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PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Keonna Jackson, a Seattle mother whose son was killed April 13 in a shooting in northeast Portland is brought to tears as Lucy Mashia, a Portland mother whose son was murdered two years ago, and others, give her comfort. The emotional meeting was held at Portland's Life Change Church. Also pictured is Jackson's sister, Roshaun, who stands behind her, and next to her is Rev. Kathei McCoy of Seattle who also lost her son to homicide.

## Converting Pain into Purpose

### Families gather to stop more black youth from dying

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Stopping more black youth from dying, often in gang-related shootings, and having their deaths surrounded by silence – is something that Portland and other major cities have been trying to tackle. That purpose was echoed

during an emotional day last week when a Seattle family who just lost their son in an unsolved Portland shooting shared their grieving and their pleas for changing the culture.

Like many young black men, D'Andre Dickerson was killed at the prime of his life. At 24-years-old, he was a scholarship recipient at the University of Charleston in West Virginia, a father of a 5-year-old with his loving steady girlfriend, and an older brother to five younger siblings.

When his parents received a phone call during the wee hours of Monday April 13, they were shocked. They, like many families, did not know where to begin to search for answers. And they feared, like many parents of lost black

sons, that Dickerson would be labeled as a 'gangster' without context for his life and his accomplishments.

"My son was not a gang member," Dickerson's mother, Keonna Jackson, shared with other mothers and fathers during a meeting and news conference at Life Change Church, a diverse ministry serving Portland's African American community.

Describing her son's accomplishments in life, she asked that police and media hold off on incriminating him unjustly.

"I believe he was a good kid and just got caught up in the wrong crowd, was at the wrong place at the wrong time."

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