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she was living in a hotel with friends. Struggling to make ends meet back in 1998, they shoplifted from a Nordstrom Rack in Clackamas with the intent to return the clothes for cash.

When they were caught, one of her co-defendants engaged physically with the security on duty, which resulted in a second-degree robbery charge for her friends and herself.

Ceaser took a plea bargain, but under Measure 11, the judge gave her a mandatory sentence of five years and 10 months. The amount she stole was less than \$100.

After serving her time, Ceaser was eager to move forward with a job and secured housing. But re-entry was another unforeseen challenge. Through numerous routine backgrounds

more likely to be sentenced to prison than Whites," Commissioner Loretta Smith told *The Skanner*. "Creating a culturally specific program like Flip the Script for our Black and Brown men leaving prisons is critical."

A 2016 report from The Sentencing Project ranks Oregon as having the seventh-highest incarceration rate for Blacks in the nation, while African Americans make up only roughly 2 percent of the population. For every 21 Black men in Oregon, one is in prison.

Locally, in the tri-county area, 30,000 at-risk youths between the ages 16 and 24 are not in school and are without jobs. "That's why I have been fighting so long and hard to create a summer jobs program to give these kids a place to go,

“You do your time, but you're continuing to pay for your crime”

checks, she was continually turned down.

"You do your time, but you're continuing to pay for your crime," she said.

Eventually Ceaser walked through the doors of Central City Concern, which serves people impacted by homelessness, poverty and addiction in the Portland metro area. To her surprise she knew the woman behind the desk — they had served time together in prison. Inspired, Ceaser applied for work.

Today Ceaser is the director of employment services at Central City Concern, and is behind its transformative new program called Flip the Script, which aims to end the cycle African Americans face upon returning from prison.

According to Central City Concern's data, an African American has a 36 percent chance of recidivism (or reoffending) after being released. For a White person, it's 29 percent.

The organization and its partners — Multnomah County's Department of Community Justice, the city and county Joint Office of Homeless Services, and Meyer Memorial Trust — are hoping Flip the Script can reduce recidivism by helping Black parolees get a leg up through housing, job coaching and culturally responsive services.

"We know that here in Multnomah County, Blacks are seven times

to provide an alternative to the street," said Smith.

In Multnomah County, African Americans who are released from prison, jail or treatment can be recommended for Flip the Script through their corrections counselors and DCJ parole officers. The program is projected to serve 150 people in its first year.

Setting it apart from other rehabilitation programs is Flip the Script's Afrocentric approach.

"Afrocentric therapy is a self-actualization tool. It's about realizing your own potential, tapping into your ancestry, understanding your culture and exploring what it means to be a Black woman, what it means to be a Black man, and how that in itself creates intersectionality throughout a person's life," said Ceaser. "We know our traditional school systems have a very watered down, strategic and intentional way of educating us about ourselves — and the information is monetary, it's from a place of power."

African American peer mentors, who have first-hand experience with the criminal justice system, will also be available on-site to Flip the Script parolees.

"It's important to have people who look like us, who can relate to those circumstances," explained Ceaser.

Read the rest of the story at
TheSkanner.com



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Larry Gossett's Birthday

King County Council member Larry Gossett prepares to cut his cake at his 72nd Birthday Party and fundraiser Feb. 25 at Garfield Community Center.

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nies, Washington was interested in taking the leap to the non-profit sector.

"It was amazing what they were doing," Washington told *The Skanner*. "And it was an opportunity for me to use what I've learned to help other people out. So I thought I'd give it a shot."

Since 1966, Impact NW has been serving individuals of all ages in the Portland metro area by providing the skill set and resources to help their communities prosper. Annually over 36,000 low-income children, youth, families, seniors and adults with disabilities participate in Impact NW's comprehensive programs.

In 2016 Washington joined the Impact NW team as the controller, and said his recent promotion was a natural progression.

As CFO Washington will help manage the non-profit's recent growth while presiding over all

its financial operations, including communicating with the board, the banks and various funders.

He's also hoping to employ his business prowess to the non-profit workflow.

"I'm really surprised since I've

"But thinking about it from that aspect is somewhat new to Impact NW," Washington said. "Of course, I have to keep in mind that this is a social services agency for people in need, and a lot of times you can't treat everything

“It was an opportunity for me to use what I've learned to help other people”

been here, how much my for-profit experience comes to bear on a daily basis at Impact NW," said Washington.

"From an operational and financial standpoint, I'd like to look at the work that we do more as a business."

He cites the organization's numerous contacts, including with Multnomah County and the city of Portland, drawing comparisons between selling products and providing services.

as a business. However, you can use efficient and effective processes and technologies to keep costs down. I think that's not only unique to for-profits."

In addition to its numerous programs for early childhood, families and seniors, Impact NW's fiscal department performs all the back office functions for the YMCA of Greater Portland.

That's a hefty amount of numbers. But for Washington, it's business as usual.

Ascent cont'd from pg 1

loan for his truck, the organization has been able to help him cover invoices to keep the business afloat during months when he may be running short — for instance, if he's expecting a check from a contractor for a recent job but it hasn't come in yet.

would remain the same. According to the organization's website, the rebrand was the result of a seven-month process in which dozens of community partners, current and former clients and others participated in focus groups and discussions to pro-

“The change reflects a shift in emphasis from one neighborhood — Northeast Portland's historically Black Albina district — to helping business owners throughout the whole Portland area”

Ascent's press release announcing the name change said the change reflects a shift in emphasis from one neighborhood — Northeast Portland's historically Black Albina district — to helping business owners throughout the whole Portland area, but emphasized that apart from the name change, the organization's mission, focus and leadership

vide feedback on the shift. "Rebranding forces you to take a fresh look at your organization," Robin Wang, Ascent's executive director, said in the press statement. "In our case, we learned that our community was often just as valuable as our capital. Our clients tremendously valued the community of support — whether it is from our volunteer



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAILEY'S CONSTRUCTION

Tyrone Bailey said Ascent Funding — which changed its name in February from Albina Opportunities Corporation — has made all the difference in keeping Bailey's Construction up and running.

advisors or partner organizations — that come with every loan so that they can overcome their challenges, better manage their business, and ultimately become bankable one day."