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# Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

# LOCAL NEWS

## Growing Up Biracial

### Portland author inspires with best-selling book

BY MINDY COOPER  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Although she desperately wanted to fit in, when best-selling author Heidi W. Durrow first moved to Portland, she remembers what it felt like to be an outsider and unseen by those around her.

"What was so frustrating to me as a kid was that I felt like my life and my experience was inexplicable," said Durrow, who grew up struggling with her identity as a biracial girl. "I came to Portland in 1980, and I remember feeling that this was a landscape that I didn't belong in, and yet, I wanted to desperately."

Years later, her voice has been heard, with her debut novel *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* being read in book clubs throughout the country and becoming a *New York Times* best seller after winning the 2008 Bellwether Prize for Fiction, an award which recognizes work that addresses issues of social justice.

Her novel has also been selected for the 2012 Multnomah County Everybody Reads event, which begins in March and encourages residents of the city, by reading the same book, to talk with each other about issues that matter.

Set in northeast Portland in the 1980s, the book is a coming of age story about a young girl Rachel who undergoes an adventure to find her place within society and escape the categories of race thrust upon her.

The first chapter alone references the now closed Wonder Bread Bakery in north Portland and the annual



Heidi W. Durrow, Portland author of the book *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, recounts her life experiences growing up biracial and what it felt like to be an outsider.

Rose Festival.

"To imagine a whole story and all of these characters I made up in my mind in the imagination of other people is an incredible honor," she said. "My hope is that the story, set in the 1980s Portland, will generate lively discussions about identity and belonging in my beloved hometown."

Although not yet a published author or novelist when she was young, Durrow said she was one of those kids who would save her money to buy notebooks with spe-

cial things on the front. "I also loved stationary, and I was a big letter writer as a kid," she said. "A lot of that had to do with the fact that we lived overseas."

With her dad in the Air force, Durrow said her family was constantly moving around the world. She lived in Germany and Turkey and would visit Denmark, where she would go to stay with her mother's family. "I think it was very fortunate we got to live in a lot of different

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## Parent's Night on Equity in Schools

To support the success of African-American and other students of color within the Portland community, a parent's night will be held at the Grant High School library in northeast Portland on Friday, March 2 at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting will give parents

and educators the chance to discuss district changes and gather information about changes within Portland Public Schools and their impacts on African American children. Resources and information about college scholarship opportunities will also be available at the

event.

The goal of the event is to incorporate a new 'culture of respect' that will focus on equity access to academic achievement for all students from all walks of life.

For more information, call Khandice Lawrence at 503-408-1121.