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OPINION

Proving Cities Can Lead on Climate Change

Portland acts before it's too late

BY DAPHNE WYSHAM

Mayor Charlie Hales recently took a step no other mayor in our country — and perhaps the world — has yet taken: He submitted a resolution to the City Council calling for an end to all new fossil fuel infrastructure in the city.

After listening to testimony from children as young as eight, elders, faith and tribal leaders, and sustainable businesses, all speaking with passion about the need to act on climate before it's too late, the council voted unan-



imously to pass Hales' landmark resolution.

This resolution is the most far-reaching of its kind: Oregon's largest city has gone on record saying it will "actively oppose expansion of infrastructure whose primary purpose is transporting or storing fossil fuels in or through Portland or adjacent waterways."

The resolution also included strong language promoting a "just transition" for any workers who might be economically dislocated as the city moves toward a greener and more sustainable economy.

While Portland, the first U.S. city to adopt its own climate action plan, is known internationally for its leadership in this arena, this initiative was unprecedented even here. It all began when

grassroots activists collectively said "no" to the dozens of proposals for oil, gas, and coal shipments out of the greater Northwest — projects that would carry as much carbon annually as five Keystone XL pipelines.

Activists hung a now legendary banner from Portland's iconic St. Johns Bridge that read simply, "Coal, Oil, Gas: None Shall Pass."

When Hales refused to back down in his support for a proposed propane terminal — the largest single business investment in Portland history — we orchestrated direct actions, taking over the City Council itself on Earth Day in humorous displays of disobedience.

We bird-dogged the mayor, spreading posters of his likeness

with the nickname "Fossil Fuel Charlie" around the city. Hales ultimately pulled his support from the project. But we didn't stop there.

We garnered international headlines when we mobilized "kayaktivists" and joined Greenpeace protesters in blockading Shell Oil's Arctic icebreaker, the Fennica, for 48 hours in Portland's docks. This action galvanized public attention and support to keep the Arctic off limits to all oil and gas drilling. We held rallies that swayed our city's leaders to divest from fossil fuels and oppose the expansion of oil train traffic within city limits.

These actions prove that a committed citizenry can persuade local elected officials to respond to climate science, despite the

gridlock at the state, national, and international levels. Innovative policies at the community level can make a big difference.

Portland's rejection of new fossil fuel infrastructure is consistent with the scientific finding that humanity must keep 80 percent of proven oil, gas, and coal reserves in the ground to prevent climate chaos. It also opens up the political and economic space to embrace the just transition to a clean economy.

If more cities follow Portland's lead, we might just meet this challenge. Join us.

Daphne Wysham is the director of the Center for Sustainable Economy's climate and energy program in Portland. Her commentary was distributed by otherwords.org.

Ugly Truths It's Way Past Time for America to Face

The scars left on college campuses

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Georgetown University President John J. DeGioia recently announced the university will rename two buildings on campus named for two 19th century Georgetown University presidents: Thomas F. Muledy, who in 1838 arranged the sale of 272 slaves from Jesuit-owned Maryland plantations and used the profit to pay Georgetown's construction debts, and William McSherry, who also sold other Jesuit-owned slaves and was Muledy's adviser. The sale ignored the objections of some Jesuit leaders who believed using the money to pay off debt was immoral and their demands that families be kept together.

Georgetown's action followed a student sit in outside President DeGioia's office but it was part of a longer ongoing process examining the university's historical connections to slavery. The renaming was one step recommended by the Working Group on Slavery, Memory and Reconciliation established by the president this school year.

Recently student protesters at Yale University repeated calls to rename its Calhoun College honoring slave-owning Vice President and South Carolina Sen. John C. Calhoun, already a subject of cam-

pus wide discussion. For years the college featured a stained glass window depicting Calhoun with a chained black slave kneeling in front of him. After complaints the slave's image was removed but Calhoun's remains as does his shameful legacy that haunts our nation still.

Georgetown and Yale are among the growing number of colleges and universities struggling to come



Many university founders and early presidents owned personal slaves including Dartmouth, Harvard, the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and more, and some colleges owned slaves.

to terms with their historical connections to slave owners, slave labor, and slave profits and the scars they leave on campuses and our nation today. What values do we want to hold up for our young as worthy of honor and emulation?

Brown University in Providence, R.I., was the first Ivy League university to move forward with a large scale investigation of its history under the leadership of former president Ruth Simmons. In 2003 she appointed a Committee on Slavery and Justice to learn more about Brown's past ties to slavery and wealthy bene-

factors involved in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Brown family included slave owners and slave traders as well as at least two members who became active abolitionists. The committee learned 30 members of Brown's governing board owned or captained slave ships and slave labor was used for some of the school's construction.

Brown is far from alone. In his groundbreaking 2013 book *Ebony & Ivy: Race, Slavery, and*

slave trade. Slaves helped build many university buildings including some at Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia. Students sometimes brought slaves to college to serve them, as George Washington's stepson did when he attended King's College in New York City, now Columbia University. Many university founders and early presidents owned personal slaves including Dartmouth, Harvard, the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) and

succeeded, as a court declined to convict him."

Slave corpses were used in a number of the colleges' medical and scientific experiments. In one of Wilder's examples, Dartmouth College founder Eleazar Wheelock's personal doctor arranged for a slave's skeleton to be wired up for study and his skin tanned at the college shop and made into a cover for his instrument case. Ongoing university "research" throughout the 19th century bolstered many of the race-based claims used to support slavery.

Across our country this ugly and profoundly morally defective past is finally being brought into the light. Brown University's Committee on Slavery and Justice said: "We cannot change the past. But an institution can hold itself accountable for the past, accepting its burdens and responsibilities along with its benefits and privileges."

More universities and institutions must follow Brown's example and engage in a thoughtful process of truth telling of their own and America's history in order to lift the indefensible blot of slavery on America's dream which plagues us still.

College students, faculty, and administrators seeking an honest historical accounting on their campuses are to be applauded. Only the truth will make us free and move us forward together.

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the Troubled History of America's Universities, Massachusetts Institute of Technology scholar Craig Steven Wilder documented many of these connections. In the book's prologue he says: "In short, American colleges were not innocent or passive beneficiaries of conquest and colonial slavery. . . . The academy never stood apart from American slavery—in fact, it stood beside church and state as the third pillar of a civilization built on bondage."

The nation's oldest colleges depended on direct and indirect wealth from slavery and the

more, and some colleges owned slaves.

William and Mary, one of the slave owning colleges, produced one of the most awful stories Wilder shares—that of founding trustee Rev. Samuel Gray, who "murdered an enslaved child for running away": "Rev. Gray struck the boy on the head, drawing blood, and then put a hot iron to the child's flesh. The minister had the boy tied to a tree, and then ordered another slave to whip him. The boy later died. Gray argued that 'such accidents' were inevitable, a position that seems to have