

Beating the Odds to Open

Barber provides braids and fades in one location

The odds were once certainly stacked against Lasheera Chambers. But the Black entrepreneur has come a long way, thanks to her fortitude, her haircutting skills and the nonprofit Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon (MESO).

Chambers' is on a path to personal success with the opening of her Queendom Cuts barbershop at 1726 N.E. Alberta St. The shop had its grand opening on April 24 and will operate 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Saturday.

Chambers and her staff of five provide haircuts, shaves, braids and fades. It's difficult to find a barbershop that can do both a braid and fade, said Chambers, a licensed barber.

Men typically have to go to two different barbers to get their hair braided on the top and faded on the sides, she said.

"I can get it done all in one sitting, usually in about an hour," said Chambers. "I will provide a service that no one else in Portland can do at the same time."



Lasheera Chambers styles the hair of Michael Greene Cheatham at her new Queendom Cuts barbershop at 1736 N.E. Alberta St.

The shop will charge from \$30 for haircuts to \$90 for a braid fade.

"I'm changing the stereotypes about barbers. I enjoy making people look better and feel better. To me, a haircut is more than just a service. It's a conversation. It's an experience," she said.

It hasn't been an easy journey for Chambers. With her birth mother in prison all of her childhood, Chambers grew up in an under-served Seattle community filled with gang violence, home-

lessness and drugs.

"Fighting to become more than a statistic was difficult," said Chambers, 32. "My adoptive parents struggled on and off with addiction. Though they tried their hardest, they found it nearly impossible to keep a place to stay."

As a teenager, Chambers was often homeless. She went from house to house trying to stay off the streets.

Chambers' aunts taught her as a child to braid hair. She started

braiding classmates' hair at school to earn a little money to eat. Later in life, she would cut hair for clients at her home. Chambers moved to Portland in 2010.

"I saw there was a need in this city for a person who was an all-around hair stylist," she said.

Chambers enrolled at Champions Barbering Institute in Portland. She heard of MESO through the school, where she graduated valedictorian, and became one of its clients three years ago.

Located in northeast Portland, MESO provides technical and financial assistance to unbanked, under-represented entrepreneurs – especially Black and Latino – in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties in Oregon, and Clark County in Washington.

"I had a business plan and a vision. MESO told me I had a unique idea," she said. "MESO gave me access to a savings plan, provided business classes and helped me network with different people. They assisted me every step of the way."

Now that she's on her way to business success, Chambers plans to help others in their journey.

"I've pushed myself out of poverty and I want to help others do the same. I am a master encourager. I'm uplifting and will give my customers a new perspective," she said. "This isn't just about barbering. I'm changing lives, one haircut at a time. I want to make others better and convince them that they can do anything, despite their circumstances." Chambers added. "I want to become the person I needed when I was younger."

For more information, visit mesopdx.org.



A Legacy Honored

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

of Portland's Civil Service Commission, Nike Corporation's Minority Affairs Advisory Board and the Oregon State Commission on Black Affairs.

His tenure was marked by innovative and award-winning policy initiatives, plans and programs that promoted respectful work environments for diverse employees, officials said.

After retiring, he served on the Northwest Renal Patients Advisory Board, Oregon Assem-

bly for Black Affairs Political Convention Planning Committee and the Port of Portland Fire Department Civil Service Board.

"Robert's service to the community transformed the employment experiences, workforce development and the hiring practices of Multnomah County and other organizations. That's why with the Portland Bureau of Transportation, we're installing a street sign in his memory outside his childhood home in Northeast Portland," a joint statement from the officials declared.

So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall **succeed** in the thing for which I sent it.

- Isaiah 55:11 (ESV)

No Menthol SUNDAY

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