

BUSINESS Guide

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The town of Vanport in what is now the Delta Park area of north Portland as pictured during the years around World War II. The multiracial community was constructed for shipyard workers and their families, and when it was wiped out by a flood in 1948, communities of color were impacted disproportionately.

A City Transformed

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

each other.”

Lo Forti says it’s all about defining the idea of “memory activism.”

“In these times it seems as if remembering history is an act of resistance,” Lo Forti says. “Our goal is to engage more and more memory activists.”

The Vanport Flood holds a special place in Oregon history.

A long rainy winter had raised the water level of the Columbia River, and on Memorial Day -- May 30, 1948, at 4:05 p.m. -- a large piece of the earthen levy protecting the town collapsed.

All of Vanport’s 40,000 residents lost their homes, and 15 lost their lives. The disaster is sometimes called “Oregon’s Katrina,” because like Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Vanport Flood impacted communities of color disproportionately, including African American shipyard workers and

their families who had moved to Vanport to support the US military effort during World War II.

Because it was Oregon’s first and biggest multi-racial community, Vanport’s destruction pushed African American families into a segregated Portland neighborhood called Albina and set up the racial dynamics we see today.

The list of Vanport Mosaic Festival 2018 events is long and varied, find it all online at vanport-mosaic.org, follow the link at the top right hand of the homepage to “Festival 2018.”

Here are a few special events you shouldn’t miss:

***Lessons From Vanport and Katrina: a dialogue to create community resilience during extreme weather conditions. Vanport survivors will join city disaster officials, members of the homeless community and the public in an interactive forum on Monday, May 28 – 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the EXPO Center. Admission is free.

***Confluence Story Gathering. Guest speakers Tanna Engdahl, a Cowlitz spiritual leader; Se-h-dom Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, Yakama), the Movement building director for the Western States Center; and David Lewis, tribal historian and past manager of the Grand Ronde Cultural Resources Department screen oral histories from tribes

along the Columbia and talk about why it’s important, on Sunday May 27, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center. Suggested contribution \$10.

***Power to the People: Black Panther Party Legacy Tour of Albina. Join Kent Ford, founder of Portland’s chapter of the 1960s-era black empowerment organization, for a walking tour in northeast Portland. Wear your walking shoes!

Saturday May 26, 1:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., Martin Luther King Jr. School: 4906 N.E. 6th Ave. Tickets are \$10.

***Lost City, Living Memories: Vanport Through The Voices of Its Residents. Hear the stories of the dramatic events of May 30, 1948 directly from the people who lived it. This is a series of documentary short films of Vanport survivors produced by local community residents, and mentored by “story midwife” Laura Lo Forti. Portland State University Prof. James Harrison opens with a brief history of Vanport, and remarks by Portland City Commissioner Nick Fish. The screening is Monday, May 28, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the EXPO Center - 2060 N. Marine Dr. Admission is free.

Legacy of A Forgotten City - The Vanport Mosaic Festival 2017: <https://vimeo.com/254799611>

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