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Alarmed by Trump: Professor Sees Parallels to Era of Martin Luther King Jr.

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LOCAL NEWS

Alarmed by Trump

Professor sees parallels to era of Martin Luther King Jr.

BY ZACHARY SENN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As the nation transitions from its first black president to an incoming president-elect who ran his campaign on divisive and racially-charged language, an expert in race relations at Portland State University sees parallels between our current time and the era of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Dr. Shirley Jackson is a professor and chair of the Black Studies Department at PSU. Since assuming her position in January of last year, she has continued the department's nearly 50-year legacy of educating students and the community at large about the issues facing communities of color in the Portland area.

Jackson says one of the defining characteristics of MLK's civil rights era was political activism by students, the response to injustices that she believes has once again reached a fever-pitch on today's campuses.

"We do see students on college campuses again taking the lead, as they did in the 1960s... Pushing for answers," she says. However, one big difference



Shirley Jackson

Jackson cites between then and now, are fears for the future of free speech, with activists and students of color "feeling as though their voices are going to be stifled with the new administration coming in."

Jackson says that modern-day activists should also prepare to face the same repercussions that

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Drum Major Ecumenical Service

Panel discussion to highlight MLK celebration

BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

One of the oldest African American congregations in the state, the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, will host people of faith from across the state this weekend to honor of the late civil rights leader Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

The two-day commemoration of Dr. King's work for justice, peace and righteousness will begin Saturday, Jan. 14 with a noon luncheon in the church fellowship hall to honor students and community members who live their lives in the drum major spirit of King; and conclude with the annual Drum Major Awards and Ecumenical Service on Sunday, Jan. 15, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in the



Rev. Matt Hennessee

church's main sanctuary, 3138 N. Vancouver Ave.

Pastor J.W. Matt Hennessee will lead the service. Pastor E.D. Mondainé will sing the African American National Anthem, and Gov. Kate Brown and new Mayor Ted Wheeler will share a few brief words. A special focus will be a

panel discussion, "Where do we go from here," led by moderator Bill Deiz.

It has been a tradition at the Drum Major celebration for a keynote speaker to address the congregation, but when Pastor Hennessee saw the fears, anger and sadness which have risen in the community since the recent presidential election, he decided to address them with a panel of speakers to cover a diverse cross section of community and city leaders.

Members of the panel are Rabbi Michael Cahana from Congregation Beth Israel, Attorney and Portland Urban League President Nkenge Harmon Johnson, U.S. District Attorney of Oregon Billy J. Williams, Portland Police Chief Mike Marshman, Executive Director of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon Jan Elfers, Director of the Muslim Education Trust Wajdi Said, Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill, Nathaniel Williams of Unify

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St. Andrew Hosts MLK Service

St. Andrew Parish in northeast Portland invites the public to join them for their annual Martin Luther King Jr. Mass and service awards which will be celebrated on Sunday, Jan. 15 from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Awards will be presented to Catherine Bax and Ann Turner of the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, honoring their work to provide health care to underserved communities. The awards honor leadership embodying the racial and economic activism of the late Dr. Martin Luther



King Jr.

A community service award will be presented to Veterans for

Peace which uses non-violent means to achieve its goals and advance world peace.

Alarmed by Trump

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Civil Rights crusaders were subjected to decades ago.

"I don't want to sugarcoat things. I do think that there is a lot of reason for concern," Jackson says, alluding to conversations with international friends who believe that the United States is sending alarming messages through its recent electoral cycle.

She said the mass surveillance by government in today's environment to fight terrorism and other criminal activities has the potential to suppress protest movements.

"Many of the activists who are doing the work that they think is necessary at this point in time should be prepared for possible, serious backlash," Jackson says. "During Dr. King's time, there certainly was a lot of surveillance that was going on... Those individuals understood the ways that surveillance could occur, and the way in which those people who were involved in that surveillance might infiltrate those organizations."

Activists must remain vigilant for the possibility of infiltration within their ranks, she warns, while also lamenting that a changed attitude by the public towards surveillance may rob the public of understanding its gravity.

Though communities of color are entering a period of uncertainty under the incoming Trump ad-

ministration, Jackson believes that collaboration between community organizations can help galvanize and protect disenfranchised groups. In addition, keeping a positive public perception of organizations and communities can be instrumental to their ability to enact change, she says.

Jackson says that many in Portland's protest community have clearly communicated their goals and kept their public image positive. She cites Portland as an example of a city in which, "There are groups that understand the importance of collaborative efforts. I think that that will become more and more important."

She says while, "Dr. King certainly had ideas about the promise of the future... That we would be judged by the content of our character, and not the color of our skin," the 2016 election cycle showed this is not yet the case.

"We're not really a society where people are being seen as equals, and that becomes extremely problematic to solve," she says.

Jackson, who earned her Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California, says PSU's Black Studies Department was founded out of what had formerly been the college's Center for Black Studies in 1969, and has grown to an interdisciplinary school with appeal to a diverse array of students.

"I think we have the same purpose that we had when we initially started. And that is to educate and to serve the community," Jackson says.

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