

RACHEL TALBOT ROSS A FIERCE ADVOCATE FOR EQUAL JUSTICE
By
Donna M Loring

I have read a number of very negative articles in the Portland Press Herald about Rachel Talbot Ross placing her twenty-one year service to the City in a negative light. Rachel Talbot Ross and her work with the City for twenty-one years will not and should not be defined by those articles.

I am Donna Loring, a Penobscot Nation Tribal Elder and former Tribal Representative to the Maine State Legislature. I served representing the Penobscot Nation for over a decade. I am a Vietnam Veteran. I fought fiercely for my Country and for our people and their rights.

Although I am not a resident of Portland I am no stranger to the city. I have worked at the University of Southern Maine as the Acting Director of Multicultural and Native American Affairs. I have served in the Legislature with both former and present Mayors and the President of the University of Southern Maine I spend lots of time in Portland going to meetings and visiting friends.

Rachel is a ninth generation Mainer. She comes from a family that has been on the front lines of the Civil Rights movement.

As many of you know she is running for the Portland District 40 seat in the Maine State Legislature. Rachel has extensive experience as an advocate and knows multicultural issues from the inside. She was the Multicultural and Equal Opportunity Officer for the city for twenty- one years. She is the President of the Portland Branch of the NAACP and the Founding President of Maine Freedom Trails. I first meant Rachel while she was meeting with Students at Bowdoin College to established an African American, Latino, Asian, Native American Student organization (ALANA) she had all ready established one at USM and was working to create branches at Bowdoin and Bates. Today she is still mentoring Students of Color. She established the Martin Luther King Jr. Fellows, a leadership development group for High School Students. They are an impressive very active group of Students who are working to educate the public about black history and civil rights. She also worked to establish the Maine Freedom Trails, which has permanent walking trails in Portland, Malaga Island and throughout the State. She has worked tirelessly to educate the public on civil rights and equal justice. She's put many hours of work every year into planning, directing and hosting the Martin Luther King events in Portland. The most famous event is known as the Martin Luther King Breakfast (recently changed to Dinner.) the largest gathering of Maine Leaders both political and Social in the State. You all know her advocacy work.

As a matter of full disclosure when I first formed my non- profit, seven eagles I asked Rachel to be on the board and she graciously agreed. I have worked with Rachel on various issues over the years, whenever I needed help to magnify or leverage Tribal issues Rachel was always there lending her voice. She has helped organize panels and

public discussions on racism and justice issues. She has been an untiring advocate for public housing, equal employment and people of color. She has spoken out about the unfair treatment of Prisoners of Color inclusive of Native Prisoners and continues to be instrumental in getting them fair treatment.

Equal Justice and Civil rights has been a full time job in Maine. Governor LePage took issue with the NAACP two weeks after he was sworn in as Governor telling the NAACP to kiss butt. Rachel's response to that comment was dignified and well spoken "Our kids deserve better, Maine deserves better..."

Sadly, recently, racism raised its ugly head in a very public way in the Maine State Senate. Rachel stood up and held the Maine State Senate accountable. No one else did that, not even the other Senators...

Rachel's work and legacy is a strong testament as to who she is and what she stands for. She speaks truth to power. If nothing else she has earned her place of respect and honor in the annals of Maine history. I for one am proud to know her and call her friend.

I can promise you this that if you choose to elect her as your representative she will be an aggressive advocate for your issues. She WILL get the job Done!