to demand accountability from our policy makers to address these issues," she said. "Not only educate, but to be one of the vehicles in the community that bring people together so they can fashion solutions and work together to make those solutions become a reality."

This is why the Urban League is so important today, she said.

"I think that our community is not the same as it was in 1945, and it certainly is not the same as it was 20-years-ago."

According to Purcell, gentrification has fractured the cohesiveness of Portland's African-American population.

"This has created a challenge for all of us," she said. "The majority of African Americans no longer live in north and northeast Portland."

Housing discrimination historically concentrated black populations in one part of the city, which Purcell said created unintended beneficial outcomes of a strong cohesion, with strong institutions.

Today, the Urban League has needs that are as great as they have ever been, she said.

"The last 20-years have seen a displacement and dispersal to some degree of our community, and I think it is a challenge for all of us to make sure we are still able to serve our community that now lives in east county, in the 'numbers,' and in Washington County and Gresham."

"The future of the Urban League is growing in strength, growing in capacity, and growing in our ability to serve the needs of our community," said Purcell.

"The Urban League is here to help strengthen our community through advocacy and through service," said Purcell. "That is what we want to do, and we invite the support of everybody to help us in that charge."



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