

A Look Back at 2017



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

Charleena Lyles Killed

Charleena Lyles, a pregnant mother of four in Seattle, was shot and killed by Seattle Police June 18. Lyles had called the police to report a theft and within minutes of their arrival was shot at least five times by both officers. The police say she confronted them with a knife but the community questions whether a less lethal means could have been used to subdue the women who family and neighbors describe as being tiny and weighing about 90 pounds. Hundreds of people gathered June 18 at the apartment complex where Lyles was killed. The shooting garnered national attention and fueled De-Escalate Washington's campaign for Initiative 940, which would reform standards for using deadly force. It would also require law enforcement officers to receive regular trainings in violence de-escalation, identifying and assisting people suffering from a mental health issue -- as well as performing first aid. A Force Review Board report made public in December that officer said the board had determined that the shooting was proportional and consistent with department training and policy.

Wheeler Hires Danielle Outlaw

In August Mayor Ted Wheeler announced he had hired Danielle Outlaw to become the city's new police chief. Outlaw is a 19-year veteran of the Oakland Police Department, where she served as a Deputy Chief since 2013, and the first Black woman to serve in the role.



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organization work with the National Newspaper Publishers Association to keep the Black community informed. Congressional Black Caucus Chair Cedric Richmond (D-La.) also pledged to work closer with the Black Press in 2017 and beyond.

The NNPA and Chevrolet sponsored eight students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Atlanta and Washington, D.C. to participate in the 2017 Discover The Unexpected (DTU) journalism fellowship program.

The 2017 class of DTU journalism fellows included: Alexa Imani

Spencer and Noni Marshall from Howard University; Kelsey Jones and Taylor Burris from Spelman College; Jordan Fisher and Tiana Hunt from Clark Atlanta University; and Ayrton Lewallen

“In 2017, the Black Press lost two of its most devoted freedom warriors

and Darrell Williams from Morehouse College. The eight fellows were rewarded for their intrepid, diligent work in the Chevrolet-backed program that provides students from HBCUs scholarships and summer internships at NNPA member, Black-owned newspapers.

Civil rights icon the Rev. Jesse Jackson also announced that he has Parkinson's disease.

A tumultuous 2017 also saw TV One announce the cancelation of the popular Roland Martin's NewsOne Now news show in December.

In 2017, the Black Press lost two of its most devoted freedom warriors. Walter "Ball" Smith, the publisher of "New York's Beacon" and the "Philadelphia Observer" died on Friday, November 10. He was 83.

One month earlier on Oct. 22, Bernal E. Smith

II, the president and publisher of the Tri-State Defender and a well-known civic leader in Memphis, Tenn., also passed away.

Smith was 45. Other Black icons also were mourned in 2017.

Among them were Della Reese, 86, and Earle Hyman, 91, both of whom died in November; Robert Guillaume, 89, and Fats Domino, 89, died in October; the rap star Prodigy, 42, who died in June; while singer Al Jarreau, 76, died in February; and activist Roy Innis, 82, died in January.

In December, Simeon Booker, a trail-blazing Black journalist who covered the Civil Rights Movement for the iconic African American magazines EBONY and Jet and who was the first black person to work as a full-time Washington Post reporter, also died.

He was 99. On August 19, 2017, activist and comedian Dick Gregory died at the age of 84.

"During the past six decades, Dick Gregory, would periodically write essays and editorials for the Black-owned newspapers of NNPA members across the nation," NNPA President and CEO Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., wrote in a tribute to Gregory. "His pen and his voice were always on the side of the oppressed, who dared to speak up and stand up for freedom. Today, in Dick's memory, we all are obligated to do no less."

Chavis continued: "Every breath that we take, we should gain more and more strength to speak truth to power and to stand against all injustice."



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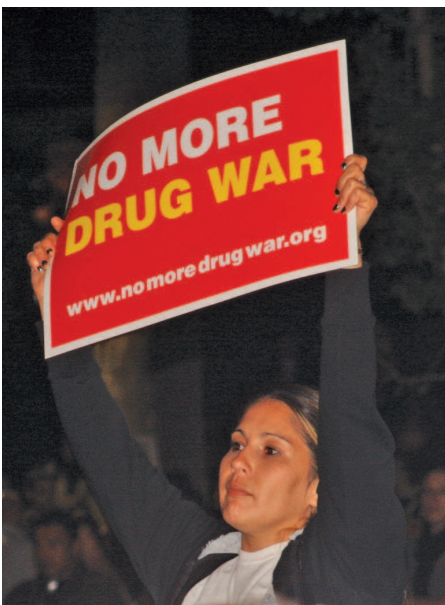


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Small Drug Possession Lowered to Misdemeanor

Oregon legislatures passed a landmark bill this week that reclassifies small scale possession of illegal drugs -- heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine and others -- from a felony to a misdemeanor. Under previous law, small possession was a Class B or C felony -- punishable by up to 10 or 20 years in prison and \$250,000 or \$375,000 in fines. The new legislation knocks down small possession to a Class A misdemeanor, which could result in one year in jail and/or a \$6,250 fine.



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