

# Helping Women Emerge from Trauma

## Culture and faith empowered to address violence

Lisa Saunders is candid that her life hasn't been easy. There have been many hills and valleys.

At 26 years old, she found herself the single mother of two sons, a 1-year-old and a 3-year-old. After 9 years, she had left a toxic and emotionally abusive relationship that left her feeling broken. Leaving was difficult. And so were the years she would spend regaining her footing and learning who she was inside.

Yet through her struggle, Saunders says, she found strength, transformation and reconnection to her faith. It's a story she shares with other women throughout her community.

"I've sat and told my own story," said Saunders. "There are so many women out here who don't get to connect. I was going to work and doing these things, but I was completely shattered inside."

"Just because you work and do these things, that doesn't mean you're fine. The face looks

good, the outfit is great, but inside I'm bleeding. Inside, I might be suicidal. Inside, I have no self-esteem or I'm hearing tapes of things that were told to me about who I am."

Today, Saunders is a wife, mother and "doting Grammy" who's passionate about her faith. Her two sons have flourishing careers and families of their own. She's a certified adult mental health peer support specialist. And she's the executive director of FaithBridge, a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping women — particularly Black women and women of color — emerge from trauma to reconnect in a life-transforming and faith-affirming way.

The women she connects with may be emerging from abandonment, incarceration, substance use disorders or abusive relationships. Some are struggling just with being an empty nester. Saunders expressly serves women of color and Black women who, stud-



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ies and surveys show, often turn to their faith during trying times and turmoil.

In the wake of crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in community violence that have disproportionately affected people of color, Multnomah County is funding services at FaithBridge as part of a series of unprecedented investments — guided by input from over 1,000 people and organizations — in public and behavioral health programs

that support resilience and healing.

According to a Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation Poll, 87 percent of Black women, more than any other group, identified faith in helping them get through tough times. Saunders also cites a Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Study in which 84 percent of Black women surveyed said religion

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## The Week in Review

### Prison for Justice Center Fire

Cyan Waters Bass, 21, was sentenced to 4 years in prison Monday for setting fire to the downtown Justice Center, causing \$46,000 in damages during a Sept. 23 protest and riot. Bass admitted to using a wrist rocket slingshot to break windows, a flammable liquid to set the building on fire, and then throwing a Molotov cocktail toward police officers.

### Woman Assistant Coach Named

The Portland Trail Blazers hired former Oregon Ducks and WNBA guard Ednie-sha Curry as an assistant coach, Jason Quick of the Athletic reported Monday. An assistant coach for the men's basketball team at the University of Maine, Curry, 42, will be the first female coach in Blazers history.



### Federal Marijuana Bill Eyed

Top Senate Democrats, including Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, introduced a bill last week that would decriminalize marijuana at the federal level. "The war on drugs has really been a war on people, particularly people of color...it's not just an idea whose time has come, it's long overdue," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

### Fire Victims, Cause Released

The Oregon State Medical Examiner identified the two men killed in a predawn apartment fire on July 4 at Northeast Weidler Street as Robert William Gremillion, 31,

and Seth Robert Thompson, 31. The cause of the fire has also been determined as fireworks that caught a dumpster on fire.

### First Sentence for Insurrection

A man who pleaded guilty to breaching the Senate chamber during the US Capitol insurrection on Jan. 6 was sentenced Monday to eight months in prison. Paul Hodgkins, 38, is the first Capitol rioter convicted of a felony to be sentenced.

### I-84 Bridge Install Delayed

The planned installation of the Blumenauer pedestrian bridge and closure of I-84 over the weekend of July 9-12 was postponed because of additional planning work, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation. A new date will be announced when it becomes available, officials said.

### New Logo for Winterhawks

The Portland Winterhawks revealed a new logo last week, removing Native American imagery which had long been criticized as having racist overtones. The team has been under new ownership since January.



### Stunning Fish Discovered

A strange-looking fish washed up on the Oregon coast near Seaside last week, stunning beach walkers. The 3.5-foot, 100-pound opah fish, also known as a moonfish, is typically found in warmer, tropical waters, though it's not unheard of to find them along the Oregon coast, authorities said.

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