



Who's on our side?

By Graham Trainor Oregon AFL-CIO President

Allyship includes action

2020 has been quite a year for working people, and it's not even halfway over yet.

An economic system that was already making the lives of too many Oregonians precarious, unstable, and unsustainable was then made catastrophically worse almost overnight by a global pandemic. These truths illustrate a shared struggle of the working class in the midst of these unprecedented times.

But all things are not the least bit equal within this struggle. Just like black, brown, and women workers are left behind disproportionately by gains in the economy, workers of color are also being killed by the coronavirus at greater rates than white workers. If you are black or brown, study after study shows that health outcomes are between 30% to 40% worse than if you are white. The way our society has been built does not embody the freedoms espoused in our nation's founding documents, and it never has.

We must acknowledge the fact that our systems, our institutions, and our societal norms have been built upon a foundation of racism and white supremacy that gives some people privi-

lege, and intentionally takes it away from others based on the color of their skin. It is incumbent on white leaders in the Labor Movement to not only acknowledge this, but to act with the same urgency we tackle our everyday fight for economic justice as we work to dismantle these racist systems. The struggles for economic and racial justice are inextricably linked.

The critically important Black Lives Matter movement was not founded in the wake of the tragic murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, or any of the recent killings of unarmed black women and men. And its founding in 2013 as a grassroots, social media outrage to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's killer was also not the founding, by any means, of the struggle for black lives. The killings of black men and women at the hands of law enforcement and racist vigilantes is, unfortunately, nothing new for those directly impacted by systemic racism.

As thousands have rallied and marched in every corner of our state, rural and urban communities — from Ontario to Portland to Dalles — this movement for racial justice is unmistakable

and inspiring. Oregon's Labor Movement must rise to the challenge and redouble our commitment to black lives.

At a number of the daily actions in Portland and around the state, I've been proud to see many leaders, staff, and members in Oregon's Labor Movement humbly showing up, marching, and chanting. I've also been heartened to see many strong, progressive statements made by Oregon unions regarding support for the Black Lives Matter movement and calling for an end to systemic racism. These are absolutely important, foundational steps we can take... and showing up to actions and making statements isn't enough.

As trade unionists, collective action is in our DNA. The power of working people coming together to tackle injustice is who we are and what we do. And while our history has many proud moments of intersectionality with the civil rights movement, and we know that collective bargaining is a critical tool to dismantle racial injustice on the shop floor, the Labor Movement has also grappled with its own exclusionary history.

Seeing the incredible, black-led movement in our communities calling for change in recent weeks has awoken our nation to the systemic racism at play in the very fabric of our society. Police brutality and the senseless killings of unarmed black women and men at the hands of law enforcement is, unfortunately, not new, but this moment is different. Oregon's union movement has a responsibility to not just show up and is-

sue statements, but to join the calls for change in real, profound ways.

For white leaders, listening, stepping back, and supporting the black and brown leaders inside our unions and communities is an important step we can take. This listening must include gaining a deeper understanding of the calls for change being made in this moment, the calls to end systemic racism and more than 400 years of police violence against black Americans. Oregon's union movement has a unique opportunity to further align our vision for economic justice with the struggle to end racism and police brutality. This work must include the hard, uncomfortable, internal work of dismantling racism in our organizations. By deepening partnerships with black-led community organizations calling for change, supporting black leaders, and using our collective power to call on elected leaders to act with purpose, our movement will once again rise to the challenge of tackling injustice in all its forms.

We must keep showing up, dismantling racism whenever we see it, and keep being better allies. We must also do the harder, more important work of supporting the effort to enact lasting change. Allyship must include action, and we must do so much more, because Black Lives Matter.

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COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

OSU faculty ratify first contract

Faculty at Oregon State University, at a time of unprecedented challenges to higher education, ratified an historic first union contract June 12. United Academics of Oregon State University (UAOSU) represents 2,200 workers at the campus in Corvallis, Oregon. Seventy-two percent of the membership voted acceptance by a 99% margin.

UAOSU is affiliated nationally with the American Association of University Professors, American Federation of Teachers.

The victory comes after six years of organizing and 18 months of negotiating, and nearly two years after faculty filed a petition with the Oregon Employment Relations Board. The contract is one of the first in the Pacific Northwest for research-heavy, land-grant universities.

The union bargained with the university during marathon sessions to firewall salary cuts from deficit reductions, while acknowledging the need for some

shared sacrifice in the face of declining revenue.

"In the midst of a global pandemic, faculty are going above and beyond to shift to remote teaching, support, and mentor students, and find creative ways to continue making progress on important research and scholarship—including research that is crucial to addressing the COVID-19 crisis," said Marisa Chappell, associate professor in the School of History, Philosophy, and Religion.

Before the UAOSU contract there was no guarantee that facilities and equipment necessary to do job duties would be provided or maintained and no contractual guarantee of the right to refuse to do hazardous work. The new contract ensures that the employer must provide and maintain facilities and equipment necessary to job duties, and faculty have the right to refuse hazardous work — and there will be procedures for addressing workplace safety issues.