For Immediate Release

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Word is Bond announces In My Shoes walking-tour project for Black History Month 2022

- Date: Beginning February 5 - ongoing through February 26, 2022
- Locations: Lents, Mt. Scott, Cully, Kenton, Parkrose, North Portland, SW Portland, Beaverton, and Vancouver (WA) neighborhoods
- Walking tour dates, times, and sign-ups listed on the website
- Contact Lakayana Drury for media opportunities and interviews
- Project one-pager attached

Word is Bond presents “In My Shoes,” a storytelling campaign in celebration of Black History Month that features nine walking tours in neighborhoods across Portland led by the community ambassadors of Word is Bond. The tours are designed to highlight the voices, dreams, and experiences of rising Black men as well as the neighborhoods in which they live. Community members and law enforcement officers are encouraged to come to listen, learn, and reflect on the stories of young Black men that are not often told or listened to.

The walking tours are curated by Word is Bond’s community ambassadors (youth leaders who have participated in Word is Bond’s programs). “In My Shoes” events feature a 45-minute tour of a local Portland neighborhood, followed by a 15-minute question and answer period at the end of the tour. During the tour, community ambassadors will indicate important places in their community, share personal experiences that shaped them and ideas they have developed to better the community, and read original works of poetry.

In the lead-up to the tours, each community ambassador will have conducted a community audit of their neighborhood to assess strengths and areas of need. The tours will be backed up with data provided to the youth from Word is Bond community partners: the Portland Police Bureau, Bureau of Emergency Communication, Portland Fire and Rescue, and the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

Each tour will be offered twice, one to law enforcement officers and staff and one to community members. Community members can sign up for the tours through the Word is Bond website at www.mywordisbond.org/inmyshoes. Each Ambassador’s tour will be supported by an “honor guard” of Black men from the community.
“I am genuinely enjoying this project so much. As I grow older, reminiscing on my childhood and my neighborhood means so much more. I see the values and lessons that were taught to me through my neighborhood. Being able to do these walking tours brings me back to who I am and what I’m about. It lets me express and see the beauty in each and everyone’s neighborhood. We may live in different situations but at the end, we’re all young motivated Black men.” —Ted, Word is Bond Community Ambassador

“It is my sincere hope that every Police Officer in our city will have the opportunity to participate in these types of walking tours in the future with Word is Bond. This tour, as well as the entire summer Word is Bond program, made me a better police officer and more importantly, a better person.”—Officer Kyle Hefley, Portland Police Bureau

**Project partners:** Portland Police Bureau, Bureau of Emergency Communication, Portland Fire and Rescue, and the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

**About Word is Bond**

“Word is Bond is about empowering young Black men to tell their stories, speak their truths, and stand in their power. We don’t advocate for young Black men; we create opportunities for them to advocate for themselves. That is how we build power.” —Lakayana Drury, Founder, and Executive Director

**Our Mission:** To rewrite the mission between young Black men and law enforcement through leadership development critical dialogue and engagement.

Word is Bond began in the summer of 2017 with the Rising Leaders summer internship program. The Rising Leaders program brings together a cohort of Black youth and a cohort of law enforcement officers to listen, learn and communicate through guided dialogue and engagement. Word is Bond’s goal is to empower young Black men and create space for dialogue with law enforcement officers.

Word is Bond serves young Black men ages 16-21 in the Portland metro area and has two major programs: Rising Leaders, our paid summer internship, and Word Up, our school year leadership program.

Word is Bond has engaged over 1000 youth in the Rising Leaders and Word Up programs over the past four summers. Over 600 officers and ten law enforcement bureaus have participated in our summer internship program, implicit bias training, and other engagements.

For more information: [mywordisbond.org](http://mywordisbond.org)

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