



# Remembering the Power of Words: The Life of an Oregon Activist, Legislator, and Community Leader (Women and Politics in the Pacific Northwest)

*Avel Louise Gordly, Patricia A. Schechter, Melody Rose*

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*Remembering the Power of Words* recounts the personal and professional journey of Avel Gordly, the first African-American woman elected to the Oregon State Senate.

The book is a brave and honest telling of Gordly's life. She shares the challenges and struggles she faced growing up black in Portland in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as her determination to attend college, the dedication to activism that took her from Portland to Africa, and her eventual decision to run for a seat in the state legislature.

That words have power is a constant undercurrent in Gordly's account and a truth she learned early in life. "Growing up, finding my own voice," she writes, "was tied up with denying my voice or having it forcefully rejected and in all of that the memory of my father is very strong. To this day--and I am today a very experienced public speaker--preparation to speak takes a great deal of energy." That this memoir has its origins as an oral history is fitting since Gordly has used her voice, out loud, to teach and inspire others for so many years.

Important as a biographical account of one significant Oregonian's story, the book also contributes "broader narratives touching on Black history (and Oregon's place within it), and most particularly the politics associated with being an African American woman," according to series editor Melody Rose.

The inaugural volume in the Women and Politics in the Pacific Northwest Series (series editor, Melody Rose)

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