

Plug in, don't drop out, during challenging times

Not that we should have to be reminded, but the year is 2017. And we have a racist in the White House.

This past week's immersion course into latent and overt racism has left most Americans wondering: Where do we go from here?

What is the next step after the murder of Heather Heyes in Charlottesville, Virginia? How far have we come more than two months after the murders of Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche and Ricky Best on a Portland Trimet train?

Who's going to draw the line between a free-speech rally and unabashed domestic terrorism, complete with threats and acts of violence against members of the black, Muslim and Jewish community?

How many more are going to die at the hands of people emboldened with racism, hate and bigotry?

Certainly the fingers are pointing at Washington D.C., and a White House bent on pandering to – and profiting from – the lowest common denominator. The fact that the President of the United States clearly stroked white supremacists by putting blame on their protestors isn't a bumbling mistake, it's the politics of divide and conquer. The enemy of my enemy, as the saying goes.

But we also need to look closer to home on this matter. We shouldn't get swept up in the nation's race problem without acknowledging that violence and oppression against communities of color in our own state are more than just uncharacteristic aberrations. If we are going to emerge from these challenging times any wiser, stronger and more just, then the lessons start right at home. Here, where lawmakers degrade and dehumanize immigrants as "criminals" or "illegals" (State Sen Kim Thatcher among others), and where the violence and terrorism promulgated by white supremacy groups are condemned with the usual lip service, but only once they're falsely lumped together with Black Lives Matter and the

anti-fascist movement (State Rep. Bill Post, for example). No one side is wrong, apparently, if they're all bad, indistinguishable and insignificant – like the difference between fake news and real news, according to right-wing distortion.

This language of division spans not only racist and xenophobic bias, but economic and social class, including homelessness. In all its forms, it undermines real progress.

Portland has become a frequent destination for white nationalist and racist organizations to pound their chests and incite a conflagration. For that reason, we're going to be on the front lines for a long time to come. We have to be ready, because for all of our vigils and somber intentions, this administration will continue to fan the flames of racism, regardless of the violence, bloodshed and emotional trauma it causes our country. It's all in an effort to retain its power and keep the critics distracted from the work at hand, because that's one of the things racism is good at.

Meanwhile, the EPA is essentially being shut down and all pretenses of addressing climate change abandoned; Americans are being arbitrarily disenfranchised wholesale from the voting rolls; and health care – and subsequently the lives of millions of poor Americans seems destined for ruin. People are struggling to pay their rent, pay their bills, keep their children in school and put a meal on the table. On and on. Through all this, institutional racism is pushing forward, incarcerating people of color behind bars and singling out millions of American Muslims for discrimination and Latinos for incarceration and deportation.

It's all connected. You can't support one shade of oppression without endorsing it all. It has to start by addressing the alt-right rhetoric in our state house, and continue down to our own backyards.

So from here we go forward, not backward. Plug into your community. Go to the town halls and the neighborhood association meetings. If you're already doing this, bring a friend along next time.

History, from this day forward, begins now.

EDITORIAL

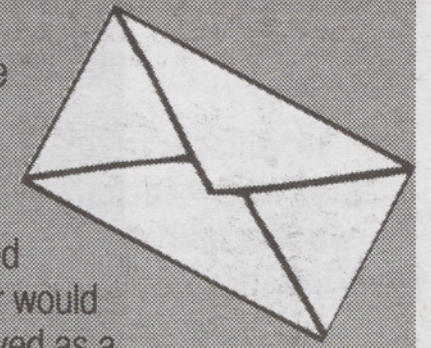


A demonstrator waves the American flag as part of the "Patriot Prayer" rally in Portland's Tom McCall Waterfront Park, June 30. The event devolved into a brawl between the right-wing Patriot Prayer supporters and anti-fascist protesters who confronted the event.

PHOTO BY DIEGO DIAZ

Write in

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