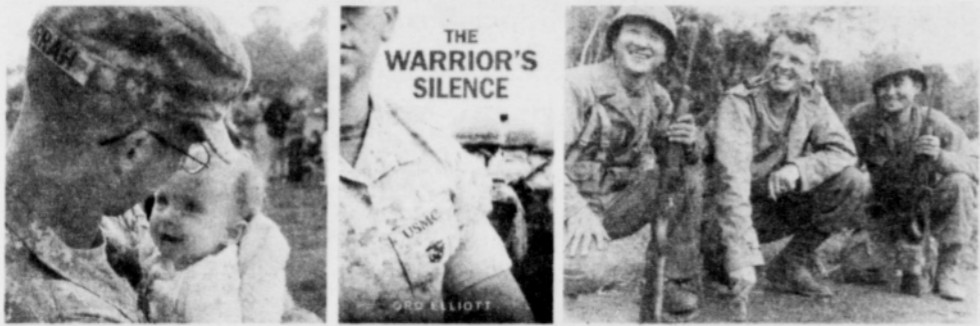


The INSIDE



Salute to Our Veterans

The Portland Observer gives thanks to all current and former members of the Armed Forces on this Veterans Day 2012.

We deeply appreciate the sacrifices you have made and honor your dedicated and loyal service to the country.

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Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?

LOCAL NEWS

Paths to Success

Accomplished professionals give back at SEI

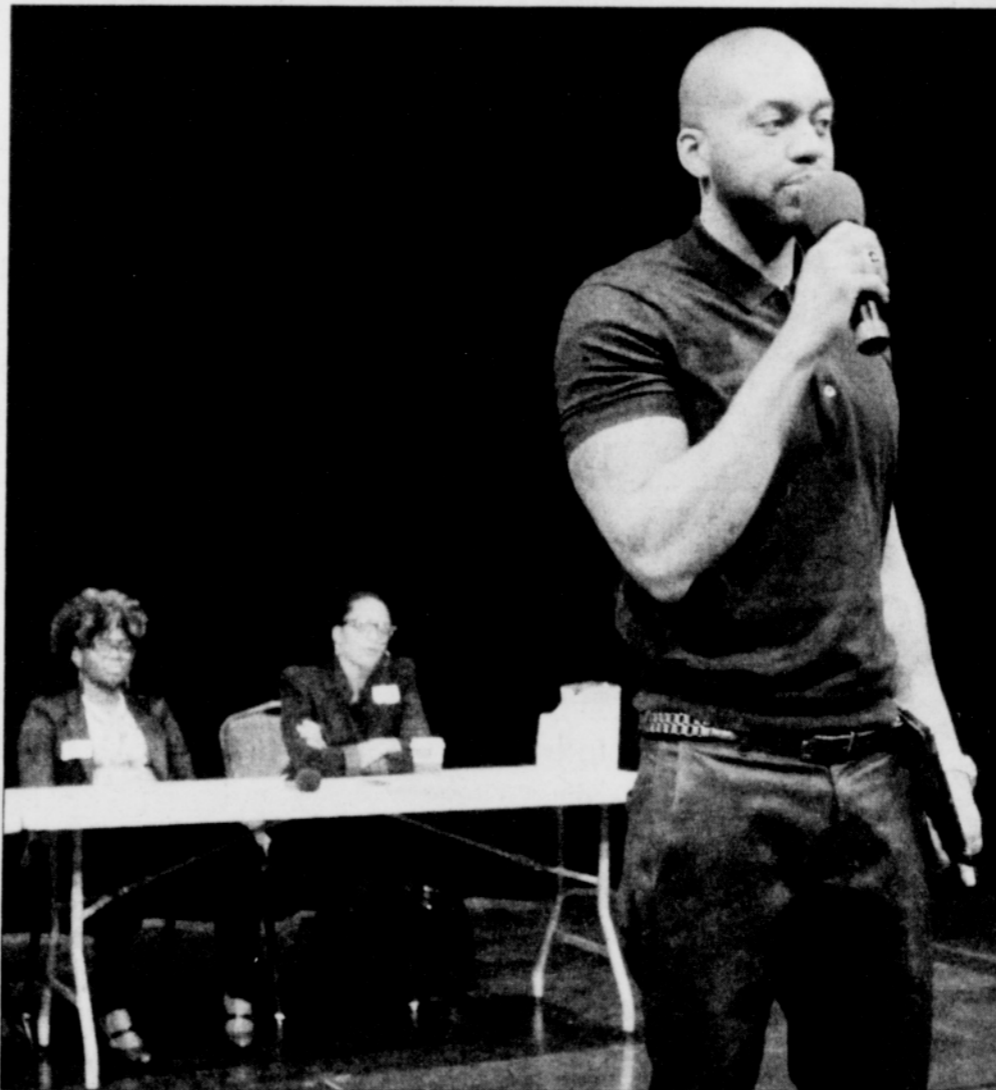


PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

New York author Mitchell Jackson returns home to Portland to talk about his local roots and inspire students at Self Enhancement, Inc. to reach for their goals.

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

"There's a lot of different ways in which you can become successful," Tony Hopson, president of Self Enhancement, Inc. told a group of students at a panel discussion Friday inside the school auditorium where four SEI alumni spoke about their paths to professionalism.

"You do not have to be an athlete or an entertainer," he said, "but you do have to become educated."

Education, finding your gift, falling down, getting up and persevering were themes all speakers touched on, but it was Mitchell Jackson's story that fell closest to home.

The smartly dressed author of "Oversoul," a collection of short

stories and essays on growing up in north and northeast Portland, may have surprised his young audience when they learned that he once sat where they did.

The 37-year-old, dressed head-to-toe in black, said he had few intentions of ever becoming an author when he was a young man living on Northeast Sixth Avenue and Mason Street.

Some of his early life impressions began looking out the window of his home and watching his mother disappear into the neighborhood behind the unfamiliar doors of a crack cocaine addiction.

Attending SEI when it was located on Northeast Weidler Street, Jackson said he learned focus and

perseverance, but it was through basketball that he believed he would make his escape. He transferred to Jefferson High School to play on the school's reputable hoop team, but when Division I college recruits failed to notice him, he chose to continue playing nearby at PCC.

In the early 1990s when Portland was at the height of America's "war on drugs," Jackson was a young college student who began dealing dope. In his junior year, he got caught and was sent to prison for 16 months.

When he got out, Jackson was hopeful when he learned he could go back to school. He returned to Portland State University where he ultimately walked away with a Masters degree in Creative Writing.

"I found something I was finally passionate about," said Jackson, who now lives in New York City as a teacher at New York University and editor of a lifestyle magazine, "And I think you guys are going to have that too," he told students.

"It's going to be a feeling in you," continued the Portland native, "It's going to be booming in you."

Jackson went on to tell students that it won't be easy. People will reject you. He read three rejection letters he received from publishers trying to get somebody to buy his book.

Wow, I thought I could write, he recalled thinking. Eventually, he found his way as an author. His ebook collection explores topics like literacy, black manhood, love and relationships, the prison system, mother and son bonds, and the gentrification of urban cities.

Jackson's novel, "The Residue Years," will be released by Bloomsbury USA in the spring of 2013.

"If you keep persevering, someone is going to reward you for that perseverance," said Jackson.

Forum Tackles Broken Families

"Where is my father?" Children in 30 percent of all U.S. households ask this question according to a survey by the National Center for Fathering. The epidemic of

absentee fathers and the resulting damage to the nation's social fabric will be discussed by local and national leaders at a conference, Father-Shift, to be held in

Portland, Thursday and Friday, Nov. 15-17.

Speakers include Pastor Mark

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