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PUBLISHER: *Mark Washington, Sr.*

EDITOR: *Michael Leighton*

Office Mngr/Clsfids: *Lucinda Baldwin*

Admin.Coord.: *Quayuana Washington*

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: *Paul Neufeldt*

OFFICEASST/SALES: *Shawntell Washington*

CALL 503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015 • news@portlandobserver.com
ads@portlandobserver.com • subscription@portlandobserver.com

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Black excellence is celebrated as part of a new billboard campaign to target community violence that is sponsored by Youth Organized and United to Help, a Black-led organization founded by Imani Muhammad, a long time youth mentor and educator.

Billboards are Call to Action

Youth group's anti-gun violence campaign

In an era of gun violence, a COVID pandemic and financial uncertainty, Youth Organized and United to Help (Y.O.U.th) has decided to give its attention to what should be celebrated: Black Excellence.

In a counter-response to the school-to-prison pipeline epidemic that is evident in Oregon and across the nation, 16 billboards are being featured across the Portland area to help shape a more equitable picture of the Black experience by focusing attention on Black ingenuity, creativity and the inspirational potential of Black youth.

"We want our Black youth to know, believe and achieve Black excellence," noted Y.O.U.th's visionary founder Imani Muhammad.

The billboard campaign is part of the initial

launch of the Public Safety Village, an initiative overseen by the Portland Opportunities and Industrialization Center and Rosemary Anderson High School, in partnership with 11 grassroots, Black-led organizations.

Muhammad, a former educator and administrator for Portland area Boys and Girls Clubs, including the Blazers Boys and Girls Club, founded Y.O.U.th in 2007 in response to the shooting death of one of her 14-year-old students in northeast Portland.

The billboards, which went up this month, consist of three images: Two promote the group's brand and logo; the third is a backdrop picture of five Black youth with the words "Black Excellence."

Y.O.U.th's mission is to motivate, inspire and empower youth, family and educators to dismantle the school to prison pipeline by challenging existing systems and structures. For more information, visit youthpdx.org

Increasing Access to the Trades

Portland Community College president Mark Mitsui recently announced that PCC was adopting the Construction Careers Pathways Framework, a program that aims to head off a forecast shortage of skilled labor by increasing access to the trades for women and people of color.

Spearheaded by Metro regional government, the framework focuses on recruitment and retention of women and people of color into skilled labor jobs that have historically been dominated by white men. As the region continues to grow and workers reach retirement age, trade unions say they expect to be short of workers in



Mark Mitsui

the years to come.

The barriers the construction program aims to address include

direct barriers, like racism, sexism and harassment in the workplace, to indirect barriers, like access to child care and other supports for workers.

"This program builds stability and careers for our region's workers, and helps keep construction costs low by having a trained workforce ready to deploy on any project," said Metro Council President Lynn Peterson. "By using public projects to establish the program, we can make it easier for construction projects everywhere to use these principles and a diverse workforce."

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