



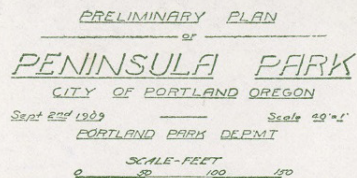
# **PARKS IN CONTEXT**

*A Community History of  
Peninsula Park*



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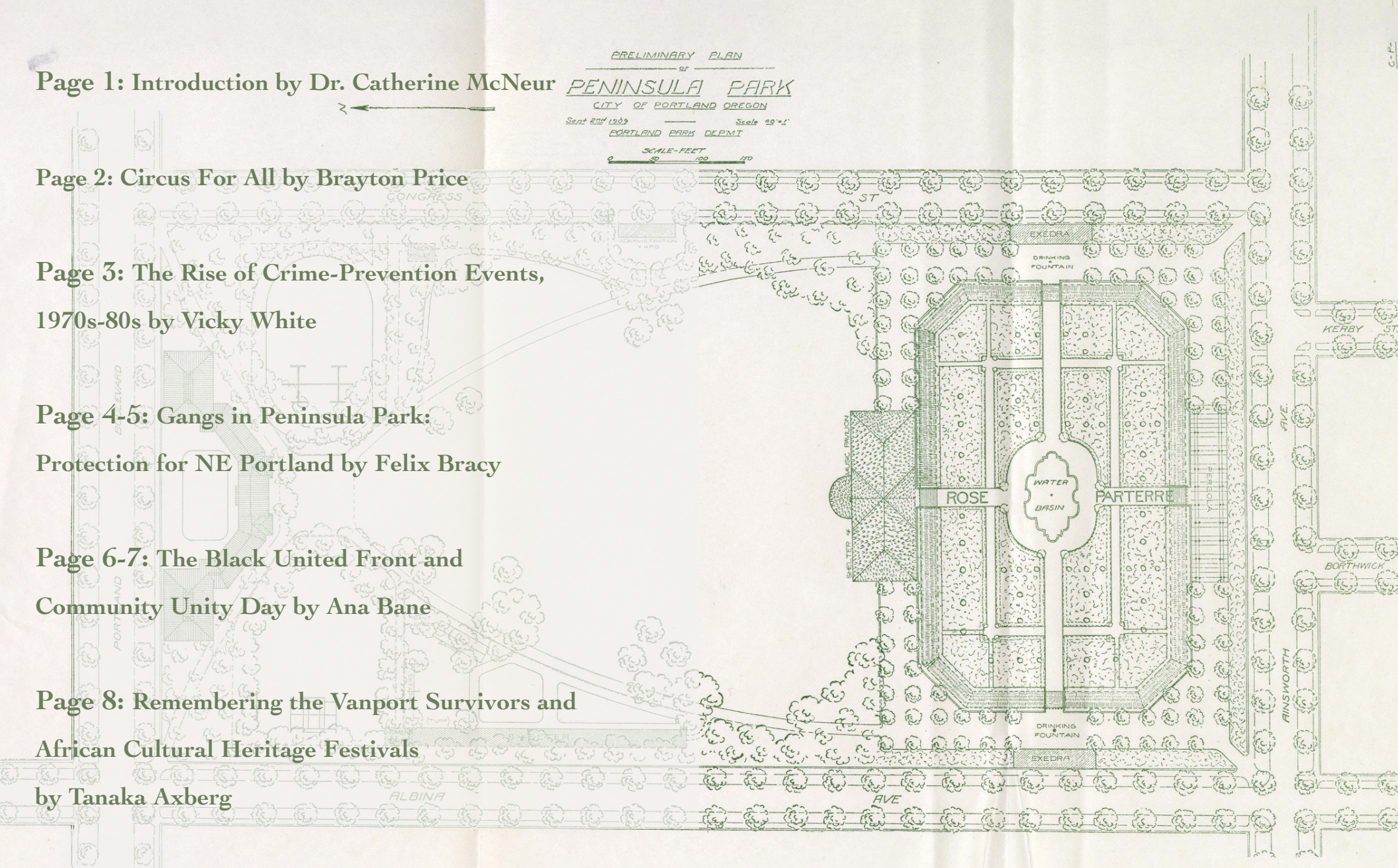
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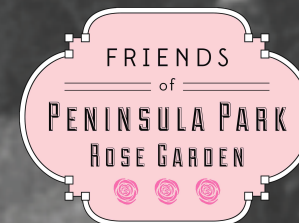


# Introduction:

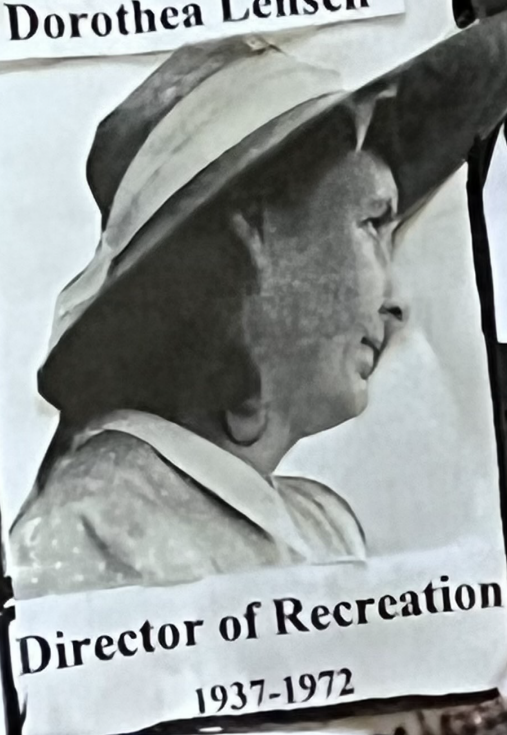
Inspired by the 2020 Black Lives Matter vigils and marches that began in Peninsula Park honoring George Floyd, the Friends of Peninsula Park Rose Garden reached out to Portland State University's History Department hoping that our students could help tell a richer history of how the park has been a home to so many communities over the twentieth century. This zine is our attempt to tell the park's story.

Professor Catherine McNeur  
Tanaka Axberg  
Ana Bane  
Felix Bracy  
Andi Johnson  
Brayton Price  
Vicky White

Images Courtesy of:  
City of Portland (OR) Archives,  
Oregon Historical Society,  
and Street Roots



Dorothea Lensch



Director of Recreation  
1937-1972

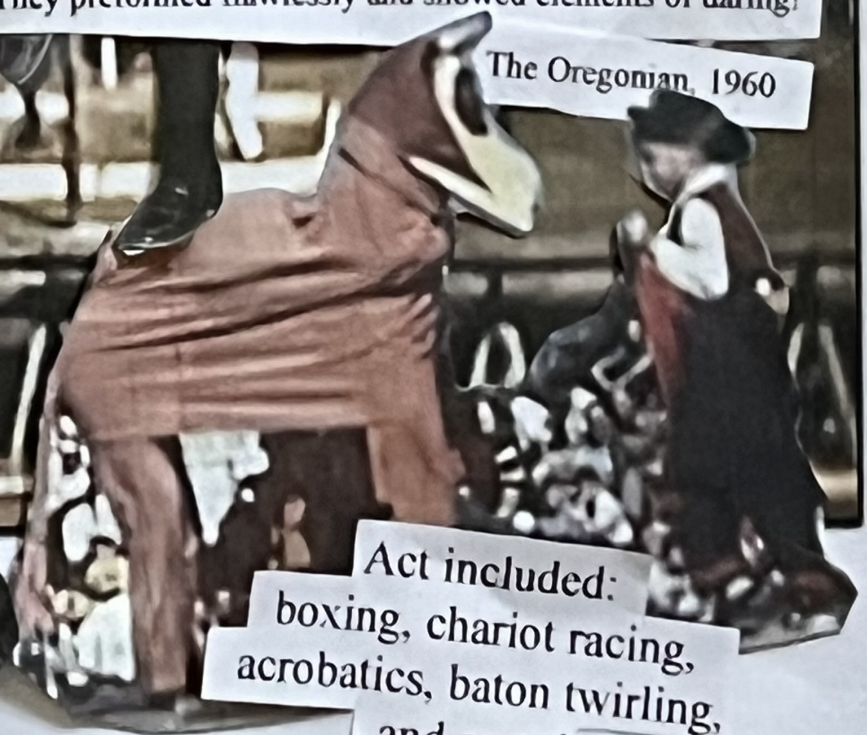
# CIRCUS FOR ALL

From the 1940s to 60s, Portland Parks and Recreation staged the annual Barr Bros. Circus in Peninsula Park. Portland youngsters ranging from kindergarten to high school performed in parades and shows, representing their local playground sites and recreation centers from all around the city



They performed flawlessly and showed elements of daring!"

The Oregonian, 1960



Act included:  
boxing, chariot racing,  
acrobatics, baton twirling,  
and more!

# Crime-prevention day to feature fun, games

In August 1979,

the Inner-Northeast Neighborhoods Against Crime program invited children and park-goers to “Crime-Prevention Community Field Day” in Peninsula Park, in which participants enjoyed activities such as bicycle-marking, puppet shows, a disco dance, and a variety of sports competitions.

Throughout the 1970’s and 80’s, Peninsula Park hosted a number of events aimed at youth crime-prevention as concerns over juvenile delinquency and crime came to the forefront of the nation’s mind.

The Piedmont Neighborhood Association and residents lodged numerous complaints of rowdy behavior, alcohol consumption, and vandalism taking place at night in Portland city parks – Peninsula Park included.



**PIEDMONT NEIGHBORHOOD  
ASSOCIATION’S CRIME-PREVENTION  
PARADE FEATURING MCGRUFF THE  
CRIME DOG (CENTER).**

3M+ THE OREGONIAN, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1982  
**Dozens answer  
 Angels' call to help**



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1982

Staff photo by GREG LAWLER

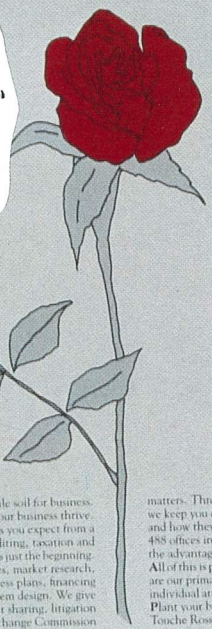
**Welcome Angels to city**

# GUARDIAN ANGELS AT PENINSULA PARK

In 1982, New York's "Guardian Angels," a volunteer street organization started by Curtis Sliwa, became popular in Portland. Peninsula Park fitness group "Crisp" headed by Penny Kelly and Roy Pittman even trained the "Rose City's Angels." Sliwa even noted that the program was more successful in Portland than in his home city of New York.



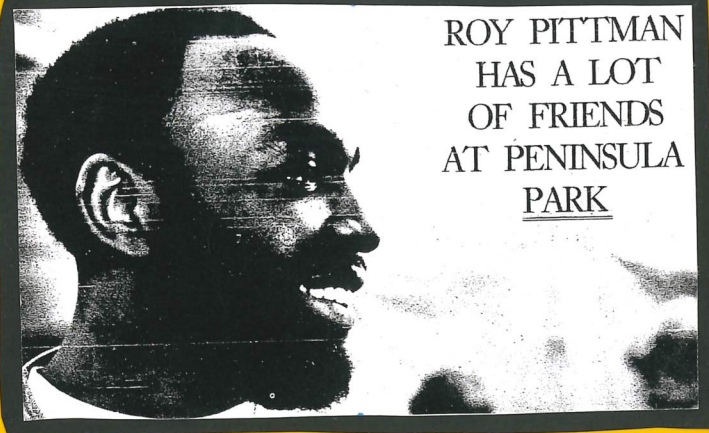
**and's Climate  
 for budding companies**



...provides fertile soil for business. The Ross can help your business thrive with the traditional services you expect from a Big 8 firm: accounting, auditing, taxation and management consulting. But that's just the beginning. We also provide feasibility studies, market research, long and short range business plans, financing alternatives and computer system design. We give advice on pension and profit sharing, litigation support and Securities and Exchange Commission

matters. Through our Washington Service Centre we keep you on top of developments at the Capitol and how they affect your business. And with 488 offices in 89 countries, Touche Ross brings you the advantages of an international network. All of this is provided by proven professionals. People are our primary resource, and you'll benefit from individual attention of our knowledgeable specialists. Plant your business in Portland and let Touche Ross help it grow!

**Touche Ross**

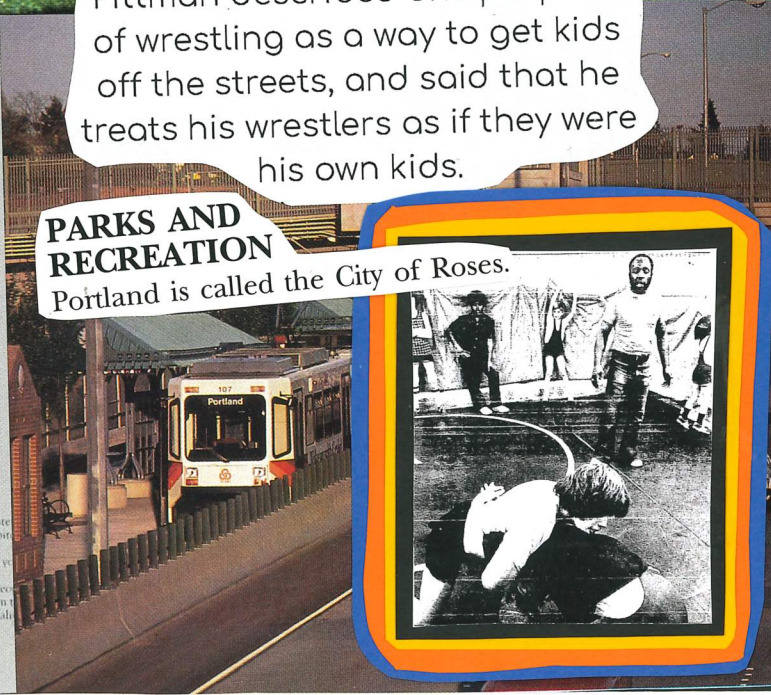
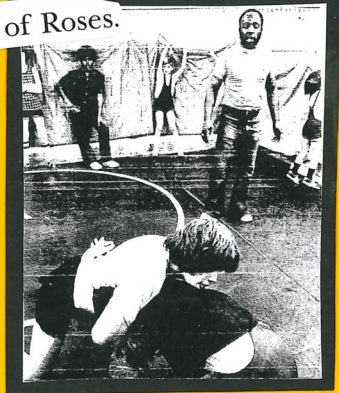


**ROY PITTMAN  
 HAS A LOT  
 OF FRIENDS  
 AT PENINSULA  
 PARK**

Roy Pittman's positive impact on the Peninsula Park community cannot be overstated. Pittman, a collegiate wrestling champion, founded the wrestling program at Peninsula Park in 1970. In an interview with *The Oregonian*, Pittman described one purpose of wrestling as a way to get kids off the streets, and said that he treats his wrestlers as if they were his own kids.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Portland is called the City of Roses.



# GANGS AT PENINSULA PARK: PROTECTION FOR NE PORTLAND

Peninsula Park's reputation has long been complicated, and many debate the existence of gang activity there and generally in Portland.

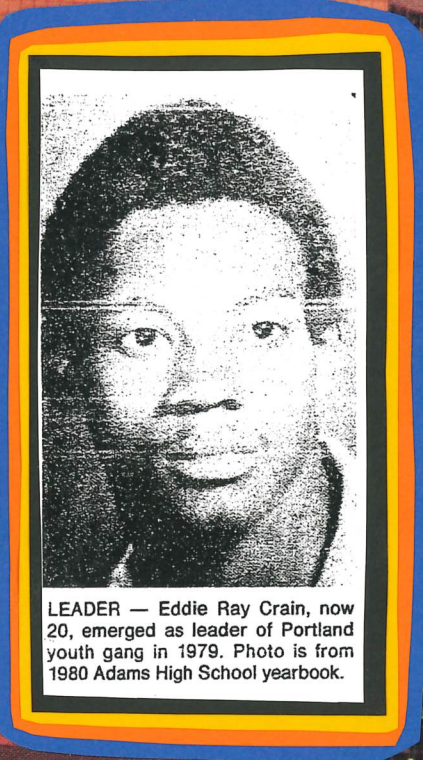
In the late 1970s, as youth unemployment soared and public disinvestment increased, Portland's first street gang since the 50s, the Dragons (later the Portland Crips), established their home turf in Peninsula Park. In an interview, the group's leader, Eddie Ray Crain, explained that one of the gang's purposes was to protect marginalized communities of NE Portland. In 1980, Portland Police estimated loosely 100 members in the Dragons alone.

They saw themselves as "self-protection" associations for the unemployed, the undereducated and the delinquent — some of the poorest of the poor in North and Northeast Portland. In a community grown increasingly impoverished, deprived of services and distrustful of police, they sought to impose what they saw as a rough kind of order.

He also wanted to retaliate against racial harassment.

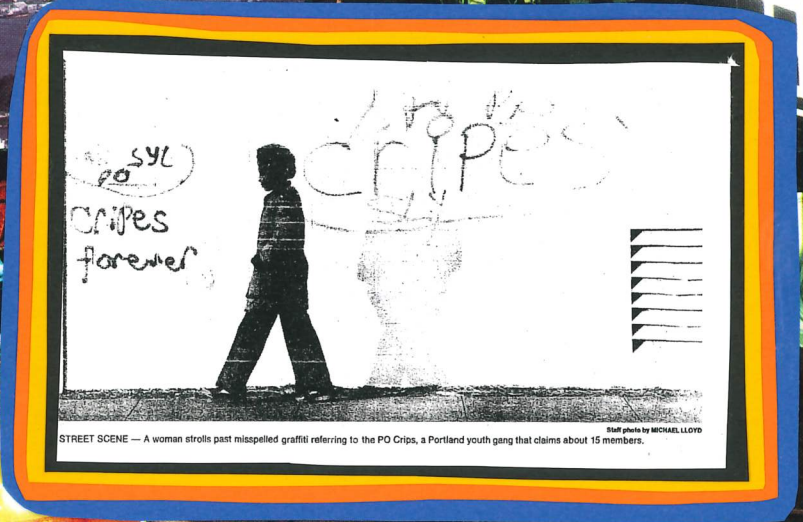
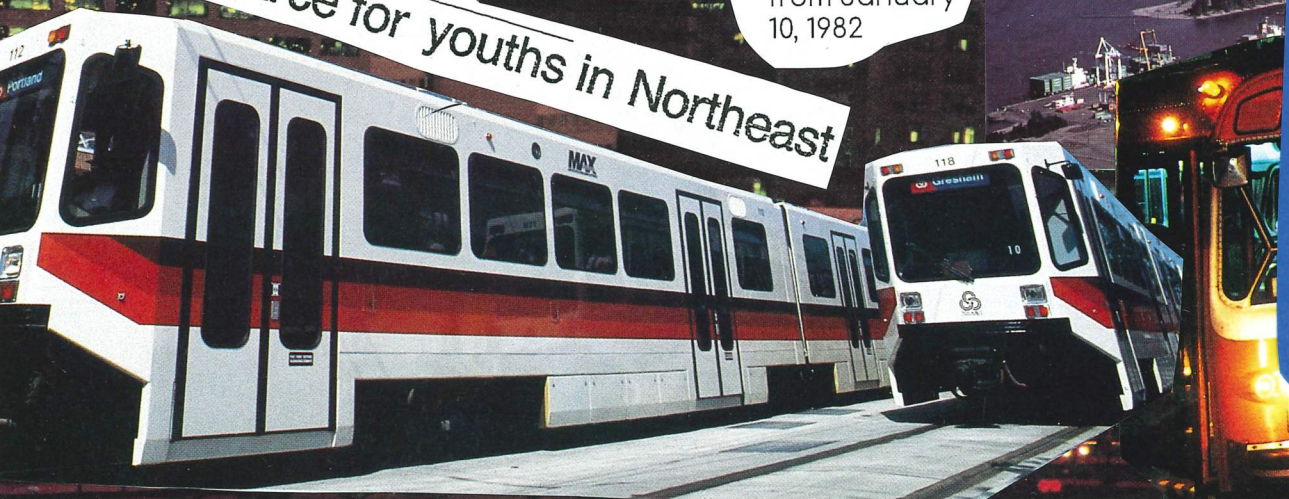
Crain said he formed the PO Crips in early 1981, after police had begun to stop Dragons wearing their distinctive jackets for questioning about crimes attributed to purported gang members.

Above: An interview with Eddie Ray Crain in *The Oregonian* from January 10, 1982



LEADER — Eddie Ray Crain, now 20, emerged as leader of Portland youth gang in 1979. Photo is from 1980 Adams High School yearbook.

Jobs scarce for youths in Northeast



STREET SCENE — A woman strolls past misspelled graffiti referring to the PO Crips, a Portland youth gang that claims about 15 members. Staff photo by MICHAEL LLOYD

# BLACK UNITED FRONT

NOW IS THE TIME



In 1987, the Portland BUF hosted an **MLK Day** celebration in Peninsula Park.

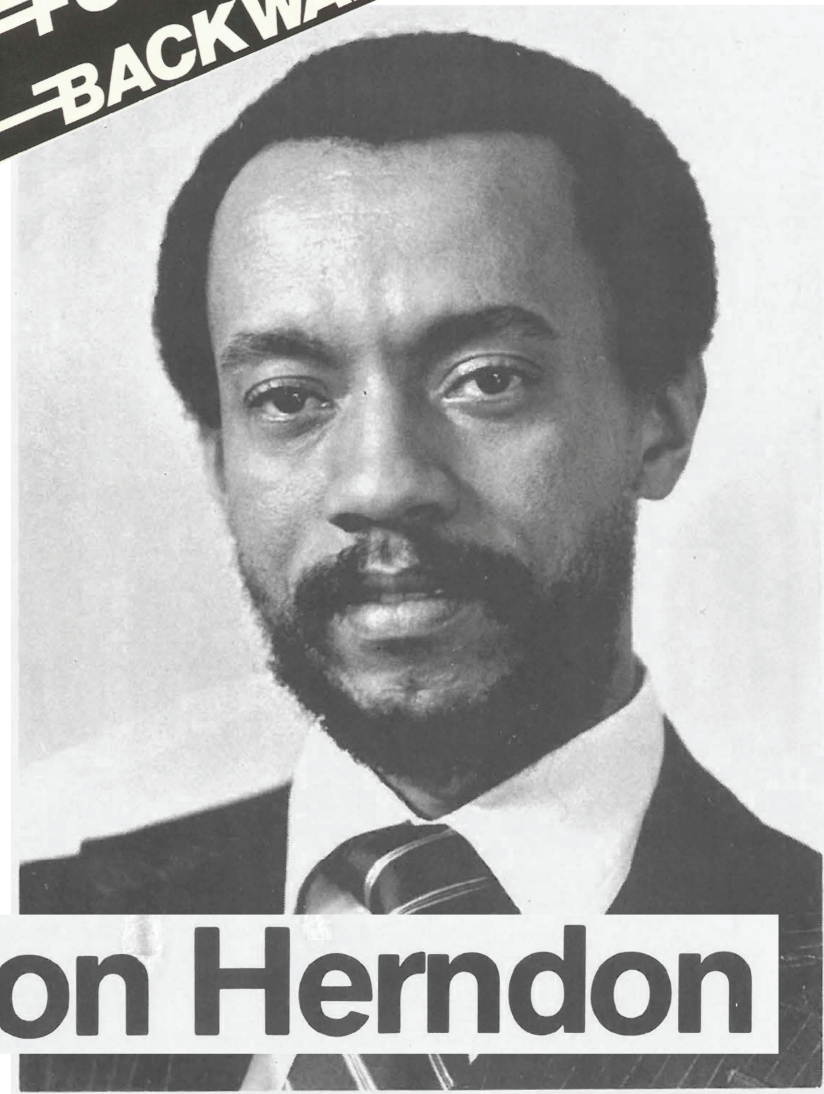
**FORWARD TOGETHER  
BACKWARD NEVER!**

A branch of the National Black United Front, the Portland BUF organized for racial justice in the 1980s, most notably desegregating schools and fighting police brutality. From 1981-1985, the Portland BUF held its annual **Community Unity Day** at Peninsula Park, an event featuring free food, live music, swimming, and games and competitions for all ages.

← From a BUF flyer ↓



Community unity day is the day the N.E. Community comes together to share its victories, realize its dreams and share the spirit of Black love.



**Ron Herndon**



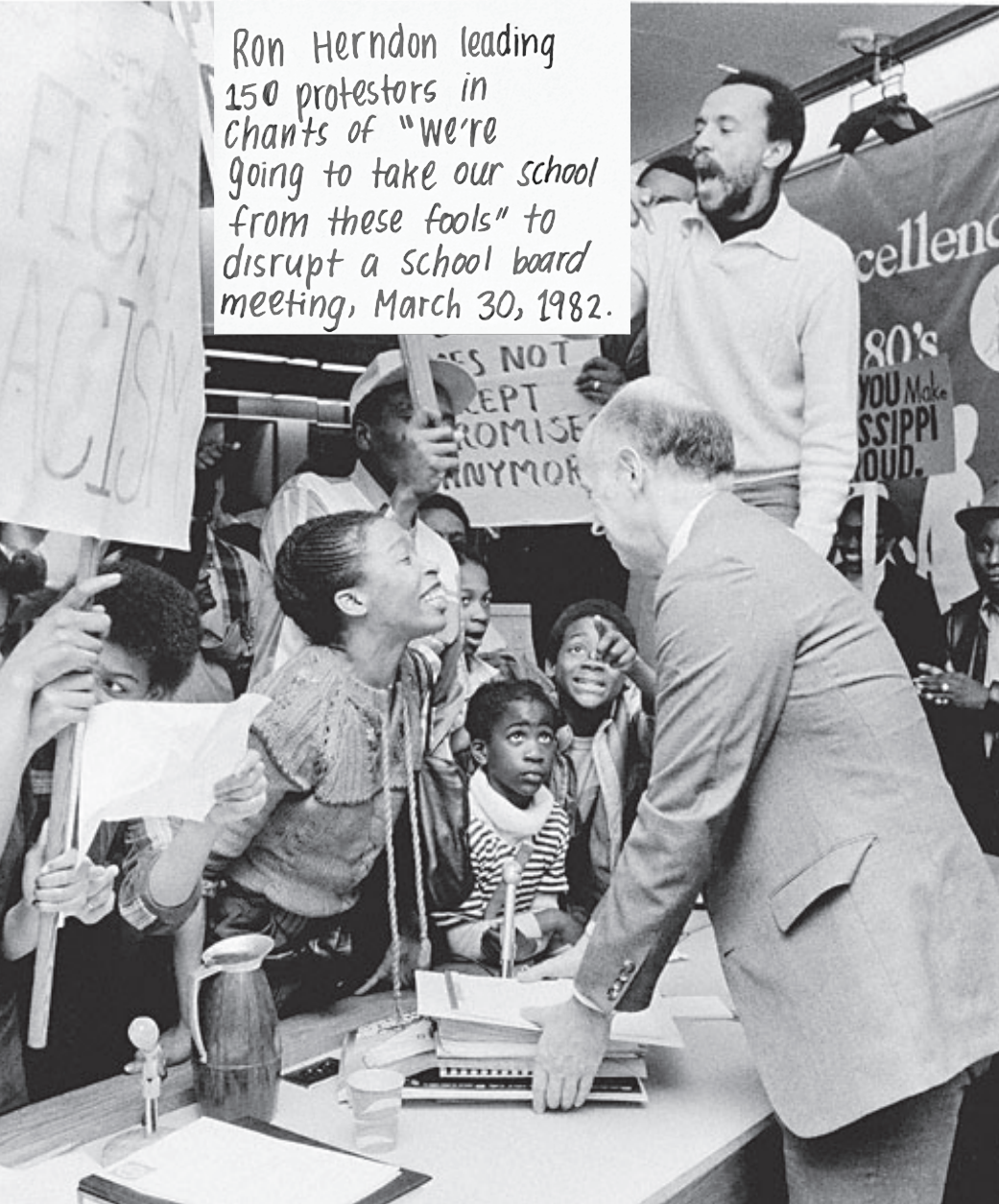
# Boycott Portland Public Schools

# 1982

Don't Allow Black Children To Be Forced  
Out Of Our Neighborhood Schools!

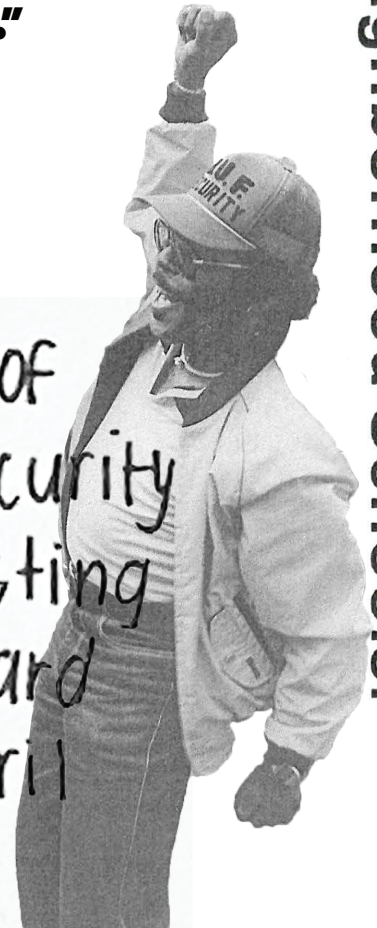
*We Must Protect Our Children.  
If We Don't—Who Will?*

Ron Herndon leading  
150 protestors in  
chants of "We're  
going to take our school  
from these fools" to  
disrupt a school board  
meeting, March 30, 1982.



The Portland BUF's boycotts  
in protest of the Portland school  
board's racist busing practices  
were so effective, they were adopted  
by the National BUF as the  
**"PORTLAND MODEL."**

A member of  
the BUF security  
team protesting  
a school board  
meeting, April  
12, 1982.



# AFRICAN ARTS AT PENINSULA

July 1997,  
Peninsula Park hosted the  
eighth annual Homowo  
African Arts Cultural  
Festival. The festival, held  
every summer in Portland,  
is named for a traditional  
harvest celebration that  
takes place in Ghana.



Since 2014 the survivors of the 1948 Vanport flood, and their descendants, are honored by Vanport Mosaic at their annual Peninsula Park celebration. After the flood, the demographic makeup of the Albina and Piedmont neighborhoods underwent a massive shift as thousands of recently displaced families sought out new places to live.

African Arts are still being celebrated at Peninsula Park as recently as 2018 when the Community Center offered a Kakatonon African Dance Workshop.

