



Mississippi  
Alberta  
North Portland

Vancouver  
East County  
Beaverton



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Shanice Clarke, a career educator who runs a resource center for black students at Portland State University, is running for Portland Public School Board, Zone 2, representing inner north, northeast and southeast Portland. Ballots for the May 21 election are in the mail.



PHOTO BY DANNY PETERSON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Michelle DePass grew up in northeast Portland where she still lives and where her mom and grandmother were teachers at King Elementary. She is running for a position on the seven-member Portland School Board to make a difference for students, motivated by the alarming outcome disparities for kids of color and other problems in the school district.

# Board Candidates Make their Case

## Clarke calls for holistic, new approach

BY DANNY PETERSON  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Shanice Clarke, 27, a career educator, aims to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students and students of color in the Portland School District by being elected to the district's seven member board of directors, from Zone 2, representing schools that feed into Jefferson and Cleveland high schools in inner north, northeast and southeast Portland.

Clarke has traversed a personal and winding path that led her to becoming an advocate for education, a goal she calls her life dream.

"I dedicated my life advocating for students," she told the Portland Observer. "I really identify with the true value of doing holistic work with students."

A first generation Jamaican immigrant, Clarke has the experience of navigating some the obstacles that can come with families who are recent immigrants. She moved frequently between her home island and the states while growing up. She also painfully learned how a disadvantaged student can fall through the cracks in school

and not get the help they need.

In her case, as a young girl, Clarke said she was not supported by guidance counselors and teachers after experiencing a troubled home life of trauma, addiction in the family, and loss. Rather than investing in her, they issued "a lot of suspensions and detentions," which ultimately led her to not completing high school in Boston, Mass., she said.

Not to be deterred, Clarke followed up by getting her GED and pursuing degrees in higher education.

She would go on to receive a Bachelor's in Human Services and a Master's in Educational Leadership from University of Northern Colorado, where she studied culturally responsive pedagogy and researched better ways of serving diverse students.

Today she runs a resource center for black students at Portland State University, the Pan African Commons, located inside PSU's Diversity and Multicultural Student Services Department.

"I love being on the front lines with

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## DePass has deep roots to community

BY DANNY PETERSON  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Michelle DePass, 58, has deep roots in the community; something she knows is an asset in her bid for a Zone 2 seat on the Portland School Board, which encompasses parts of north and northeast Portland, where she was born and raised.

She is one of the two African American candidates vying in the May 21 vote-by-mail election for a seat governing Oregon's largest school district, a position vacated by Paul Anthony after one term. Currently the seven member board has no black members.

DePass is the Community Engagement and Policy Coordinator for the Portland Housing Bureau, where she is focused on advising the bureau on how best to connect with community, serving low to moderate income people seeking housing.

The first thing DePass mentioned as a top priority for the school board was closing the racial achievement gap, as outlined in a recent Oregon Secretary of State audit of Portland Public schools, a report that she called "disturbing," but not surprising.

"We've known--community members have known for a long time that black and brown children are being failed. They're not failing. The system is failing them," she said.

DePass would address those failings by "aligning our budget spending with our racial equity plan," she said.

"The whole idea behind equity is that we direct more resources to where there's more need. It's not spreading equal resources across the city because some of our schools are doing just fine," she said.

The daughter of a Panamanian immigrant father and New Orleans ancestry on her mom's side, DePass moved around a bit when she was a child, bouncing from Central and South America back up to the states, but most of her schooling from elementary through high school was in Portland.

Both her mother and grandmother were teachers at King Elementary in northeast Portland for years. And Like her mom, DePass has experience as a single mom. She raised two boys, ages 18 and 20, who both

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