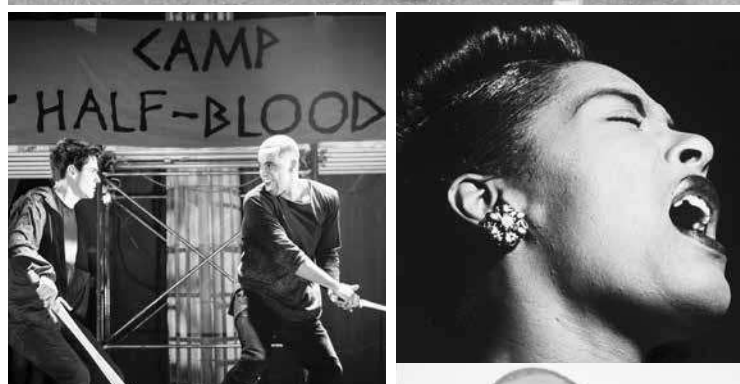


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LOCAL NEWS

Making the Case

Hopes High for Measure 11 Reform

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

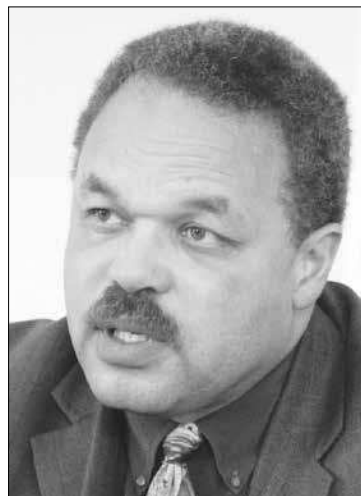
A bill proposing juvenile justice reforms in regard to Oregon's mandatory minimum sentencing law—which has disproportionately impacted communities of color—is on the cusp of passage after decades of effort.

“We still need to do some significant lobbying to make sure that folks understand what it's doing and what it's not doing and why it's doing those things. But I think we'll be able to make that case and I hope that it will pass out of the House as a result,” Sen. Lew Frederick, a sponsor of the legislation, told the Portland Observer.

Senate Bill 1008 would allow more flexibility in dealing with juvenile offenders, ending the practice of automatically prosecuting 15, 16 and 17-year-olds as adults when charged with murder, robbery, assault and sex offenses.

The bill had a two hour hearing last week at the House and is waiting for a work session with the House Committee on Judiciary before it can proceed to a vote, according to the Legislature's website, as of Tuesday.

Frederick said the reforms are long overdue.



Lew Frederick

A report from 2011 by Partnership for Safety and Justice and Champaign for Youth and Justice stated that while the black youth population of Oregon was around 4 percent, they represented 19 percent of Measure 11 indictments.

In addition, Frederick said the recidivism rates for those who transfer to adult prison—as opposed to staying in the youth system—were much higher.

SB 1008 would give more power to judges, as opposed to prosecutors, initially placing youth accused of any crimes in the youth justice system instead of the adult justice system. Moving a youth to the adult justice system would require prosecutors to request a special hearing with a judge who would decide where youth are placed.

It would also establish a process

where all youth who are convicted in adult court would eventually be afforded a “second look,” halfway through their sentence, by a judge. A youth could serve the remainder of their sentence under community based supervision, instead of in prison, if they showed rehabilitation and accountability of their crimes had taken place.

The bill also requires an additional review by a judge before a youth is transferred to an adult prison for those with long sentences. Currently, Oregon youth who are given long sentences are allowed to be in youth prison until age 25, and then they must transfer to an adult prison. The bill would make it so that the judge could review the 25-year-old's rehabilitation and accountability of their crimes and make a determination to either send him to adult prison or transfer them to community-based supervision—applying only to cases where offenders only have two years left on their sentence.

Life without parole sentences would also be eliminated, ensuring that anyone under 18 convicted of a crime receives a chance for parole after 15 years of imprisonment.

The bill received bi-partisan support in passing the Oregon Senate—receiving three of its votes by Republicans-- receiving a 20-10 vote. The legislation was carried by Senators Jackie Winters, R-Salem, and Floyd Prozanski, D-Eugene.

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Cleveland Tackles Racism

After blackface and other unsettling events

Citing deeply unsettling events of hate speech and racial insensitivity at Cleveland High School, Principal Ayesha Freeman has assembled an after-school student-of-color-focused panel discussion about racism, for staff and students to participate in.

The announcement follows an alleged incident where a group of white students at the school decorated a chocolate cake as blackface and sold it at a bake sale. Freeman emailed parents Thursday to relay “an event...that was hurtful to our staff and students of color.”

A Cleveland student identified as white tweeted an image of the cake, saying “a bunch of white girls at my school made a blackface chocolate and we're all pissed about it.”

Four days before then, Freeman sent an email telling students and parents that a teacher had found a “string tied like a noose” hanging from an entrance to the school.

At future panel discussions, topics such as “How is racism showing up at Cleveland?,” “What can we do about it? What can we do differently?” and “How



A chocolate cake decorated in blackface at Cleveland High School and posted on Twitter.

can we come together as a community to heal?” will be discussed, according to Portland Public Schools' website.

An anti-hate assembly, specifically to honor the Native American Community will occur this Thursday, May 2 at the school. A Family Equity Council where concerns from parents will be heard will also be held on Tuesday, May 7 at 6 p.m. at school's library, where “all families who wish to attend for a community discussion about how to move forward” are invited.