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Portland Observer

Volume XLVII • Number 8



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PHOTO BY OWEN CAREY

Portland actor La'Tevin Alexander takes on the role of a lifetime, as a young Cassius Clay, the legendary boxer who became Muhammad Ali, in "And In This Corner: Cassius Clay." The Oregon Children's Theater production tackles issues of racial inequality and bullying during segregated Jim Crow-era Louisville, Ky. Opens Saturday and runs through March 25.

Andⁱⁿ This Corner

Portland actor helms role of boxing legend

BY DANNY PETERSON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Themes of racial injustice and childhood bullying come to life in a new Oregon Children's Theater play about a young Cassius Clay set in segregated Louisville, Ky. before he changed his name to Muhammad Ali and won a series of heavyweight boxing championships.

"And in This Corner: Cassius Clay," opening Saturday, March 3 is written by award-winning playwright, rapper and essayist Idris Goodwin and stars Portland actor La'Tevin Alexander.

Known for his bravado persona once he found his way into the public spotlight, Ali often spoke in rhymes or witty aphorisms, saying his style in the ring was to "float like a butterfly, sting like a bee."

In the play, audiences get treated to a glimpse of the young fighter as an unknown up and comer.

"You get to see how all the fundamentals and all the forces in his life are set in motion," Alexander said. "He starts to see the world as it was and how it is for a black man in America. You get to see the caterpillar of the butterfly."

Stan Foote, the Oregon Children's Theater artistic director who co-directs the play, compared the tale to the origins of a super hero story, but in this case the beginnings of a sports and civil rights hero.

The play incorporates historically accurate language of 1950s Kentucky with meditations on race relations and humor to bring "so many great points of intersection for adults and kids," Foote said.

Alexander, 26, will helm the role of the young Clay, whose boxing origins began at age 12 when his bike got stolen. Clay reported the theft to a police officer who then offered to teach him how to box and defend himself.

The young Clay took a knack to the sport immediately.

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Village of Hope Rebuilds

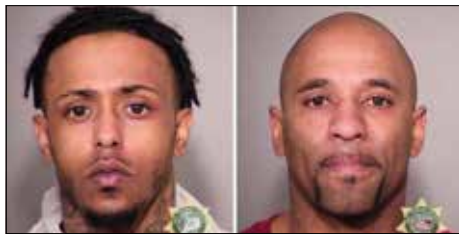
Village of Hope, a self-managed houseless community was re-created last week at its original location, a city-owned parcel on Northeast Airport Way. The village was torn down by city officials earlier in February because of environmental concerns and a lack of a permit.

Shooting Response Faulted

An armed officer on campus at the Florida high school where a former student shot and killed 17 people Feb. 14 did nothing

The Week in Review

to stop the shooter, the sheriff's office revealed Thursday. That failure, plus delays in security camera footage and records indicating the suspect displayed behavioral troubles for years added to what some officials describe as an "abject breakdown at all levels."



Robbery Suspects Detained

Two men were arrested last week for an armed robbery at Rounder's Bar in northeast Portland, the second time the estab-

lished was held up at gunpoint over the past 11 days. Sergio Nathaniel Hill, 24 and Ramone Metcalfe, 25, were taken into custody after a traffic stop.

Man to Plead Insanity

A Clackamas County man accused of decapitating his mother, taking her severed head to a grocery store, and stabbing an employee, plans on pleading insanity for his defense. The attorney for Joshua Webb, 37, wrote to the court Friday saying his client suffered from a "mental disease or defect."

Delay on Freeway Tolls

An Oregon Department of Transportation advisory committee was asked last week to delay a decision on approving tolls as a

way to reduce congestion on I-5 and I-205 in Portland, pending further evaluation of a 2017 study.

Hit-and-Run Law Change

Lawmakers last week gave final approval to a bill that requires drivers in hit-and-run crashes to come back to the scene of the incident once they learned there was a crash and notify authorities once they realized the incident caused an injury. The bill was spurred by the death of two young girls who were struck by a vehicle while playing in a leaf pile outside their Forest Grove home.

Health Care Measure Fails

Oregon Senate Democrats reported Monday that they are short the votes needed to put a proposed state Constitutional Amendment before voters that would make health care a right. The bill had passed along party lines in the House.

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Chair Names New Chief of Staff

Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury recently announced that Kimberly Melton, a communications and policy advisor who has worked on children, public health and equity issues since joining the chair's office in 2015, is her new chief of staff.

"Kim is the rarest combination of analytical thinker and policy wonk with a strong dose of heart," Kafoury said.

A graduate of Stanford University, Melton was an award-winning journalist for The Times-Picayune in New Orleans and The Oregonian. She joined the nonprofit Stand for Children in 2011 where she spent two years as communications and policy director and another two years as policy and community



Kimberly Melton

organizing director.

Melton replaces Nancy Bennett, who left the county to become the Department of Environmental Quality's new policy and external affairs manager.

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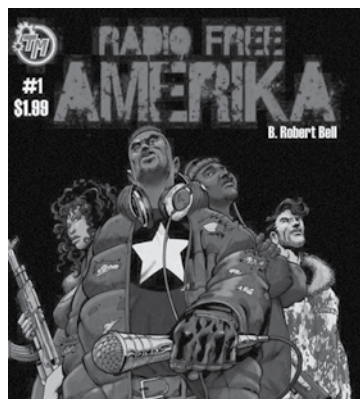


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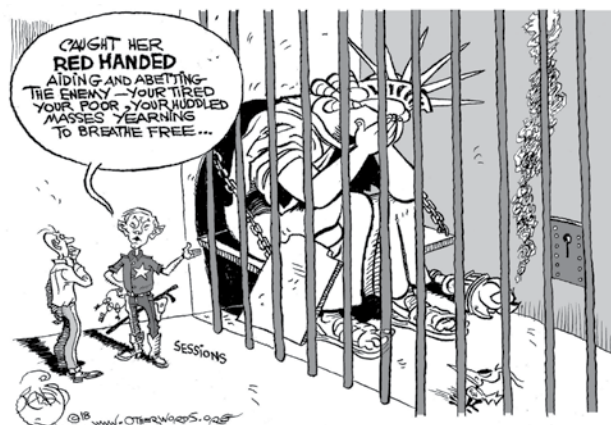
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What's on your list today?



PHOTO BY WOMENFIRST TRANSITION AND REFERRAL CENTER

A new grassroots organization, WomenFirst, uses peer support to help women of color and others from disadvantaged groups overcome societal challenges like poverty, hunger, homelessness, and domestic violence.

Empowering Women

Mentorship group celebrates first graduates

WomenFirst, a grass-roots organization helping women rebuild their lives and gain support through peer mentorship, will host a public celebration on Saturday, March 3 for their first graduating class from a 12 week women empowerment group, called "I Love Me."

The group places a special emphasis on helping women of color overcome the challenges that come with the stereotypes and prejudices they face in society.

Former State Sen. Margaret Carter, who was the first black woman elected to the Oregon's Legislature in 1985 and retired from the Senate in 2009, will be the event's guest speaker. Having overcome tremendous odds to carve a path of success herself, Carter came to Oregon from Louisiana as a single mother of five in 1967 with no job, nowhere to stay and struggling to make ends



Shannon Olive

meet.

"As we celebrate Black History Month, we honor the opportunity to be better stewards of the privileges we gained, create awareness for all people, highlight the best of black history and culture, and honor the historic leaders of the black community," said Shannon Olive, WomenFirst founder and president.

Group members help each other tackle issues such as poverty, hunger, homelessness, gender wage gap, violence against women, poor treatment of women in prison, access to rehabilitation centers, and human traffick-

ing/sex slavery. In coordination with the WomenFirst Transition and Referral Center, they also support women prisoner reentry, women in recovery, and those seeking any transformation in their lives

Life skills, community support, and referrals to resources for personal and professional development are cultivated in the organization, whose full name is WomenFirst Transition and Referral Center.

A new "I Love Me" 12 week women empowerment program will be open to incoming members starting March 22 at the Miracle Central Apartments where members will restore a path of empowerment by learning to love and value themselves.

The community is invited to join the "I Love Me" graduates at Saturday's event, scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. at Curious Comedy Theatre, 5225 N.E. Martin Luther King Blvd. Tickets are \$5 in advance and \$10 at the door. More information can be found at rebuildwomenfirst.org or email lovingyoufirst@yahoo.com.

Oregon Moves on Gun Control

People convicted of stalking and domestic violence or with restraining orders won't be able to buy or own guns or ammunition in Oregon under a new gun control measure that was passed last week in the Oregon Legislature and is now headed to Gov. Kate Brown who plans to sign it into law.

Brown told a Senate panel that the anguished voices of victims, especially in the wake of the recent school shooting in Florida, must be heard, saying the bill will help keep guns out of the wrong hands. The bill earlier passed the Oregon House.

"Closing the 'Intimate Partner Loophole' is an important step to keep Oregonians safer, and keep guns out of the wrong hands," Brown said.

One of the senators who backed the bill, Floyd Prozanski, remembered how his sister had been shot dead by an enraged boyfriend.

North by Northeast
Community Health
Center celebrates
and honors Black
History Month.



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Gordon Lessing, 90, who regularly walks to stay healthy, tries out a new gym at Legacy Emanuel Hospital built specifically to help heart and pulmonary patients.

New Gym for Heart Patients

Legacy Emanuel has opened a new cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation program, which includes a 4,200-square-foot gym, to help heart and pulmonary patients on their road to recovery. With this new addition, Legacy Health will now have cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs at all six of its medical center campuses.

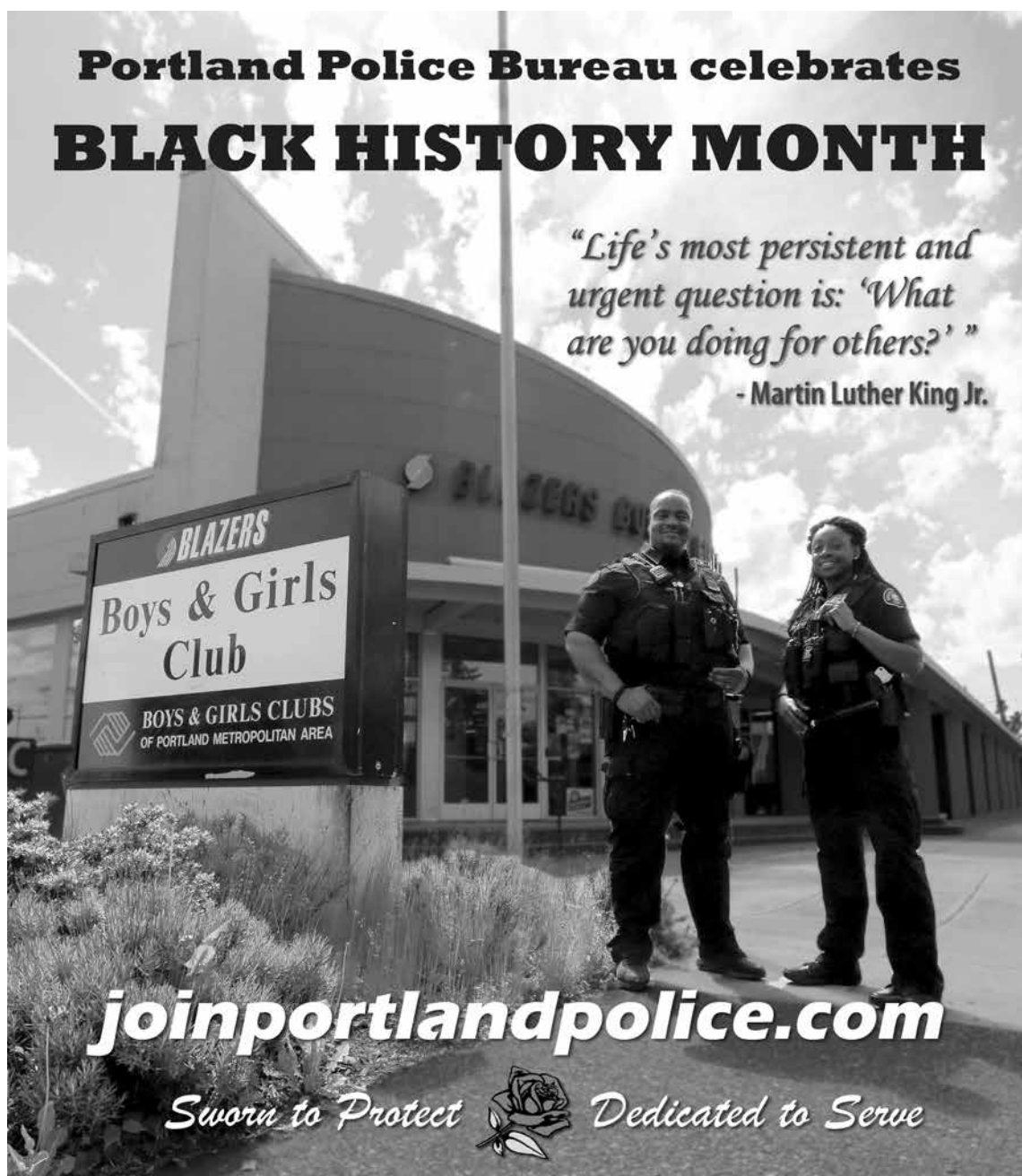
The program offers a state-of-the-art fitness gym with equipment such as treadmills, elliptical

fitness tools. Patients get a completely individualized and closely monitored outpatient treatment plan that includes instruction on physical activity, nutrition, stress management and classes to help them change their lifestyle and kick habits, like smoking. They are overseen by a team of physicians, exercise physiologists, nutritionists, nurses, behavioral therapists and physical and occupational therapists who serve in the field of cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation.

Portland Police Bureau celebrates BLACK HISTORY MONTH

*"Life's most persistent and
urgent question is: 'What
are you doing for others?'"*

- Martin Luther King Jr.



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2018 DATI E. J. Holifield Scholarship Award

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Woman in Labor Unions

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Woman in Communications

Angela Jenkins, Executive Director, KBMS - AM 1480 Radio Station

Saturday, March 24, 2018

12:00pm to 2:00pm

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BY
DARLEEN ORTEGA

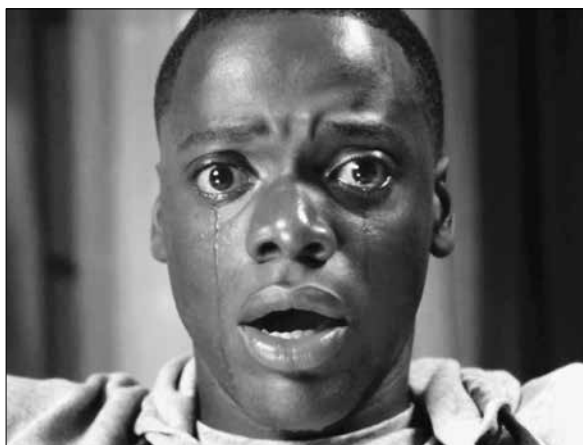


PHOTO BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES
A black man's experience of racism is powerfully portrayed by Daniel Kaluuya in 'Get Out,' an unconventional new horror film voted best picture of 2017 by Portland Observer film critic and Opinionated Judge columnist Darleen Ortega.

'Get Out' Best Film of 2017

As usual, the more than 150 films I saw this year includes almost all of those that populate most critics' top 10 lists. My own list of the year's best films includes some overlap -- but five of the films on my list were virtually unrecognized by critics. I'm left savoring a game-changing social thriller, two important documentary examinations of systemic injustice, an animated celebration of Mexican culture, an achingly beautiful love story, a biopic that breaks the mold, and four features that engage mightily with stories of the marginalized. So here's the whole list, with fuller descriptions below:

1. **Get Out**
2. **The Unknown Girl**
3. **The Florida Project**
4. **Whose Streets?**
5. **Coco**
6. **Abacus: Small Enough to Jail**
7. **Call Me By Your Name**
8. **I, Daniel Blake**
9. **A Quiet Passion**
10. **Maudie**

1. The top of my list has been reserved for **"Get Out"** since I first saw it last spring, and every one of the many times I

have seen it and thought about it since. Not since "The Matrix" has a film spoken so cannily about the things I experience most profoundly; it would not be an exaggeration to say that I think about "Get Out" (as I do "The Matrix") literally every day -- it helps me make sense of my world, gives me ways of explaining things I could never quite explain before. It irks me to hear what much of the mainstream press says about this film (such as referring to it as "Jordan Peele's film about racial paranoia")--and yet that very blindness is a manifestation of the so-far intractable dynamics of racism that Peele has illustrated so astutely. His film is an achievement in originality and visionary writing and directing without any parallel, and Daniel Kaluuya has more than earned the title of best actor. Like the very best films, "Get Out" deserves to be named Best Picture for reasons we are not yet ready to understand.

2. **"The Unknown Girl"** is a thriller of the best kind; it captures some profound spiritual truth. It is the work of the Belgian writer-director brothers Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, who make absorbing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



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Successful foster parents have two things in common: they have a desire to help children, and they are flexible -- they know how to roll with the punches. Most importantly, foster families need to provide safe, stable and caring homes for children.

If you think fostering may be right for you, please read more about how you can make a difference in the life of a child or youth in foster care.

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3 A.M. - 7 A.M.
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7 A.M. - 10 A.M.
TONI TERRELL

10 A.M. - 1 P.M.
REV. AL SHARPTON
(KEEPING IT REAL)

1 P.M. - 3 P.M.
KENNY SMOOV

3 P.M. - 7 P.M.
D.L. HUGHLEY

7 P.M. - 9 P.M.
PAPA SMURF

9 P.M. - 12 Midnight
MIKE SHANNON

12 Midnight - 3 A.M.
MIKE SHANNON

3 A.M. - 6 A.M.
TOYA BEASLEY

6 A.M. - 12 NOON
SUNDAY MORNING GOSPEL
WANGELA

12 NOON - 1 P.M.
HIGHLAND C.C. LIVE
BROADCAST

1 P.M. - 4 P.M.
PAPA SMURF

4 P.M. - 12 Midnight
DOUGLAS WILLIAMS



Tom Joyner
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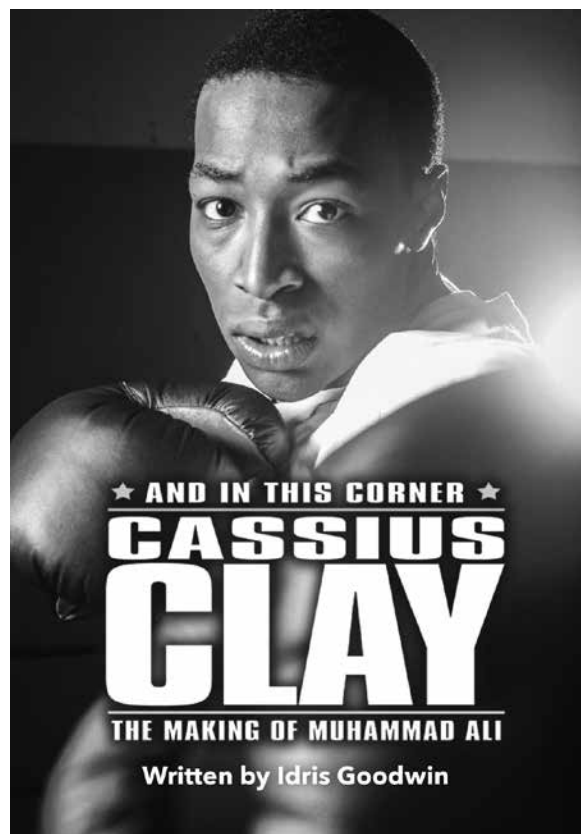


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Dogs make great reading partners

For many children with learning challenges like dyslexia, the idea of sharing a book aloud is fraught with anxiety. Finding the courage to overcome the fear of reading can be a battle.

"I don't like reading because

I'm not good at it," says fifth grader Kaleah.

But not on Shadow Day. At Sitton School in north Portland, the kids in Mande Bish's classroom have picked out their favorite books to share with a new friend—a black and white poodle named Molly, who is there to listen to their reading.

Educators say that dogs make

great reading partners because they can gently nudge students to keep going, or strategically place a paw to offer support and enhance focus. Dogs also have a calming effect that can reduce anxiety, and their quiet presence boosts confidence, courage ... and reading comprehension.

Indeed, Molly quietly lays on her blanket and sets her chin on



The comfort provided by a black-and-white poodle named Molly helps Kaleah, a fifth grader at Sitton Elementary in north Portland, lower her anxiety level during a reading session.

the kids' legs, closing her eyes to the soft sound of the students' reading. No matter that their words are sometimes halting. No matter that they miss some words or mix up letters. Molly patiently listens, and the kids finish their books and forget for a moment their struggles with reading.

"That was so fun!" says Kaleah. "I can't wait to read again!"

Shadow Day is an annual event to honor Shadow, a dog born on

Valentine's Day, who is the inspiration behind the nonprofit Shadow Project. The Shadow Project arranged for Molly's visit in collaboration with Columbia River Pet Partners to celebrate its 15th anniversary in Portland Public schools, and the fourth year in the district's innovative, collaborative Read Together initiative, which is focused on literacy in underserved schools.

For more information, go to shadow-project.org.



1974: Commissioner Charles Jordan is sworn-in as the first African American elected to the Portland City Council.

Prosper Portland celebrates Oregon's black pioneers

Opportunities to celebrate African American contributions to Portland's history continue beyond Black History Month.

Learn more about the courageous and influential men and women who led the Civil Rights Movement in Oregon through the Oregon Historical Society's exhibit and programming, **Racing to Change: Oregon's Civil Rights Years**, through June 24.

www.prosperportland.us/events



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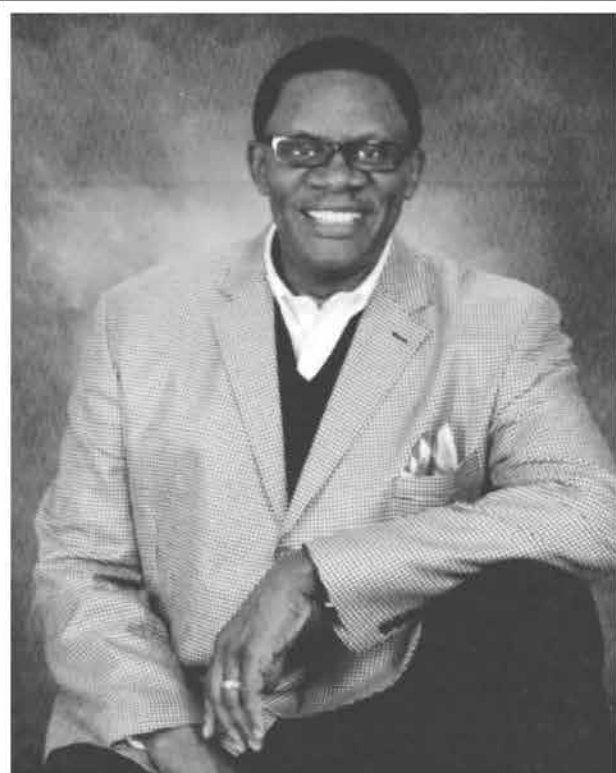
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And in This Corner

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Not only did he use his new found skills to defend himself against bullies, but quickly rose through the ranks of amateur boxing rings, garnering numerous Golden Glove awards and later, at age 18, an Olympic Gold Medal.

As a young man in the Jim Crow-era South, and a descendant of slaves himself, Clay was impacted by racial inequality and the 1955 murder of Emmet Till, a young boy around his age who was brutally tortured and killed in Mississippi, and whose murderers were acquitted, which sparked national outrage.

The young Clay took his frustrations out in the ring, where only his skill as a fighter and not the color of his skin determined his merit, right at the time when athletes of color in America were breaking through to the mainstream.

Alexander hopes the play will shed light on the historic civil rights era for the younger generation and spark conversations with their parents long after the curtain drops.

"The idea of segregation and Jim Crow laws are kind of hazy [for kids] and so they get to see this on stage and kind of have it explained to them. I would love if that conversation was being had," he said.

Originally from Perry, Fla., Alexander had been inspired by Ali from an early age and even had dreams of becoming an all-star athlete himself.

"I grew up with Muhammad Ali on my wall, and Malcolm X on my wall," he said.

It was during his last month of high school, in his senior year, when Alexander got involved in an independent film in Tarpon Springs, Fla. and where he met other show business professionals who encouraged him to pursue a career in acting and the arts.

Alexander said he continues to draw inspiration from Ali's sheer confidence.

"The thing that also resonates with me is that he found his passion early and committed to it," he said. "His hard work gets overshadowed by his personality, but the man worked hard. He always had that discipline. There's a reverence and a masterful craftsmanship that comes with that. And I look up to that just being an artist and working hard."

Alexander went on to graduate from one of the highest ranking historically black colleges in the nation, Florida A&M University, as a theater major. He was later became an acting apprentice with Portland Playhouse and even started his own theater company, Confrontation Theater, which explores the realities of the African American experience through the voices of modern black theater talent in



PHOTO BY OWEN CAREY

Themes of racial injustice and childhood bullying come to life in a new Oregon Children's Theater play about a young Cassius Clay set in segregated Louisville, Ky. "And in This Corner: Cassius Clay," opens Saturday, March 3 and stars Portland actor La'Tevin Alexander.

Portland.

Jerry Foster, a prominent African American newspaper professional who has lived in Portland for the past 35 years, co-directs the Oregon Children's Theater production. He is also a board member, producer, director and actor for Passin Art, the oldest African American theater company in Oregon. Foster even met Ali at one time.

The play's boxing choreographer, Damaris Webb, is herself an accomplished athlete, having won a Golden Glove herself. She also plays Clay's mom in the play.

Webb also is co-director of the Vanport Mosaic Project, a community-driven showcase put on by

local artists, storytellers and media makers that engages the public of the history of Vanport city, a diverse and African American populated town north of Portland that was destroyed by Columbia River floodwaters in 1948.

Information about the nearly forgotten city will be on display in the theater lobby before each showing. Foote said the special exhibit is meant to emphasize that the Jim Crow-era South wasn't the only place in America with issues of race.

When Clay changed what he called his "slave name" to Muhammad Ali and converted to Islam after his first heavyweight title wins in the mid-60s, he set an example of racial pride for African Americans. He also conscientiously objected to the Vietnam War in 1966 by refusing to serve. In the process he was jailed and barred from the sport for several years, eschewing



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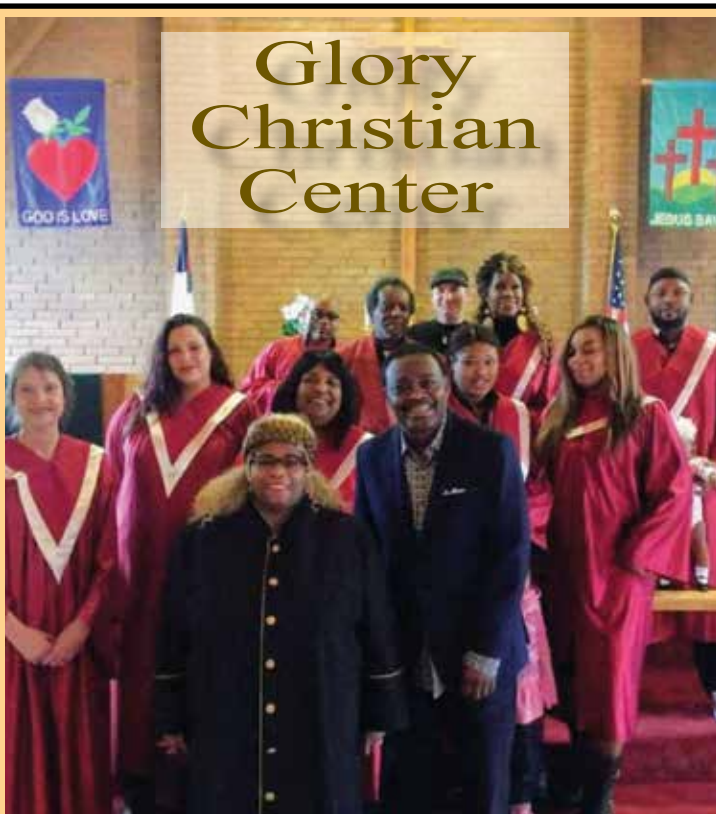
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Friday March 9th 7:00pm 2018

Saturday, March 10th, 7:00 pm

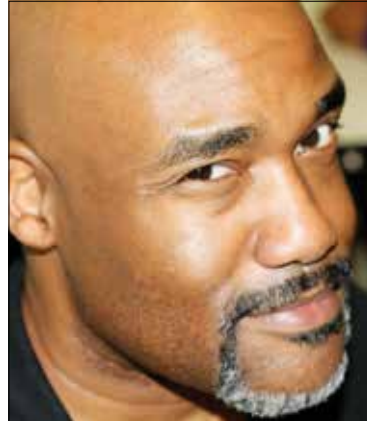
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Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

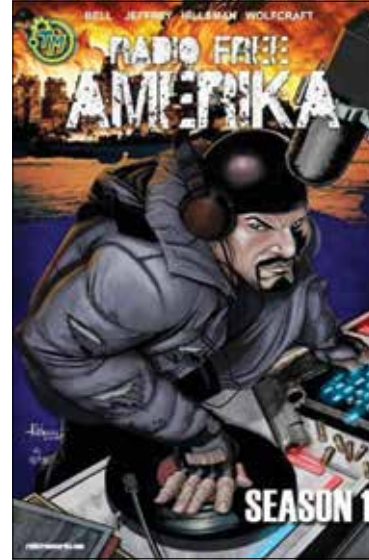
Local Author Weaves Hip Hop into Thriller



Barron Bell

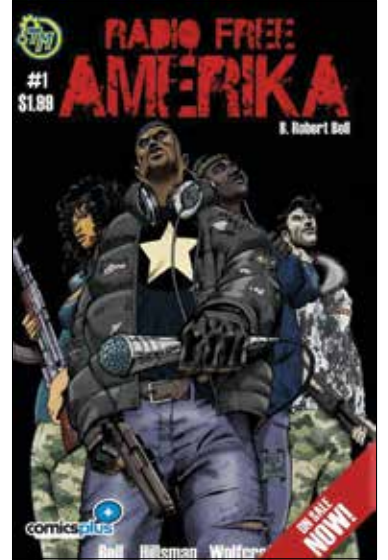
Hip Hop is alive and well in a post World War III world in a new graphic novel by Barron Bell, a Portland based professor and graphic novelist.

"Radio Free Amerika" is the apocalyptic thriller that deals with the aftermath of a Russian-occupied United States from the perspective of DJ Moses who provides hope to the resistance while spinning the best rap from a pirate



radio station.

Unbeknownst to the enemy, there is code interwoven in the beat. Will Moses be able to coordinate the disorganized resistance and inspire the next American Revolution? Find out in this new Glyph award nominated graphic novel.



Bell has been a professor at the Art Institute of Portland in Media Arts and Animation since 2014. He has a Masters in Communications from Regent University and a doctorate in education from Capella University. Radio Free Amerika is published through Terminus Media in Atlanta.

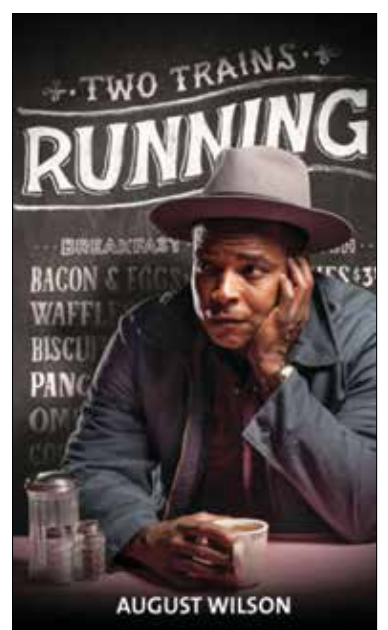
Collision with Gentrification

**Local theater
group presents
'Two Trains
Running'**

Portland's African-American producing theater company PassinArt presents 'Two Trains Running' by August Wilson, opening

Friday, March 2 and continuing all month at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave.

The play, by the late Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, paints a vivid portrait of everyday lives in the shadow of economic development and gentrification in the 1960s. It takes place in a restaurant run by a man named Memphis Lee. Diner regulars fight



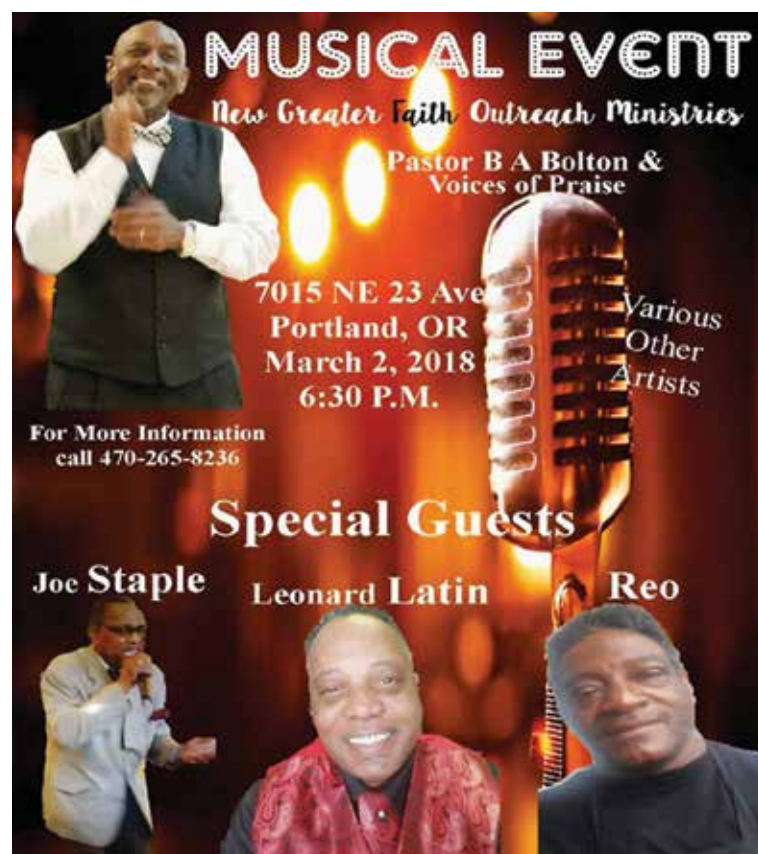
to hang onto their solidarity and sense of community.

"Two Trains Running," plays through April 1 on Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m.; and Sundays at 3 p.m.

With compassion, humor and a sense of place and time, Pulitzer Prize winning playwright, August.

The mission of the PassinArt theatre company is to entertain, educate, and inspire artists and audiences while addressing critical issues facing our community; and to celebrate our history and culture.

For tickets and more information, visit passinart.org.





The bold and innovative dance group Urban Bush Women will perform, Thursday through Saturday, March 1-3 at 8 p.m. at the Newmark Theater, downtown, in addition to a special community workshop on Saturday, March 3 at 1 p.m. at the June Key Delta Community Center, 5940 N. Albina Ave.

Bold and Innovate Dance

A celebrated dance group known for their power and humor in addressing gender identity and racial inequality will perform three shows in downtown Portland this week and attend a special community workshop on Saturday with a local African American sorority.

Urban Bush Women has been creating groundbreaking work rooted in a female-cen-

tric perspective for more than 33 years. The group's return visit to Portland, sponsored by White Bird, will include their latest evening-length work "Hair and Other Stories" scheduled for the Newmark Theatre, 1111 S.W. Broadway, Thursday through Saturday, March 1-3.

The company will front the special commu-

nity workshop "Hair Party," combining conversation with movement, on Saturday, March 3 at 1 p.m. at the June Key Delta Community Center, 5940 N. Albina Ave. A \$10 fee for the workshop will support Roosevelt High School's Black Girl Magic Club. To reserve a place and more information, email Renee Mitchell at create.artfully@yahoo.com.

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Arts & ENTERTAINMENT



A talented and gregarious soul singer struggles to find her health and voice again in "Miss Sharon Jones," one of more than dozen movies to get a screening for Women's History Month during the month of March at the Hollywood Theater in northeast Portland.

Women in Film Series Opens

In honor of Women's History Month, the Hollywood Theatre in northeast Portland presents a month-long celebration of the women who have shaped the film industry, beginning with a screening of "Broadcast News" on Monday, March 5 at 7:30 p.m.

The non-profit theater has curated a selection of more than a dozen films for the month that feature women in front of the camera and behind it. Invited film programmers and community partners will at-

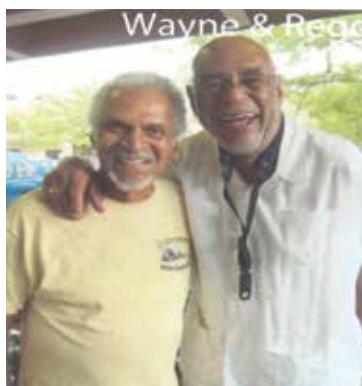
tend many of the screenings, sharing the films that influenced them as feminists.

The aim is to celebrate the contributions that women have made, and continue to make, to the film industry, while acknowledging the ongoing need for advocacy on behalf of marginalized voices in the film industry, specifically trans and nonbinary filmmakers and filmmakers of color.

For a complete schedule, visit hollywoodtheatre.org.



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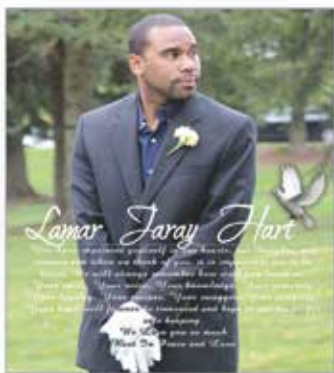
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Inclusive Force in Hip Hop Tours

Brockhampton, a Los Angeles-based hip-hop collective known as one of the most progressive and inclusive forces in rap right now, brings their national tour to Portland's Crystal Ballroom on Friday, March 2. Brockhampton was founded on the Internet forum KanyeLive leading them to be described as 'The Internet's first boy band.'

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Everybody Reads --

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brary's 16th annual communi-

ty reading program

is underway with 5,750

copies of Moshin Hamid's 'Exit

West' now being distributed across

the district so readers and students

can engage with the book's themes

of safety, migration, displacement

and conflict. Hamid will speak

on Thursday, April 5 at 7:30 p.m. at the Arlene

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OPINION



Shouldn't Be the Only Time We Talk About Mental Illness

The aftermath after another mass shooting

BY JILL RICHARDSON

After every mass shooting, we repeat all of the same things.

Some call for gun control. Those against gun control say this isn't the time to talk about it. The Onion reprints its story titled, "No Way To Prevent This," Says Only Nation Where This Regularly Happens," and updates the dateline to reflect the location of the new mass shooting.

When the shooter is white, we talk about mental illness. If they're not, we talk about terrorism.

Then, Congress does nothing.

But, so long as we're discussing mental illness, I'd like to weigh in. That's something I know a bit about. I suffer from anxiety, PTSD, and depression.

I'm not a potential murderer. Mostly I just hide in my bed and cry and get down on myself. My mental

illness paralyzes me and keeps me from getting work done, and then I heap shame on myself for not getting work done.

There are an awful lot of mentally ill people like me who are not potential security threats. We're already stigmatized enough without being suspected of mass murder too.

From where I stand, there are two problems with "solving" mass shootings in this country by simply keeping the mentally ill from owning guns.

First, banning the mentally ill from owning weapons only takes guns away from people who are diagnosed with mental illness. That includes a lot of people like me who've sought out help. We're under a doctor's supervision. Many others aren't.

Second, taking away guns while not actually fixing how we treat mental illness isn't much of a solution. That basically says it's OK to let millions of Americans suffer so long as they don't shoot anybody.

We have a system in place that deals with only the most extreme cases.

We can lock up people who commit violent crimes, or take kids away from parents who abuse them. We provide (some) help to the most severely disabled mentally ill people, through Social Security disability. And we can temporarily put people who are dangerous to themselves or others in a mental institution.

What about everyone else?

If you're insured, it's relatively affordable to get on medications for problems like depression and anxiety. Medication, when it works, literally saves lives.

If you're not insured, it's trickier. And when there's an underlying problem that needs to be addressed through therapy, medication is a Band-Aid.

I still wonder why no adults noticed my problems when they were developing when I was a kid. A simple screening in my school could have gotten me started on treatment much earlier.

Even teaching mindfulness meditation or yoga in school would have helped.

It took until age 34 to discover the treatment that works for me: a form of psychotherapy called So-

matic Experiencing and a form of bodywork called myofascial release. Together, these two therapies are changing my life in a way I never even dreamed was possible.

But they cost \$10,000 per year if I go every week.

I'm not so sick that I need to be on Social Security disability, but I am too sick to work full time at most jobs. I struggle to earn enough just to live in general, so coming up with an extra ten grand a year is almost impossible. I've relied on crowdfunding to help.

I'm lucky I have friends who can afford to help. Not everyone does.

Survivors of the shooting in Florida are leading a courageous new call for gun control. Maybe this time will be different.

But if we're going to talk about mental illness in the mean time, can we really talk about it? It's not OK to let millions of Americans keep suffering and call it a success so long as none of them kills anybody.

OtherWords columnist Jill Richardson is the author of Recipe for America: Why Our Food System Is Broken and What We Can Do to Fix It. Distributed by OtherWords.org.

Fix Your Sidewalks

My late wife, Enola Gay Badrick, was being treated for cancer. She was enduring both radiation and then chemotherapy treatments at OHSU. Finally, I noticed some signs of her

feeling better.

She made a short walk to our neighborhood store one evening. But she didn't recall that I had reported to the city on at least two occasions about a block of uplifted sidewalks.

Well, an uplifted sidewalk caught her foot and she fell very hard. There was never another

sign of recovery.

The city does not have the time or the finances to fix these sidewalk problems. I say to homeowners, fix your sidewalks. It may save a life. It's also the decent thing to do.

Bruce C. Badrick
Northeast Portland

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

OPINION

The Second Amendment and White Anxiety

America clearly has a gun problem

BY OSCAR H. BLAYTON

There has been yet another school shooting in America. The multiple murders at the Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. mark the 18th school shooting in this nation since the beginning of the year. And once again the only response by elected officials has been to offer "thoughts and prayers" for the victims and their families.

News anchors and pundits scratch their heads and ask, "What can be done to fix this?" while ignoring the obvious answer - limit access to guns.

If this seems like madness, it's because it is. This country clearly has a gun problem, a problem that can be solved if we act, as so many countries around the world have done. But we choose not to.

Much of the blame for these killings is placed at the feet of the National Rifle Association, the political behemoth that slides dollars into the pockets of every conservative federal elected official and to many state politicians as well. These "bribes" ensure that conservative politicians will not enact any meaningful legislation that will stop or slow the flow of guns, even into the hands of the criminally insane. But the NRA could not exist without a culture in this country that places a higher

priority on the right to gun ownership than on the lives of school children.

The main question then becomes, "How did this madness come to dictate America's priorities?"

In attempting to answer this question, we cannot ignore the racial dynamic of America's obsession with guns. White men can walk the streets with fully loaded automatic rifles and suffer no negative consequences, while people of color are shot dead for having a toy gun.

This is because the freedom of Americans to bear arms that is not the real issue here; it is the freedom of white Americans to arm themselves against people of color (who are perceived as a threat).

Even though the great majority of mass shooters are white, the perceived threat is the armed person of color. The psyche of many white Americans are tainted by a fear of retribution for past wrongs and injustices committed against people of color. This fear will not go away anytime soon because for as long as the injustices persist, the fear will persist and the gun culture will persist.

So, the mass killings will persist.

Typically, and ironically, the victims of American injustice are not doing the killing. A segment of the white populace that is armed to the teeth unleashes its murderous anxiety by firing assault weapons,

killing the innocent. It may seem farfetched to quote a character from a "Star Wars" episode, but in this case, the warning by Master Jedi Yoda's makes sense: "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering."

To those whites prone to such behavior, Donald Trump has given license to openly fear and hate people of color. The resulting suffering has followed, as night follows the day.

The problem of mass shootings is most definitely a gun problem. It is also undeniably a mental health problem. And at the base of it all, the root of the gun culture that allows the mentally ill to run around with the capability to commit multiple murders is white America's fear of people of color.

But the fear that many white people have of people of color pales in comparison to their fear of a black man with a gun. The high-water mark for American gun control legislation during the last 80 years was in the late 1960s, due in large part to the Black Panther Party showing up heavily armed at the California State House in May 1967. The sight of armed black men with large afros and berets sent a chill down America's spine and sparked political activity that eventually led to new gun control laws being passed in federal and state legislatures.

In the years since, law enforcement across the country struck heavy blows against black organizations perceived to be radical,

armed and dangerous. These organizations began to fade and the perceived threat level lessened. Once this happened, gun control began to be relaxed.

A working paper released by the Harvard Business School in 2016 explored the impact of mass shootings on gun policy from 1989 to 2014. It showed that gun laws have been loosened over the years by legislators courted by the gun lobby. The paper even states, "When there is a Republican-controlled legislature, mass shootings lead to more firearm laws that loosen gun control. A mass shooting in the previous year increases the number of enacted laws that loosen gun restrictions by 75 percent in states with Republican-controlled legislatures."

In other words, when there is a mass shooting, Republicans make it easier for someone to commit another mass shooting by loosening gun control laws. This can best be explained by the existence of a great fear of, and a need to arm against, the perceived threat posed by people of color.

The gun lobby's 2nd Amendment argument to keep and bear arms is predicated upon self-defense. But the language of that amendment begins, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State..." Gun rights advocates never talk about this first clause of the one sentence that is the 2nd Amendment. The necessary "well regulated Militia" underpinning the right to keep and bear arms has been swept aside, as

it is now alleged that the amendment addresses the security of individuals rather than that of the "free state."

Today, it is white privilege, not America, that some white people are seeking to protect by the 2nd Amendment.

We must now ask ourselves, "How do we, as citizens, take on the gun lobby and the culture that supports it?" Clearly, our current, collective elected officials will do nothing.

We, as citizens, need to begin on the local, state and federal levels to replace politicians who are lackeys of the NRA and the gun lobby so that we can pass laws restricting access to automatic weapons. The right to bear arms does not mean the right to bear all weapons. Ordinary people cannot possess mortars, rocket launchers or grenades, so, why can't we extend these prohibitions to include automatic assault rifles? Why can't we mandate strict background checks and limit the number of guns an individual can purchase?

We must put people in office who have principles and who value human life over profit and privilege and find ways to pass laws that create more effective gun controls.

It is time for us to use gun laws to protect citizens rather than to secure white privilege.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia.

Been Waiting My Entire Life for a Black Superhero

The power of being represented

BY LAKAYANA DRURY

I remember sitting on the floor of Lakeview Library, six years old, pulling out the bins of superhero comics and staring at the covers of Hulk and Wolverine. I remember stuffing my backpack full of action figures as a kid on my way to school. Taking my Batman figure on adventures around my house.

I remember playing Power Rangers at recess at Lapham Elementary and wanting to be the Red Ranger because he was the lead-

er, he was cool and also white, and wanting to change my name to Tommy. I remember creating my own superhero comic in sixth grade, Morpho Man, who I drew as a white guy and it never

occurred to me that he could be black.

I had no understanding of race at the time. It never crossed my mind that all of my action figures in my backpack were white. I was and still am a dreamer. I acted out countless battles and adventures as a crime-fighting superhero as a kid on playgrounds across my city. Punching and kicking at villains that were so real to me as my imagination ran wild. And as big as my imagination was, never once in those childhood fantasies did I envision my alter ego was

black. And while I didn't grow up to wear a cape or mask, I did become a real life superhero of sorts; a teacher.

All of those memories of comics and heroes played in my mind as I sat in the theater with all of my students for the new movie Black Panther. I organized a trip for my whole school because I wanted them to see a black superhero on the big screen.

Especially for my students of color, I wanted them to be part of their moment. White boys had their moment when Star Wars came out in 1977. White children had their moment when Harry Potter came out in 1999. For little black boys and girls, and adults who had once been little black boys and girls, finally this is our moment.

I wanted them to see powerful

black men and women fighting villains. Whose names were not Bruce or Peter or Jane. I wanted the idea of black superheroes to seep into their conscious so that the next time they drew a superhero it would occur to them that he or she could be black. Or maybe Asian or Muslim or transgender.

I wanted them to see black men that were scientists, women who were warriors and young people who were inventors. I wanted them to see an Africa that stood in its power. But I also wanted them to understand it was bigger than a film.

Before the movie, we discussed the context leading up to the production of Black Panther -- that there wouldn't be a Lupita Nyong'o without Hattie McDaniel; that 100 years ago "Birth of a

Nation" was playing in the White House; that Denzel Washington won an Academy Award for "Training Day" and not Malcolm X; and how we went from Blaxploitation films in the 1970's to Afrofuturism in 2018.

I was little me again in the theater as I watched T'Challa leap, run and fight across the screen. I was the little boy on the court in Oakland, star-struck as his ship flew overhead.

I have been waiting my entire life for a black superhero on the big screen and I didn't even know it. I want my students to know it. I want them to feel it. To understand it. And then, like T'challa, I want them all to go out into the world claim their throne and be great. Wakanda Forever!

Lakayana Drury is a teacher at Rosemary Anderson High School.

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When we say we are building an equitable economy to serve the city and its residents, we mean it. But we also know that it takes a lot of leadership and support. Prosper Portland created the Equity and Inclusion Program Manager position to strategize and implement external and internal equity efforts with a supportive and motivated team. Are you someone who can help us move beyond aspiration and toward achievement and assessment of our equity goals? Do you want to be part of an agency that is taking strides to be a workplace where every employee experiences belonging and trust? If that's you, please apply!

As part of the Social Equity, Policy and Communications Department, this position will provide leadership, direction and guidance for equity, diversity, and inclusion-based internal and external strategies and programs. For internal equity initiatives, this position will serve as a group facilitator, subject matter expert and consultant to the agency. For external initiatives, this position coordinates and consults with staff on public engagement and outreach strategies for agency meetings, events, and programs that encourage inclusive community engagement and improve access and participation for underserved communities. Establishes, develops and advances relationships community-based organizations, leaders, and networks to foster inclusive community engagement and mutual collaboration. In addition, this position will serve as a liaison between the agency and key standing committees and advisory bodies.

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'Get Out' Best Film of 2017

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

films about people facing ethical and moral questions at moments of crisis or loss. This is their best work yet, in my view, a suspenseful story about a young doctor, Jenny, coming face to face -- in a way that most of us avoid -- with the importance of facing the truth of one's actions.

Early in the film, Jenny is riding her intern hard about being too soft; she is feeling her power, about leave her practice working with struggling working-class people in order to accept an appointment in a prestigious practice. One night, just after office hours have ended, someone rings the bell of the office, and seems frantic; the intern moves to open the door but Jenny stops him, asserting harshly that the caller is too late. A few days later police inform her that a young woman was found dead near her office, and it turns out from the security tape that it was the woman ringing the bell.

Jenny immediately feels responsible for not letting the woman in and wonders if she may have contributed to her death. Her attempts to talk to the intern fail; she finds that he is about to quit medical school, giving Jenny another reason to feel terrible. She eventually admits, to him and to herself, that she too wanted to open the door that night and that she had prevented him from doing so only to get the upper hand. This is the kind of self-assessment most of us avoid.

Jenny decides not to take the prestigious job and, for the rest of the film, goes to great and frequently dangerous lengths to find out what happened to the dead girl. She encounters a succession of people who did things they are ashamed of that may well have contributed to the girl's death, and most of them are experiencing some kind of health problem

-- back pain, stomach pain, infections. It's subtle but clear. Many are angry with Jenny for asking questions, and she puts herself in some real danger. But she is compelled to pursue the truth; she can't get the woman out of her head.

The film is exceedingly wise about how people work, and about systemic injustice.

3. *"The Florida Project"* is the work of writer-director Sean Baker, whose *"Tangerine"* was on my

guts and quick flashes of anger, and their life together is achingly precarious. Yet Moonee feels (and is) loved (or what passes for it in Hailey's conception), and slams through her world with the utmost ballsy confidence, armed with Hailey's lessons in hustling, grabbing what she wants and leaving carnage in her wake.

As he did in *"Tangerine,"* Baker helps us to linger inside a world of the marginalized that most of

with a 10-foot pole; I left wrecked, and grateful.

4. *"Whose Streets?"* deserves much more attention that it has yet achieved. Its smart director, Sabaah Folayan (a black woman), and her co-director, Damon Davis, clearly fought like hell to tell the story of the protests in Ferguson, Mo. in the aftermath of the police shooting of Michael Brown from the perspective of the black citizens who sought to challenge what had happened. The contrast to the narrative that carried the day in the mainstream media is so

acting with agency. We need more of that kind of filmmaking.

5. *"Coco"* is the most joyful film on my list, and this most Mexican of stories is inspiring as an example of how even a major studio can honor a community outside the dominant culture from a place of curiosity and admiration, and without centering whiteness. I imagine lots of mistakes were made in the production process -- I've read about some of them, including that Disney made an early effort to trademark "Day of the Dead" -- but the studio evidently righted itself enough to enlist some of its most vocal Mexican-American critics as advisors, prioritized Latinx voices in the cast and crew, and emerged with a beautifully realized celebration of Mexican culture. They even released it in Mexico first, where it quickly became the highest-grossing film in Mexican history. What a joy for Mexicans to see Hollywood-level resources devoted to presenting a feast of color and story and in-jokes that first speak to what is theirs -- and what a joy for me and other Mexican-Americans and Latinx people here in the U.S. to see pieces of our culture legacy celebrated with such joy and dignity. We exist! We are gorgeous! And there is music, and spiritual wisdom, and a brilliantly imagined world of the dead here to thrill and teach and entertain anyone ready to enjoy them. This is for all of us.

6. *"Abacus: Small Enough to Jail"* does an excellent job of breaking down a particularly clear example of structural bias, even if director Steve James (*"Hoop Dreams"*) doesn't completely understand what that is. He and a terrific production team put their storytelling talents to good use in laying bare the complicated story of the one bank that was prosecuted as a result of the 2008 global financial crisis: a small family-owned bank that serves an underserved community of Chi-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



The 2017 documentary *"Whose Streets"* looks at how the killing of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo. inspired a community to fight back and sparked a global movement.

list of the best films of 2015. Here again, his compassionate focus is the underclass of people who live on the edge of destitution, next door to la la land -- in this case, Disney World. Six-year-old Moonee (played by the irrepressible Brooklynn Prince) lives with her mother Hailey (still a child herself) in a week-to-week budget motel painted in bright pastels and sporting discount fairytale trappings, originally built to house park visitors and now housing the virtually homeless. Hailey is a profoundly neglectful parent, plainly having experienced only neglect herself; she manages her untenable circumstances with

us would avoid, and avoids the temptation to romanticize or solve its unsolvable problems. Here he also imparts a picture of childhood that is parked on a precarious and thrilling edge; by filming largely from Moonee's viewpoint, Baker allows us to experience her childhood both as she does and as we would from a safer adult vantage point, a view largely embodied by Willem Dafoe as the longsuffering and resignedly compassionate caretaker of the motel. It all builds to a final scene that is as devastating as any I can remember seeing. Baker knows how to lead audiences to wrestle with truth they normally would not touch

telling; this film is a master class in allowing the marginalized to speak their own truth. My second viewing occurred shortly after seeing Kathryn Bigelow's film *"Detroit,"* about the 1967 uprising, and I was struck by what a better film this documentary is. *"Detroit"* depicts the suffering of black people, but never shows them acting with agency, and its director and writer miss completely how problematic it is for white people to control how that story is told. *"Whose Streets?"* is directed by a black woman who understands the importance of depicting not only the suffering of black people but also of showing them



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"Fats" Domino, 1928-2017
(best-selling R&B artist)

27

Marian Anderson, 1897-1993 in Portland OR (opera singer)
Polar Bear Day

28

Public Sleeping Day
Charles A. "Bubba" Smith, 1945- (NFL player: actor)

February 2018
CALENDAR

'Get Out' Best Film of 2017

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

nese immigrants in New York. An absorbing film and a perfect case study.

7. *"Call Me By Your Name"* fully deserves the rapturous response it got from audiences and critics. Italian director Luca Guadagnino has not only created a heartbreakingly beautiful gay love story; he has captured the ache of longing and falling in love more profoundly than I can remember seeing on film. I caught myself holding my breath several times while watching it -- even without narrating the thoughts of Elio, the 17-year-old boy at the center of this story, Guadagnino (and Timothée Chalamet, in an astonishing performance) make you feel the push-pull of fascination and obsession and irritation and urgency that drive him in the weeks that Oliver, a 24-year-old grad student, is living in the home he shares with his very groovy academic parents in Italy. And while the story is told from Elio's point of view, Armie Hammer's Oliver is compelling and gorgeous and diffident and yet believably vulnerable too. I appreciated the gentle way in which such passionate love was portrayed and how the film did not solve the discomfort we might feel with the difference

in age between Elio and Oliver. Michael Stuhlbarg as Elio's father also is especially wonderful and delivers one of the most moving speeches ever uttered on film by a father to his son, words not just for Elio but for so many others who never otherwise would hear them. In the end, so much is packed into so few words and images that you leave feeling like you understand something essential about these two men in the fullness of their lives, and hold the mystery of what it means to experience a love that, however fleeting, changes you forever.

8. *"I, Daniel Blake"* ought to be required viewing for everyone in the U.S. and other industrialized countries. The great British director Ken Loach does his best work here depicting the title character's Kafkaesque experiences navigating the British social services system. Blake is a 59-year-old carpenter who recently suffered a heart-attack; his doctors tell him he's not ready to go back to work, but his benefits have been cut off and his fight to get them restored would provoke a health crisis in just about anyone. This is not a documentary, but its dramatic rendering of the dehumanizing experience of obtaining help from the government is imparted with empathy and wisdom, aided by

an utterly believable and absorbing performance by Dave Johns as Blake, and by an equally excellent supporting cast.

Although this film won the prestigious Palme D'Or at the Cannes

putably brilliant poet who lived a very quiet life. But director Terrence Davies has found a way to present Dickinson, in her time, in a way that illuminates how a radical woman thinker could manifest in a time when it was not possible for a woman to be a radical thinker. As played by Cynthia Nixon (who

10. Actress Sally Hawkins has justly received recognition for her role in *"The Shape of Water,"* but I think she is even better in *"Maudie,"* the surprisingly effective homage to folk artist Maud Lewis. Disfigured by what appears to have been juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, Lewis was entirely self taught and lived in extreme poverty in Nova Scotia for most of her life -- and yet bright, colorful scenes of trees and cats and flowers flowed out of her onto just about every surface she encountered. She mostly painted them for herself until, at the end of her life, she enjoyed a surprising celebrity. This film treats her with consummate respect and is largely devoted to exploring her relationship with her husband Everett (Ethan Hawke, too handsome, but surprisingly effective), who hired her as his housekeeper and then married her. Their relationship is troubled and disturbing in many ways -- but the film treats them both with appropriate dignity and real insight. Whether or not the details are true, this film is true in the ways that are deepest and most important.

Darleen Ortega is a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals and the first woman of color to serve in that capacity. Her movie review column Opinionated Judge appears regularly in The Portland Observer. Find her movie blog at opinionatedjudge.blogspot.com.

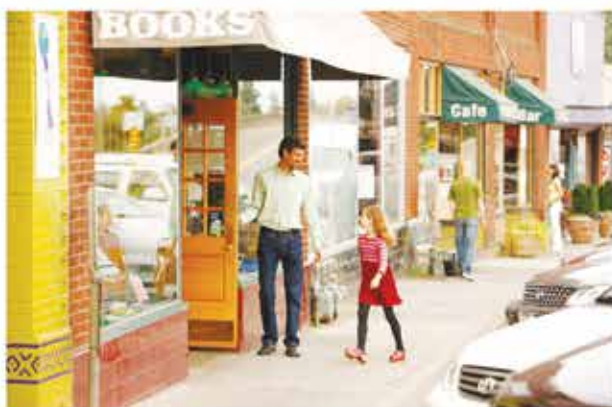


A Chinese immigrant family fights to defend themselves and the legacy of their Chinatown community bank in the new documentary *"Abacus: Small Enough to Jail."*

Film Festival in 2016, it received no Academy Awards notice. The Hollywood establishment has neither the clarity of vision nor the guts to honor stories like this, let alone to produce them.

9. I was quite stunned by how deeply *"A Quiet Passion"* affected me. Period pieces are very tricky; filmmakers often have a hard time letting go of a desire to beautify according to current standards, and the main character, here, Emily Dickinson, is an indis-

deserves the Academy Award for Best Actress), Dickinson speaks in measured tones and is devoted and respectful to her father, and yet she is funny and fierce and questions everything. Traversing her life from age 16 to her final years of seclusion before her death at age 55, this film captures what it means to operate far far ahead of one's time, and promotes a much deeper respect for an iconoclast who lived without appreciation or recognition until her death.



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