

A Career Owning and Driving Trucks

When Earnest Parker Jr. wanted to go to college, his parents did not have the money. Now he is earning more money than many college graduates—by owning and driving trucks.

After five years of steady work and savings, the North Carolina resident had amassed enough money in his 401(k) retirement plan – with the help of his employer, who matched his contributions – to buy his first truck. He put down \$3,000 on a W900 Kenworth for \$110,000.

Parker bought a second truck, a Freightliner Century, for \$30,000 in November 2017. With unmistakable pride, he jokes that his fleet “grew by 100 percent.”



Earnest Parker Jr.

Working near Statesville, N.C., just north of Charlotte, Parker does not believe his lack of a degree has held him back. “For the money that I’m making, I probably wouldn’t be doing too much better even if I did go to college,” he said.

After paying all expenses, Parker takes home about \$750 per week (roughly \$39,000 per year). “I’m pretty happy,” he said. “Everybody always feels they could get a little more, but I look at what I can provide for my family and I’m really not in need.”

Parker can provide hope to the growing

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Diversity

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to add to his own mentoring, including Los Angeles actress and producer Keena Ferguson of the Emmy-winning FX show ‘Atlanta’ and New York based director Che Broadnax. Portlanders Ime Etuk, who was the first assistant director of the Netflix show ‘Everything Sucks,’ and authors David Walker, Renee Watson, and Mitchell S. Jackson will also lend their support.

Kamryn Fall, Elijah Hasan, Tamera Lyn, Sika Stanton, Noah Thomas, and Dustin Tolman are the project’s fellows, while local filmmaker RaShaunda Brooks will act as production coordinator for the program. The filmmakers are slated to screen some of their work a year from now, and Bell said he expects thematic similarities to arise.

“One thing that I’ve talked with a lot of the fellows about in leading up to this point is a lot of our stories--because some of the folks grew up here, because of our identity and culture--I think there’s a lot of overlap in terms of what kind of stories we can tell.”

Because of that overlap, Bell said, it will free up the cohort to get into the “nuts and bolts of how to create empathy with our audience,” rather than trying to decide on subject matter.

A \$2,000 year-long stipend, training, access to industry-standard equipment, staff and actors from Artists Repertory Theatre, and connections to the field via the Oregon Governor’s Office of Film & Television, will be provided to the fellows.

In Bell’s own illustrious career, which ranged from creating national public television educational programming to being on the production team of big name Hollywood films, like ‘Mystic River’ and ‘The Departed,’ it was a fellowship for WGBH in Boston, Massachusetts that first gave him the taste for public media production after college.

Bell returned to Portland when he had a child in 2010. He worked for Oregon Public Broadcasting from 2011-14 and later for WHYY in Philadelphia, Penn., covering gentrification radio and web-based video stories.

His 2014 personal essay, ‘The Air I Breathe,’ and a subsequent video, ‘Future: Portland,’ both created for Oregon Humanities, were poetic takes on what it means to be black and displaced in Portland.