

OHSU cont'd from pg 1

rights and they got away with it," Frazier told *The Skanner*. She declined to say whether she planned to pursue additional action against OHSU.

In November — shortly after the election, Frazier notes — she came to work and discovered a sign with a noose attached to it and filed a grievance through her union, Local

'An especially cruel form of race harassment'

James Ryan, a spokesperson for the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, said the presence of nooses in workplaces is an "especially cruel form of race harassment" and one his office has seen more of in recent years.

“The presence of nooses in workplaces is an ‘especially cruel form of race harassment’

328 of the American Federation of County, State and Municipal Employees.

Frazier took photos of the sign and noose and posted them to Facebook. The sign reads, "Stress Reduction Kit - Bang Head Here." Below the text is a large circle; above it, the photo shows a small hanging noose.

Frazier and her family were the victims of a hate crime in September, which was reported on by *The Skanner* and other media. (In that story, she is quoted using her legal name, Foia, where Maria is a nickname she uses at work.) While her young sons were sitting in their car in front of her mother's house, according to Frazier's account and police reports, a passing bicyclist sprayed bear spray into the parked vehicle, screaming racial slurs at the children. The children were hospitalized and the interior of the car was destroyed.

The Portland Police Bureau is investigating the incident as a hate crime, and for Frazier, the noose connoted the long history of lynchings of African Americans.

According to information released by the commission last summer, the EEOC had filed or recently resolved about 20 racial harassment lawsuits involving nooses in the workplace. Charges of racial harassment filed with the commission increased fivefold between the 1980s and the 1990s and tenfold from Fiscal Year 1996 to 1999. Only a few hundred of the tens of thousands of complaints filed annually with the EEOC, which specializes in enforcing federal discrimination laws, end up resulting in a lawsuit. Others resolve with employers choosing to settle out of court or with complainants reaching out to local agencies, since some states have stronger anti-discrimination laws than the federal government.

Matt Hilton, president of Local 328 of the AFCSME, said Frazier's case is the first case of a racial harassment complaint he's seen that went as far as it did and had the result it did.

Read the whole story at [TheSkanner.com](#)

Sheley Secret Kickoff

Mayoral candidate, attorney and spoken-word artist Nikkita Oliver (left), former Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Candidate Erin Jones, Seattle/King County NAACP Vice President Sheley Secret and former Ohio politician and Bernie Sanders surrogate Nina Turner celebrated Women's History Month and kicked off Secret's campaign for Seattle City Council Position 8, March 24 at Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute. The event also featured performances by the dance team Kutt-N-Up and renowned Seattle songstress Josephine Howell.



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Assault cont'd from pg 1

believe there is value in talking to everyone. Even people you disagree with."

Whitten had hoped to engage in civil discourse on the Salem Capitol grounds, but was instead surrounded by several masked members of a patriot movement group.

One of the men loudly and aggressively threatened Whitten's physical safety, while accusing him of being a child molester.

"I made the grave mistake of thinking that I could stand peacefully at the March4Trump rally without becoming a target of threats and hostility," wrote Whitten in a letter addressed to Salem Mayor Chuck Bennett and Salem City Council. "Because I am a Black man, a White Trump supporter saw me and loudly accused me of being a child sex predator, because they thought I looked like a different Black man who has been accused of such crimes in the media."

Caught on video

At about 19 minutes into Whitten's livestreamed Facebook video, an unidentified man — masking his face with a yellow scarf and sunglasses — threateningly

Meanwhile, behind the officer, a female Trump supporter — identified as Angela Roman, a policy analyst for State Representative Mike Nearman — yells at Whitten, "you have mental f---ing illness"

“I made the grave mistake of thinking that I could stand peacefully at the March4Trump rally'

tells Whitten, "I know you're the sex offender."

Whitten is heard defending himself repeatedly, asking his accuser to say his name as the masked man, backed by a circle of cohorts, becomes increasingly hostile. The man curses and demands, "Get back on your side, you rapist son of a bitch."

Whitten then asks a nearby photographer to alert police of his threatened safety. In the video, which has over 13,000 views, the officer is seen doing little to address the threats and instead asks Whitten to leave the area.

because he and fellow protestors "get off on ruining peoples' freedom to assemble."

"I told (the officer) that I had done nothing wrong and that he could choose to protect me from being killed if he'd like to," Whitten continued in his letter. "The police officer almost immediately decided that my concerns were not significant, and left so that this physically aggressive male could continue to harass and push me."

Read the rest at [TheSkanner.com](#)

Welch cont'd from pg 1

Skanner, that she went to Nordstrom's before her big interview and bought the most expensive suit she's ever purchased.

"And I got the job!" she grinned, letting out a big laugh.

On April 1, Welch will retire from her post and pass the baton to Kirby McCurtis, a young African American woman who is currently the branch's youth librarian.

"She's smart, committed, efficient, but she also has heart," Welch said of McCurtis, who in 2013, received *Library Journal's* Mover & Shaker award for her efforts in community building.

Welch herself is no stranger to esteem.

In February 2015, she was honored with the Flemming Award for her commitment to social justice by the Multnomah County Managers of Color, during its Black History Month celebration. Dr. Arthur Flemming was the Secretary of Health, Education and

Welfare, under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He was also appointed Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and fought for racial equal-

“I wanted to work someplace where I thought I could make a difference, and this job has been all of those things'

ity, before serving as president of the University of Oregon.

Portland has never been well-known for diversity, Welch emphasized during her interview with *The Skanner*.

And in fact, the librarian had had her eye on Atlanta as a career destination. But when she landed in the Rose City, she was surprised.

"People were very welcoming to me, beyond anything I could have ever have expected," said Welch.

She was readily invited to social events with diverse groups, and soon

got involved with the employee resource organization, Managers of Color, which works to enhance cultural diversity in Multnomah County.

Over the decades, Welch has helped make her branch a leader in adult programming.

She's exhibited the work of local artists, partnered with PassinArt to host a Juneteenth celebration, and has continually encouraged the community to engage in Black literature.

"There was very little programming for African Americans, though when I got here there was a much larger African American community," said Welch. "So I feel that I have been intentional in making sure that African American voices and culture are heard."

That effort has come to fruition through the library's annual African American Read-In, a national event which Welch kick-started in Portland, as well as through the integrity of the Black Resource Center.

Launched in 1987, the collection is unique to the North Portland branch, and also in its selection of first editions, including titles by Maya Angelou, W.E.B. Du Bois, and James Baldwin.

"I'm happy to know that before I even got here, Black people in this community used this library and cared enough about it to say, 'We're not seeing ourselves here.' They raised the money to establish this collection."

"African American reading is not just for Black people," continued Welch. "This is a genuinely fantastic collection for anyone. It speaks well to the system to have this collection, but it also enriches this neighborhood."

Read the full story at [TheSkanner.com](#)