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Diversity in Public Art

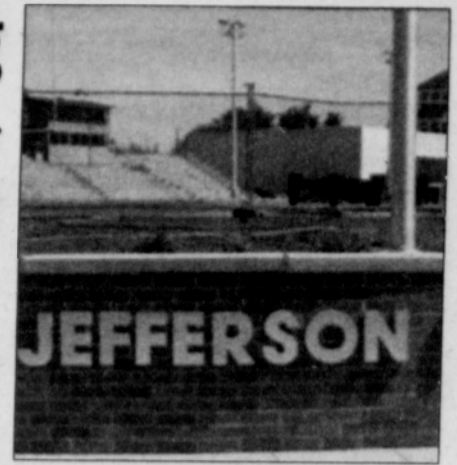
Arts group looks for works out of the mainstream

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Decade in the Making

A new frontage for Jefferson High School fulfills a late activist's dream

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'City of Roses'



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Established in 1970
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years of
community service

Trouble at the Workplace

Employees impacted by recurring acts of racism

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It is still happening; people are going to work only to be met with unacceptable acts of racism and a paystub as the only consolation for an apology. In a city where protests against injustice are plentiful, and the unofficial motto is progressive politics, it is troubling to hear that several of Portland's own have been the victims of such bigotry recently.

Lifetime Portlander Ivery Mays Jr. says, as an African-American, he is certainly "underrepresented" in his profession as an Apprentice Pipefitter, however, he never thought he would encounter racism on job, especially not so blatant.

But to his surprise racism is what the 39-year-old says he found in the trade he

pursued in an effort to better support his family.

His sense of normalcy was destroyed while finishing up work at a Camas, Wash. jobsite in early December. As per usual, his supervisor asked him and three other apprentices to begin cleaning out toolboxes before everyone left for the day.

Mays was given four toolboxes to clean, but the very first one would provide a disturbing surprise; a hangman's noose was revealed when he opened it, taped to the inside door. He immediately went to the bathroom to attempt to regroup and then snapped a picture of it with his camera phone. "Nooses aren't part of our materials," says Mays.

Whenever there is an incident or concern there's a chain of command any apprentice must follow to report it. The second-year trainee did so, but without resolution. Now he has acquired an attorney and has filed a complaint with the state of Washington and is pursuing legal action against his employer Harder Mechanical for racial discrimination.

Mays' attorney, Sean Bannon says "It's shocking that it's happening in this day and age, and a big part of why we're taking legal action is to make sure that there's accountability for companies tolerating this conduct."

Perhaps more troubling is that he is not alone.

Community leader and activist Rev. Leroy Haynes, the pastor of Allen Temple

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As an African-American, Ivery Mays Jr. is certainly 'underrepresented' in his profession as an Apprentice Pipefitter, but he never thought he would encounter racism on the job.

PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/
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