

## Homeless

continued from page 1

these disparities.

"Homelessness has been a racial issue for a long time," says Adams. "Sadly, people just take it as a given."

He points to institutional racism in areas such as the prison industrial complex, housing and employment to demonstrate how race plays into poverty.

Adams notes that Blacks make up 40 percent of the US prison population. Upon release, convicted felons can legally be barred from public housing and employ-

Blacks were only allowed to live in certain neighborhoods," says Adams. "The long standing impact of this still perpetuates today."

According to the study, the median household wealth for Blacks was \$5,677 compared to \$113,149 for whites (Black and white categories include data for Hispanics).

Lastly, Adams examines institutional racism in hiring.

The study found that Blacks with associate's degrees had a higher unemployment rate than whites with high school diplomas (10.8 percent and 9.5 percent respectively). Also, the report says that a Black male employee with a bachelor's degree or higher was paid 25.4 percent less on average in weekly salary (\$1,010) in 2010 compared to a white male

worker (\$1,354) with the same education level.

"You know what they say, we're the last ones hired and the first ones fired," says Ibrahim Mubarak, who runs the Right 2 Dream Too camp in downtown Portland.

The camp gives people a place to sleep for 12 or more hours and refers them to social services. It allows families and couples to stay together, allows pets and doesn't discriminate based on sexual orientation, says Mubarak.

Mubarak says most people come to the camp because of foreclosure, the splitting of families and outsourcing of jobs.

He says that the camp has helped 13 peo-

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ment. In addition, some ex-cons have to make restitution payments, which can be difficult if they're not able to find employment.

Adams says this has an especially negative effect on children who have to deal with the possibility of having their families broken up. He notes that studies have shown children with incarcerated parents have a higher potential for developmental delays. In addition, half of Oregon's Black children live in poverty, according to the Census Bureau.

The study also addresses housing discrimination.

"You had red line areas, which meant

## Law

continued from page 1

while telling homeowners they are working with them to modify their loans. Mediation will cost \$200 each for lenders and borrowers, but mediators can waive the fee for struggling homeowners.

"It ends the dual process that banks have been involved in," Martin said. "It's surreal. They tell homeowners they are working with them and have them fill in forms for loan modifications. Then maybe they lose the paperwork and the homeowner has to do the forms again. But all the while the bank is fast-tracking them to foreclosure without their knowledge. So the homeowner can think they will get a loan modification in a week and two days later the bank will foreclose on them. With this law the lender is

forbidden from doing that."

But the Attorney General's Office says enforcement was not part of the deal.

"While the AG (Attorney General) is given the responsibility of creating the mediation program required by SB 1552, the legislature did not give the AG any authority to enforce violations of the act," says Tony Green, communications director for the Attorney General's Office.

Asked what that means for enforcement, Green said, "There are questions about enforcement."

Rep. Gene Whisnant, (R-Sunriver), said the law will allow homeowners to sue banks if they don't comply.

"There is recourse; you can sue," he said. "That's how it was intended."

The law will apply only to lenders who process 250 or more home foreclosures a year, which means it won't apply to smaller lenders, such as most credit unions. Commercial loans are not covered.

### The Big Picture

Nationally, the Obama administration has created programs to help struggling homeowners remodify their loans. This week the administration announced that the Federal Housing Administration will lower its refinancing fees. It also will review military foreclosures to ensure service-members are compensated for illegal foreclosures. HUD also offers several programs, such as HAMP (Homeowners Affordable Modification Program) and other options that can reduce the loan principal, defer payments for unemployed borrowers, or help homeowners exit loans without foreclosure.

"This bill offers a way to put some of the president's proposals into action," Angela Martin said. "It will turn them into reality by forcing banks to come to the table and giving homeowners the opportunity to say, 'I qualify for that program. You have to

### MORTGAGE DELINQUENCY AND DEFAULT RESOLUTION COUNSELING

Under the new foreclosure law before meeting with a lender homeowners must first meet with a HUD-certified housing counselor, available through:

African American Alliance for Homeownership  
Oregon Plaza Building  
825 NE 20th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97232  
Phone number: 503-595-3517  
Web address: www.aaah.org

Clearpoint Financial Solutions  
9955 SE Washington, Suite 301  
Portland, OR 97216  
877-877-1995  
Web address: www.clearpointccs.org

Hacienda CDC  
5136 NE 42nd Ave.  
Portland, OR 97218  
Phone: (503) 961-6413  
Web address: www.haciendacdc.org

## Commemoration

The Reverend Yuren Tai from the Seattle Koyasan Buddhist Temple shields the flame of a candle from the wind before the start of a community gathering commemorating the first anniversary of the Japanese earthquake and tsunami. About 200 people attended the event Sunday March 11th at the Kobe Bell at Seattle Center. At 2:46 p.m., the time of last year's earthquake, a minute of silence was observed, followed by the ringing of the Kobe bell by the dignitaries in attendance and members of the public.



ple find work and eight find housing.

Although he's seen mostly white people at Right 2 Dream Too, Mubarak has noticed how the barriers that lead to poverty can have a particularly detrimental effect on Black families. He says there are a lot of Black families couch surfing instead of staying at shelters.

"When they say they're creating affordable housing, who can afford that housing?"

These policymakers need to sit at the table with the people that are being affected by poverty," Mubarak said.

The activist suggests that the city is using its homeless population to get funding that isn't going to those that need it.

Currently, the city is imposing fines on the camp that start at \$641 for the first two months and double every month after that.

### BY THE NUMBERS

U.S. homeowners lost 1.8 trillion of home equity in the housing crash —about \$20,000 per household.

1 in 5 homeowners are underwater and owe more than their homes are worth.

Borrowers of color are 30 percent more likely than Whites to have high interest loans even after accounting for income level and credit rating.

5.9 percent of Oregon homeowners are behind with payments.

3.9 percent of Oregon homeowners are in foreclosure.

Source: The Center for Responsible Lending

sis because its leaders deliberately pursued reckless lending policies they knew could not be sustained.

"I'm not excusing any individual borrower from responsibility for the loans they took out, however 5.5 million people didn't wake up one day and decide to throw away their futures. They were sold a bill of goods," she says.

"There were people making enormous profits off the pain they were dealing. This whole crisis started with some really toxic loan products. And they were constructed by financial professionals. They were telling people, 'We are the financial experts and if you don't tap into equity, if you don't buy a home, you are putting your children's future at risk.'

"They said 'We're the financial professionals, trust us'. And millions of Americans did," Martin says. "But their loans triggered the financial crisis and now we're in a place where we have millions of Americans out of work. We lost our jobs because they took our homes."

Martin says the banking industry is responsible for creating the foreclosure cri-