



Jamilah Bourdon plates a free breakfast for local students as part of a grassroots effort to empower and support Portland's black community.



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Empowering Lives

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

About seven Portland organizers with the All African party took up the call and started a free breakfast program this past year in the New Columbia neighborhood of north Portland, bringing children food and offering lessons in sustainability and activism on a rotating basis. During the school year the program fed about 25 students per day, but over the summer the program has expanded its hours, allowing parents to have relief from caretaking while children take some time out of their day to learn aspects of African history, food growth, and grassroots community building.

Organizer Jamilah Bourdon (who prefers her name in all lower case, like bell hooks) has been involved with the organization for about a year and a half and says she is happy with the program.

"The work that we are doing is to make sure that not only are these kids' bellies full, but to encourage them and remind them that they are important," she said. "We are teaching kids about self-sufficiency and self-defense. It's not just physical defense. It's the ability to defend your commu-

nity and yourself with education and history and providing for your community on your terms."

Adrienne Cabouet, another organizer for the All African party, who is also active with Black Lives Matter, explained how it's important to counter the erasure of African history from general education.

"We have to create a system stronger than white supremacy," she said. "It's about divesting from systems that oppress you and creating things that serve your community that you build," she said.

The All-African People's Revolutionary Party, which bills itself as a pan-African socialist organization that connects all people of African-descent for collective education and a unified Africa, has its headquarters in Guinea-Bissau. The Oregon chapter, which is based in Portland, opened up in 2013.

Organizers of the New Columbia free breakfast program say their goal now is to ensure that it will become self-sustaining and that other communities can run their own breakfast programs wherever they are needed.

"The cause continues long after

the leader is gone," said Bourdon. "One day, we hope the children who are eating now might feed other children; that they will feel this project, and this community, belongs to them just like their history does."

Both organizers we spoke with suggested that, if others saw value in what they were doing, they would consider opening up free breakfast programs in their own communities, and that it was important to them that people be in charge of their own organizing. Those who are interested in either donating to the current New Columbia breakfasts or starting their own are encouraged to visit aaproporegon.org or like their Facebook page at [facebook.com/pages/All-African-Peoples-Revolutionary-Party-Portland-Oregon/328296627222194](https://www.facebook.com/pages/All-African-Peoples-Revolutionary-Party-Portland-Oregon/328296627222194). The group is also accepting new back-to-school supply donations for students at the moment as well, including backpacks, notepads, writing implements, and calculators.

Donations for food to the free breakfast program can be dropped off at the organization's community meeting location, In Other Words Bookstore, 14 N.E. Killingsworth St. The breakfast program currently runs on Mondays and Fridays from 8 to 10 a.m. at Columbia International Cup Coffee Shop at 9022 N. Newman Ave. In September, the program returns to its school year schedule of 7 to 8 a.m. on Mondays and Fridays.