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# Fred Meyer

What's on your list today?.

## LOCAL NEWS



PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Verna Glass looks to the treasure of her family history for inspiration.

### Power of the Pen

#### Getting through hard times by writing

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The domino effect has certainly left its mark on Verna Mae Glass. Continually faced with tragedy, the Portland woman arrived at the point where despair had almost overtaken her completely. But an opportunity to exercise her deepest thoughts with just a pen and paper offered a gateway for positivity to once again flow into her orbit.

In the fall of 2010 Glass lost her son, daughter-in-law, and one of her grandchildren all at once in a heated domestic dispute turned tragic.

"I really had no will to live at that point." The struggle for answers berated her consciousness every day, she said.

The unfortunate series of events did not stop there. Her partner of more than 12 years was soon to be deported. Less than a week after her son's funeral, he was sent to prison in Washington State to be deported back to his native Mexico.

With her family seemingly falling apart, depression washed over her. "I didn't even want to go out of the house anymore," she said.

That was until the day her daughter came to her, ecstatic about a writing workshop she had been attending, called Write Around Portland. Her daughter urged her to attend.

"I'd never really gotten a chance to express how I feel, so rather than just sit in the house every day and make my mind wander through what

happened and what possibly could have gone wrong and make scenarios, I got up every day and I got dressed and went."

Write Around Portland is a 10-week free creative writing workshop offered to people in low-income apartments, hospitals, senior centers, prisons, schools, homeless youth centers, social service agencies, and treatment programs.

They provided Glass with a journal, and she began to write feverishly. She was told by a facilitator to write in it every day for 20 minutes; she wrote more.

Naturally, much of what she wrote initially was her attempt to process

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### Portland Remembers Kendra James

The shooting death of Kendra James galvanized Portland when it occurred in 2003.

The Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform will lead a memorial vigil on Sunday, May 5, for James, the 25-year-old African American woman who was killed by Portland Police exactly 10 years ago on the Skidmore overpass in Portland.

The memorial, beginning at 5 p.m., will be held outside the Greater Faith Baptist Church at 931 N. Skidmore.



Kendra James

Members of James' family will be in attendance.

James' death was a touchstone for many in Portland who saw the shooting of an unarmed African American woman as a symptom of a Police Bureau needing major reforms.

The event is endorsed by Portland Copwatch and other community organizations.

For more information call Dr. LeRoy Haynes Jr., chair of the AMA Coalition at 503-287-0261.