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homicides last year in her North Portland neighborhood, Taylor says she was ready to move head first into the idea — one she says she'd been sitting on for close to three years.

She began reaching out to the women she felt could translate their tales of street life into inspiration for the kids of today, putting any remnants of animosity to the side.

How? They were all friends at one point.

“We basically went back to that. Like, what [were] we tripping off of, really? I done slept at your house. Been at your mama’s house. We done broke bread together. We literally went back to the basics,” says Selmene Rodriguez.

Since forming, the women have been doing presentations and small-scale community events throughout the city using as an entry piece Taylor’s autobiographical book penned in 1998, “Ask Nicky...A Young Person’s Workbook for Building Dreams.”

The book works more or less as the group’s “Bible” right now, detailing real-life scenes from Taylor’s life. The goal is for kids to use it as critical thinking to debate how she could best have handled her adversities, growing up as a youth influenced by gang culture.

Taylor’s initiative comes during a time when gang violence is on a noticeable uptick, after nearly a decade of record lows. City officials say the violence peaked in 1997, when 15 died in gang violence citywide.

Many others who did not lose their lives were hurt in other ways, with lengthy prison sentences or criminal records that prevent job opportunities, leaving the long-neglected and impoverished residents of the city’s North and Northeast an even more unstable community.

Nonetheless, the women say they are taking responsibility for their pasts and trying to plant positivity and opportunity into today’s generation with community organizations, schools and churches alike.

# Demolitions

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asbestos audits.

## Who do you call?

Reporting an unsafe demolition is not a user-friendly process. While government enforcement bureaus offer complaint lines, it can be a trial to determine which agency regulates what hazard.

Michael Liefeld with the enforcement program of the Portland Bureau of Development Services said there is no “one-stop-shop” for citizen complaints. The department enforces state and city building codes through building permits.

Dangers such as the church wall falling down would involve multiple agencies,

# Report

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tics, case studies, and expert essays to outline solutions, paired with specific policy call-to-actions to improve conditions.

Here are some of the core findings from the nearly 200-page State of Black Oregon report:

## Unemployment, Economics, and Poverty, and Entrepreneurship

The wealth gap between Blacks and whites has widened in the five years since the last report was penned.

Black unemployment is nearly triple that of whites, a staggering 20.7 percent.

Consequently, Black poverty rates are nearly triple the 11.7 percent for whites, and when it comes to food insecurity the rate is nearly doubled for Blacks, a staggering 44.4 percent the report says.

It should be noted that today nearly 1 in 5 of Oregon’s near 4 million residents are living in poverty—a problem rampant in the state’s rural counties.

Entrepreneurship, report essayist Mike Green, co-founder of ScaleUp Partners notes, is the “driving force” of wealth creation and the global economy—thus a critical element of jobs and economic vitality for Black Oregonians.

## There’s an App for That




PHOTO COURTESY TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE

Fourteen teams of middle and high school students from around Western Washington communities were announced on Saturday, May 9 as the winners of the second annual Youth Apps Challenge. Launched by the Technology Alliance and sponsored by Amazon, the Youth Apps Challenge is a statewide competition designed to build student interest in computer science education and careers. Student teams won prizes for entries that included an app that helps you test water quality, an app that teaches young kids the concept of genetics and an app that shows you what kind of extra-curricular clubs are at your school. From left, Darla Van Corbach of Harrison Middle School with winning team Black Thunder - Jake Gray, Eduardo Bejar and Diego Benitez, from YVTC MESA in Sunnyside. The teens created an app to help students learn their math tables. (Not pictured is their teacher Soo Park).

Neighbors Against Violence will be delivering home-made goods this week, Friday and Saturday, May 15-16, as part of a fundraiser to start their own summer camps. Plates

are \$8 apiece. To place an order, call 503-960-9297.

Read the rest of this story online at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com) 

## OSHA requires the demolition crews that work around lead paint and asbestos be protected from harm, but those protections do not carry over to neighbors

according to Liefeld. It is “not necessarily” a building code violation according to BDS, but it could be a work safety violation — which would then involve the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Since the wall fell outside of the perimeter and posed a public safety danger, it would

be appropriate to call 9-1-1, according to Pete Simpson, Portland Police Bureau public information officer.

Liefeld said even more agencies could be involved. If the roadway was blocked, the Portland Bureau of Transportation would be responsible. Since the wall balanced on the utility lines, the utility company would be

involved as well, he said.

Liefeld acknowledges that it can be confusing to know who is responsible and says that part of his work at the enforcement program is to steer people to the right agency.

“We get all kinds of inquiries, so if it’s something outside our jurisdiction we can refer people to other city agencies or outside agencies to have their concerns addressed and figure out how to get help on things,” Liefeld said.

### Carcinogenic loopholes

Lead paint and asbestos are often considered as similar construction dangers, but the

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## Incarceration

Black people are locked up at a rate that is six times that of their white counterparts who stand as the state’s majority making up more than three-quarters of its total population.

In 2010, Blacks accounted for nearly a fifth of all police stops in the state despite making up two percent of the population.

## Black unemployment is nearly triple that of whites, a staggering 20.7 percent

The report calls for an end to both the Measure 11 law which automatically transfers youths to adult court, an end to mandatory minimum sentencing, and programs that better sustain life post-incarceration.

## Health

Homicide remains the leading cause of death for Black youths 10 to 24 in Oregon which is noted as a symptom of compounded stresses, multiple traumas including personal ones, and environments that over-stimulate the “fight or flight” responses.

With the introduction of the Affordable

Care Act (a.k.a. “Obamacare”) and Oregon’s switch from a state-based market to the federally-ran Healthcare.gov things have proven confusing for Oregonians at large, and put an increased urgency on advocates like North by Northeast, Urban League and others to get Black communities into a healthcare plan.

## Schools

Oregon has the worst graduation rate for whites in the nation, and the third worst for Blacks.

People of color makeup a growing number of the pupils in Oregon schools and increasingly account for the number of its graduates from public schools rising from 26 percent in 2011 and 2012 to an expected 31 percent for the next two years.

Like the state’s total Black population, Black students account for just over 2 percent of the student body—while African descent teachers are less than a percent of

educators in the state.

Black students are also disciplined and suspended at higher rates than their white counterparts for exhibiting similar behavior, further perpetuating the school to-prison pipeline, the report notes.

## Housing

The greatest concentration of Oregon’s Black population lives in the Portland metro area. In the half decade since the last Census in 2010, more than 10,000 Black people have moved out of the city’s core neighborhoods, as Urban Renewal plans continue to gentrify the poor out to the fringes and suburbs of Portland.

One of the featured essays in the report comes from housing expert and Portland State University professor Lisa Bates titled, “This is Gentrification;” in it, she details City policies that perpetuated these stark changes while making an appeal to re-build.

“Gentrification and displacement aren’t inevitable. Black Oregonians have voiced a vision for thriving neighborhoods. That vision for community development can be made real with a clear focus on racial justice and empowerment.”

Read the report at [www.ulpdx.org](http://www.ulpdx.org).