



Black History Month



Valentines Day is February 14



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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Governor Honors Black History



Oregon Gov. Kate Brown welcomes representatives of African American communities across the state to the state Capitol in Salem last week for her signing of a proclamation in honor of Black History Month. The contingency included members of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs, the Oregon Black Pioneers, State Sen. Lew Frederick, and many others. (See related photo, page 4)

Esteemed Author Speaks Out on Inmate Justice

Says system so flawed prisons should be abolished

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Speaking out and emotionally connecting in personal ways with people of color experiencing the criminal justice system is a passion for Walidah Imarisha, an esteemed Portland author, teacher and scholar from the African American community.

Sharing her thoughts for Black History

Month with the Portland Observer, Imarisha explained how cruel and unusual punishment has put too many people in prison.

It's especially true for black people where incarceration rates have historically been three to nine times those of whites, depending upon the decade and region of the country. In Oregon, African Americans, for example, make up 2 percent of the state's population and 10 percent of the



Walidah Imarisha

inmates in Oregon prisons and jails. And according to a 2016 publication from the Oregon Health Authority, at any single time in the state, there are about 22,200 people in lockup, including 1,800 housed in the federal prison at Sherwood and 550 youth.

Imarisha said there was a time when she believed that prisons existed to rehabilitate people and make communities safer, but after more than a decade of research and frequent visits

with inmates over the years, she is convinced that state and federal penitentiaries do more harm than good.

The first time that she saw a mother sobbing and clutching her incarcerated son when visiting hours were up only to have a guard drag him away, she know nothing about that scene made her feel safe.

"Prisons don't make us safe and should be abolished," she said.

Imarisha blames the "war on drugs," profitable prison building booms of the

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