

Picking up the Baton

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Imarisha, a professor at Portland State University and a writer, said the vigil and the gatherings that came before it were opportunities “to remember those who were lost, not just as names or faces on posters at rallies, but as real people, as children, as parents, as community members.”

It’s important “to recommit to the ongoing work, and really think about what justice would look like in our communities,” she said.

Shirley Isadore, the mother of Kendra James, an unarmed African American woman who was shot and killed by police during a traffic stop, this one in north Portland in 2003, and Joe Bean Keller, the father of Deontae Keller, a young African American man shot and killed by Portland police outside his vehicle in 1996, both told their stories.

Keller spoke about the need to hold out for justice. “I’ve been fighting this fight for 20 years, and I have more fight within me. I’m

not done yet.”

He said by examining transcripts in his son’s death, he discovered that his lawyer had built a confusing, flimsy case for a lawsuit against the police before dropping the case three months from the trial date.

It’s very important that you do read,” said Keller. “Some of this information can really be turned around, and if you’re not quite sure and clear on it, it will confuse you.”

Isadore, meanwhile, said she is haunted by questions over her daughter’s death. “My baby had

contact with these officers six months before this event, and I still don’t know why,” she said. “I know I’m never gonna get the answers I need.”

Other speakers included Dan Handelman of Portland Cop Watch; David Whitfield, a community member who has combed through files related to the Otis case; Hardesty, a lawyer and the president of the Portland NAACP branch; and Alyssa Bryant, Otis’s sister.

Bryant talked about the day the family learned Keaton Otis was killed.

“We found out two days after he was murdered. We were watching the news. And from that day forward... my dad was never the same.” According to her, Bryant spent hours poring over paperwork, court transcripts, and the files in his son’s death. Evidence tying his son to a gun was questionable.

Whitfield also spoke to the importance of citizens taking the time to look over all the documents from police, prosecutors and the courts. He listed inconsistencies in the transcripts and files in Otis’ case; saying he found piles of evidence to show that the police engaged in a coverup of what he called “the execution of Keaton Otis.”

The event was emotional. At times, some of the speakers were stopped by tears. They hugged each other and a small altar was set up where community members wrote messages to Otis and Bryant. These notes were read aloud near the end of the night, and they demonstrated the air of community that characterized the evening and the broader movement for justice.

“When Fred called for a vigil at the site of the killing, we went to support him,” said Hardesty, “so he’d understand he was not alone in knowing a tremendous wrong had been done.”

“We don’t need to go any further,” Whitfield said. “These things are happening all the time: thou-

sands of African Americans are being killed. They’ve all got stories like this going back hundreds of years. What we need to do is keep raising their names.”

When it was his turn to speak, Dr Leroy Haynes, pastor of northeast Portland’s Allen Temple Church, did just that. Haynes headed the Texas Chapter of the Black Panther Party in the 1970s, and with his speech, he connected the modern struggle with the past.

“This is not a new fight,” Haynes said. “Some of us have been fighting this thing all our life, and it’s a struggle that continues.” He invoked the names of victims of police violence from across the nation: Otis, Kendra James, James Chassi, Aaron Campbell, Trayvon, Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Freddie Gray.

“This is not a moment,” he said, “This is a movement. And you are a part of that movement. You are writing history.”

What next? The monthly vigils will continue.

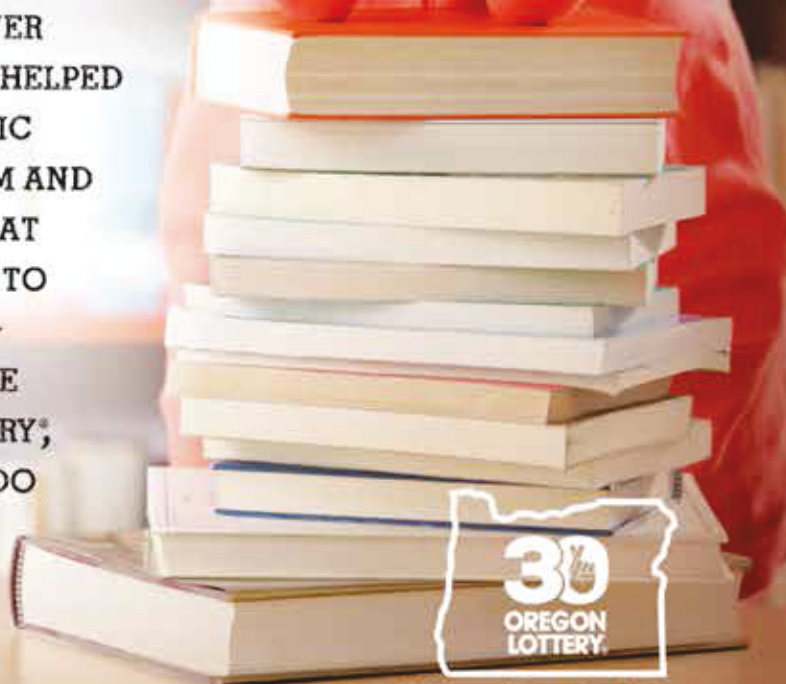
“Alyssa, Jo Ann Hardesty and I have committed to continuing these vigils, in Keaton’s name, in Fred’s name, until justice has been achieved,” Imarisha said.

The following are upcoming events to note in the justice movement: NAACP General Meeting, Saturday, May 23 at noon at the North Portland Red Cross, 3131 N. Vancouver Ave; Community Oversight Advisory Board meeting on police reforms, Thursday, May 28 at 5:30 p.m.; Montavilla United Methodist Church, 232 S.E. 80th Ave.; Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reforms general meeting, Saturday, May 30 at 11 a.m. at Maranatha Church, 4222 N.E. 12th Ave.; and a screening and dialogue for the documentary Arresting Power, Sunday, June 7 at 7 p.m. at Clinton Street Theatre, 2522 SE Clinton St.

Tessara Dudley is a poet and educator living in east Portland.

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Artichoke Stuffed Mushrooms

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic salt, or to taste
- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 1 cup shredded Italian cheese blend
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 24 mushrooms, stems removed and chopped
- 1 (12 ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained and chopped
- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened



Directions:

1. Preheat an oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Prepare a baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat; cook the onions and mushroom stems in the hot oil until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes; season with salt and pepper. Transfer the mixture to a large bowl; add the artichoke hearts, cream cheese, sour cream, Italian cheese blend, and Parmesan cheese. Season with salt, pepper, and garlic salt. Stir the mixture until ingredients are evenly distributed. Stuff the mushroom caps with the mixture. Arrange the stuffed mushrooms on the prepared baking sheet.
3. Bake in preheated oven until filling bubbles, about 20 minutes.