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216-2022

Proclamation

Proclaim March 30th, 2022 to be Avel Louise Gordly Day

Placed on File

Whereas, Avel Louise Gordly was born in 1947 in Portland, to Beatrice and Fay Lee Gordly into a working-class family, her father was a Union Pacific Pullman Porter; and

Whereas, Avel Louise Gordly was educated in Portland's public school system; her mother enrolled her at Girls Polytechnic High School where students were offered college and vocation track education; as one of 20 African American Students; Gordly blocked attempts to put her in a vocational work track; and

Whereas, Gordly entered PSU's Administration of Justice program in 1971; Her Career in Public Service started in 1974 at the Oregon Department of Corrections, and she would later go on to earn an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from PSU in 2014 and she is senior fellow of the American Leadership Forum of Oregon; and

Whereas, Avel Gordly was recruited by the Urban League of Portland in 1979 as director of youth services; later as director of American Friends Service Committee, she traveled to South Africa and other countries as part of the Free South Africa Movement seeking to end apartheid; and

Whereas, Avel Gordly has a long history of volunteering for community causes including but not limited to her work with the Black United Front, Black Women's Gathering and Portlanders Organized for Southern African Freedom and the National Black United Front; and

Whereas, Senator Avel Gordly was appointed to the Oregon House of Representatives in September 1991, while working for the House of Umoja; as a Legislator she led a trade mission to South Africa and Zambia and participated in a trade mission to South Korea; and

Whereas, Avel Gordly served three terms as a State Representative and made history in 1996 when she was sworn in as the first Black woman Oregon State Senator; and

Introduced by

[Mayor Ted Wheeler;](#)

[Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty](#)

Contact

Derek Bradley

Policy Director

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📞 [503-823-8775](tel:503-823-8775)

Requested Agenda Type

Time Certain

Whereas, Senator Avel Gordly in 1999 became the chief petitioner for the constitutional amendment that removed the state's Black exclusion laws from the records. Oregon's Territorial Assembly had passed the laws 150 years earlier to forbid Blacks from settling in the territory; and

Whereas, Senator Avel Gordly left public office in 2009 then continued as an associate professor in the Black Studies Department of Portland State University; and

Whereas, Avel has been a mentor to generations of Black women interested in entering public service and politics; and

Whereas, Senator Gordly has volunteered her time to over a dozen regional community groups many of which focus on raising the voices of Black Portlanders including Black United Front, Black Leadership Conference, National Black United Front, and the Black Women's Gathering; and

Whereas, in 2008 Oregon Health and Science University Behavioral Health Unit was renamed the Avel Gordly Center for Healing, the Albina Early Head Start Center is also named after her, and the Oregon Community Foundation is creating a scholarship in her name to benefit Black Women; and

Whereas, in 2011 Senator Gordly opened up publicly about her own struggles with depression in her memoir, Remembering the Power of Words;

Now, therefore, I, Ted Wheeler, Mayor of Portland Oregon, "The City of Roses," do hereby proclaim March 30th, 2022, to be

Avel Louise Gordly Day

in Portland and encourage all residents to observe this day.

Documents and Exhibits

 [Proclamation](#) (139.91 Kb)

Agenda Items

216 Time Certain in [March 30, 2022 Council Agenda](#)

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