

Imarisha cont'd from pg 1

Imarisha recently moved to California to teach writing and rhetoric at Stanford University. *The Skanner News* spoke with Imarisha about her work, her plans for the future and how she intends to stay connected to communities in Oregon. This interview has been edited for space and clarity.

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The Skanner News: In your work, you write in many genres – from poetry to abolishing the prison system to radical science fiction and the racist history of Portland. Creatively, do you feel pulled in many directions or is there a common theme at the core of your work?

Walidah Imarisha: I definitely feel that there is a common theme at the core of my work and I think that theme is really about visioning and imagining different possibilities rooted in histories and current realities of resistance.

I think that these boxes we create around different kinds of writing can be useful but often can keep us from understanding and seeing that really, in my opinion, genres are different ways of knowing and exploring, they aren't different content.

TSN: What do you plan on bringing to the new position at Stanford?

WI: Well, I am teaching in the program of writing and rhetoric, so I'll be teaching courses for incoming freshmen. The great thing about this program is each lecturer gets to choose our theme. Even though we have the

same learning objectives across the program, we get to each tailor the lens through which we teach that material.

I am getting to bring my focus around movements for social justice as well as explorations of racial justice to this course.

One of the other areas of my work that I will be focusing on here and

hoping to continue connecting in Portland is my work around prisons and prison abolition. I have my new book that's out, "Angels with Dirty Faces" – three stories of crime, prison and redemption – that explores these issues through people's stories and I will be doing work with that as well.

TSN: Are you planning on coming back to Portland?

WI: That's the million dollar question. I really haven't thought past this part of the move. I think there are a lot of questions, so I am sort of staying open to what happens.

I definitely really love and value my work in Portland, and regardless will stay connected with the work that I started there wherever I happen to be.

TSN: You were recently quoted in an Atlantic article about the racist history of Portland. Do you see your work reaching a broader understanding among White Portlanders?

WI: I think that this is a collective process.

Read the full interview at TheSkanner.com

Soo Pak Joins Portland Parks & Recreation

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) has named Soo Pak as the Bureau's Arts, Culture, & Special Events Manager. The newly created position within Recreation Services will oversee PP&R's many citywide programs including programs at Multnomah Arts Center, Community Music Center, Summer Free For All, Urban Parks Programming, Laurelhurst Dance Studio, and Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center. Pak's first day was Aug. 15.

Prior to moving to Portland, PAK served in high-ranking positions at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), a large-scale performing arts and cinema center. She also worked at New York's French Institute Alliance Française in marketing and communications, served with the Museum of Fine Arts in film programming in Boston, and at the Boston Center for the Arts in theater management. Pak grew up in northern Virginia; spent her young adulthood in New York and Boston; and moved to Portland in 2014.



PHOTO COURTESY OF PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Restaurants cont'd from pg 1

gone out to support Black-owned restaurants? *The Skanner News* conducted an informal straw poll to see if these restaurant owners saw an increase in business during last year's event.

William Travis III – also known as Dub, owner of Dub's St. Johns Soul Food eatery – said he felt a huge outpouring of support from customers, a number of whom came back throughout the year.

"The Black Restaurant Business Days weekend – that Saturday happened to be the most phenomenal Saturday of the year," Travis said. The patronage he received during that weekend helped him prepare for the rest of the year.

Staff at Po'Shines Cafe De La Soul in the Kenton neighborhood and the Oregon Public House in Woodlawn reported similar successes.

Frank Taylor, owner of the downtown fine dining establishment Portland Prime and the newly-opened Southern breakfast restaurant, Sweet Jam in Beaverton, said a few people ate at his restaurant last year because of the Facebook event. Taylor expects to see more people year after year as the event grows and becomes established.

"We saw a few people, but I think it is something that as the years go on and people become more aware of it, I think we will see more of a big turnout," Taylor

said.

Not every Black-owned restaurant felt a bump in business that weekend. Norma's Kitchen, featuring Creole and Cajun cuisine, had a fairly average weekend during the event last year.

"They absolutely did not attend," said Bruce Broussard of Norma's Kitchen. He said the Jantzen Beach eatery located on Hayden Island is sometimes difficult to reach, but said that shouldn't stop people.

“The Black Restaurant Business Days weekend – that Saturday happened to be the most phenomenal Saturday of the year” – Owner of Dub's St. Johns

Food cart owners reported less success from the event than brick and mortar restaurants. James Dixon, of Dixon's Rib Pit, was in the process of establishing his food cart during last year's event. Currently, he is moving his business across the river to Vancouver.

Similarly, A Wing and a Prayer food cart owner Ronda Chiles reported an average weekend. Yelp reviews praise her cart on NE Prescott and 60th Avenue as a "hidden gem" of Portland, especially noting her sweet potato pound cake.

Wambui Machua, the chef and

owner of Spice of Africa had an even harder time receiving support from the community because she has no permanent location. The Kenyon cuisine chef caters, teaches cooking classes, holds pop up dinners and vends during street fairs.

"[On Aug. 28], I am going to be at the Hawthorne Street Fair and people can come find my booth there," Machua said.

Machua recently received a kiva.org loan to operate out of her

own commercial kitchen, cooking classroom and café. Machua's business was the first loan given by the non-profit Oregon's Kitchen Table Lending Team whose goal is to support emerging small businesses and empower communities.

Many of the restaurateurs and staff *The Skanner News* spoke with said they are unaware of the Support Black Restaurant Days event. Po'Shines staff said many people came in to eat, but they had no idea why there was extra enthusiasm that Saturday.

Read more at TheSkanner.com

SOAR cont'd from pg 1

ry, SOAR programs will help students learn to become better students – how to organize their days and materials so they can succeed regardless of the setting.

“Where White families tend to cite religious reasons for choosing to home school, Black families generally point to factors related to racism

Last year the Atlantic reported an increase in the number of Black families who choose to home school their children, with more than 220,000 Black children being home schooled. Accord-

ing to the National Home Education Research Institute, Black children make up about 10 percent of children being home schooled, versus 16 percent of children in public schools. Where

White families tend to cite religious reasons for choosing to home school, Black families generally point to factors related to racism, including a culture of low expectations for African

American students, especially boys, or disproportionate discipline – both of which ultimately contribute to high incarceration rates for African Americans.

While graduation rates for local African American students are up, Oregon has the third lowest graduation rates for Black students in the country, and the state incarcerates African Americans at a rate that's 46 percent higher than nationwide.

SOAR classes start Sept. 11. For more information, visit the School of African Roots Facebook page @Facebook.com/SOARPD, call (707) 456-SOAR or email soar@beamvillage.org



PHOTO BY CHRISTEN MCCURDY

Ahjumu Umi addresses the crowd at the School of African Roots open house Aug. 20.