

Biography, **Jo Ann Hardesty**

The Honorable Jo Ann Hardesty was raised overlooking the color line – literally – in Baltimore, Maryland. In time, her working class father would muster the financial resources required to take his family of twelve across that line: they were at the forefront as Baltimore began desegregating. From strong parents, who added church and school to a vibrant family life, Jo Ann plunged into life choices that had only recently become available to women of color.



Jo Ann was among the first American female sailors assigned to a naval vessel on sea duty.

Aboard the USS Samuel Gompers, she was one of 155 women among a crew of five thousand. Her tours included a station in the Philippines and her international experiences were launched. At the beginning of her political career, Jo Ann was a delegate to Association of Young Political Leaders in Australia. More recently she's seen the confluence of capitalism and authoritarianism as a delegate to a Chinese peace conference called Responding to Financial Crisis and Promoting Social Harmony.

After working in both private enterprise and the non-profit sector, Jo Ann served as Senior Policy Advisor to Multnomah County Chair, Beverley Stein. It is now one of Jo Ann's life goals to emulate for other women the encouragement Bev Stein provided; Jo Ann was prodded to run a successful campaign into the Oregon State Legislature in 1996. She represented District 19 until forced from office by term limits that had not yet been ruled unconstitutional. From her minority role on the Judiciary committee, Jo Ann developed sufficient perspective to co-sponsor Ballot Measure 57, designed to repeal mandatory sentencing which has been proven racially discriminatory.

Jo Ann has a proclivity for advocating for those on the downside of power. For six years she was Executive Director of Oregon Action, part of a national effort to redress race disparities in policing, health care outcomes, and educational achievement. In that capacity she oversaw Know Your Rights training, voter registration, and high-level negotiations regarding federal legislation. Jo Ann has shown long-term commitment to social, racial and economic justice. It took many years of organized advocacy for Portland City Council to adopt a Plan to Address Racial Profiling by their Police Bureau. Jo Ann continues to campaign for police accountability through her work with clergy in the Albina Ministerial Alliance.

Currently President of the Coalition for a Livable Future, Jo Ann is devoted to broad-based, community organizing. Through research, policy advocacy, and public education, Jo Ann and her fellows work to ensure clean water and healthy air; to protect farmland and wildlife habitat; all while also supporting living wage jobs, real transportation choices, affordable housing and an end to hunger in her community. She is actively campaigning to support Portland's progressive political endeavors with vibrant yet non-intrusive economic activity:

jobs with justice in a green collar economy.

Today, [Hardesty Consulting](#) makes available Jo Ann's expertise, drawn from a long history of dedicated organizing. She is on the edge of formulating a Political Action Committee, with the intent of not only developing a new generation of leaders, but also funding political campaigns so young leaders are more likely to get an opportunity to govern. It has been consistently Jo Ann's contention that we must nourish youth leadership, that in fact all substantial social change has been the result of their initiative & advocacy.

You may have seen Jo Ann on cable television. While President of Portland Community Media she also hosted *Close Up*, a series of in-depth interviews. Anyone who has listened to her long-running radio program, *Voices from the Edge*, will appreciate her infectious laugh. Jo Ann Hardesty is pleased to bring her voice to the campus of Washington State University.

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