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Girls Meet on Gangs

Judge Nan Waller hosts courthouse intervention

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

We love you. We want to help you. But you have to help us too, by staying away from gangs, drugs and weapons.

Work to stay out of trouble and your future can be anything you want it to be. Stay involved with criminals and crime, and you could find yourselves behind bars for a long time.

That was the powerful message delivered to a small group of girls on probation last Friday evening in Judge Nan Waller's downtown courtroom. Roy Jay, chair of the African American Chamber of Commerce and founder of Project Clean Slate, hosted the hour-long event, designed to help the girls get their lives on track.

The girls' meeting was part of a series of "call ins" named, "Standing up to Gang Violence: Not One More Drop." The call ins, also brought together small groups of gang-affiliated men and boys to hear from community members, pastors, police, parents who had lost children and former gang members.

Ericka Pruitt of Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice, told Portland's Nov. 9 gang task force meeting that 75 gang members have attended four recent call ins.

"Everybody was there really, clearly giving a message about accountability, but also a message about love," Pruitt said.

Girls make up an increasing number of youth in Multnomah County's juvenile justice system. Last year almost one in four youth admitted to Multnomah County's Donald E. Long Detention Center were girls. All told that was 91 girls. Their average age was almost 16, more than half of them were minorities. And in our city, with its African American population of less than 7 percent, a third of them were Black girls.

Modeled on the work of David Kennedy, who created the gang-intervention program Ceasefire, call ins bring in small groups of

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DYNAMIC

Renowned vocalist Josephine Howell highlighted the performance of trumpet player Gabriel Burbano during her performance Nov. 17 at the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center in Seattle. Josie is famous for her dynamic audience interaction and her Langston Hughes performance was no exception.



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

The Unequal States of America

Why has inequality increased and what can states do about it?

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

When the economy grows, incomes rise and everyone benefits. During the 1950s that's exactly how it worked. But for the last 30 years, the top 20 percent of Americans have benefited far more from growth than middle-income or lower-income households.

The result? Income inequality has risen steeply across the country.

That's the conclusion of a

joint report released Wednesday by Washington DC-based think tanks, the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

"Gains from growth have gone mainly to the top leaving the middle and the bottom earners at the side of the road," says Doug Hall, director of economic analysis and research at EPI. "That's clearly not a recipe for shared prosperity."

Over the last decade, households in the bottom 20 percent income bracket have seen their

incomes fall by 5.8 percent, even as incomes have risen 8.6 percent for the richest 20 percent, the report says. For the top 5 percent those gains are even higher at 13.9 percent.

The report, titled "Pulling Apart," looks at the national picture, but also breaks down the numbers state by state. Nationally, over 30 years, it's not just low-income households that have lost ground. Middle-class households too have fallen behind.

And because the report does

not include income from capital gains, which benefits the richest groups far more than the poorest, it actually underestimates income inequality. For example, a separate analysis by the Oregon Center for Public Policy, found that in 2010, the top 1 percent of Oregon families collected about 70 percent of all capital gains income in the state.

Oregon and Washington are not among the states with the largest gaps between the top and bottom income groups. In

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Reps: DOJ Should Respect Pot Votes

Taxes could bring the states tens or hundreds of millions of dollars

Gene Johnson
The Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A group of lawmakers on Friday urged the Justice Department to respect recent votes in Colorado and Washington state allowing the recreational use of marijuana, and some introduced a bill to ensure that happens.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Diana DeGette of

Colorado said her bill would bar the federal government from blocking state marijuana laws. Several other lawmakers have signed on, including Republican Rep. Mike Coffman of Colorado.

"I voted against Amendment 64 and I strongly oppose the legalization of marijuana, but I also have an obligation to respect the will of the voters," Coffman said in a statement. "I feel obligated to support this

legislation."

Voters this month made Washington and Colorado the first states to allow adults over 21 to possess up to an ounce of marijuana, and to set up state licensing schemes for pot growers, processors and retail stores. Taxes could bring the states tens or hundreds of millions of dollars a year, financial analysts

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