

in Washington state. In New Mexico during the exams, hundreds of students walked out, carrying signs that read “I am more than a score,” a majority of them Latinos.

And Hagopian says the decision to opt out is not just a fad fueled by white suburban mothers, as some claim. People of color are joining in, including influential black leaders like Karen Lewis, the head of the Chicago teachers union, and Gerald Hankerson, the leader of the NAACP in Seattle.

Hagopian says he sees common ground between the opt-out movement and the Black Lives Matter movement.

“I think the fight for black lives definitely means we don’t want to get shot down in the streets by unaccountable police,” he says. “But it also means we want an education worthy of black students that empowers them to understand racism and undo it.”

According to Hagopian, the roots of standardized testing can be traced back to the eugenics and white supremacist movements of the early 20th century. For all the complicated policies and acronyms that surround the current debate about education, Hagopian says, a history lesson is all that it takes to understand what is at stake.

“The first tests were developed by open eugenicists, out-and-out proud white supremacists,” he says, citing the example of Carl Brigham, who helped develop the SAT and whose 1923 book *A Study of American Intelligence* was influential in the eugenics movement.

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Once familiar with that history, Hagopian says, “you’ll never again fall for the lie that standardized testing is there to help black kids.”

He compares testing to a thermometer. “A thermometer never cured a fever, right?” he asks. He says that’s what these tests are, an effort to take students’ temperatures over and over in the form of standardized exams, even though the achievement gap between white and non-white students has been documented since the 1960s.

The trends in testing could be shifting. When Hagopian and his colleagues boycotted a standardized test in 2013, he says they received tremendous support from across the country. “It started with one teacher who contacted me and said she was going to refuse to administer this test,” he says, adding that “it has continued beyond my wildest imagination.”

Many of the leaders of the move towards standardized testing are “backpedaling,” he says, including President Obama, who recently conceded that students are taking too many tests.

And in Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown signed a law last June that makes it easier to skip the Smarter Balanced test: Parents can now opt out their child for any reason, while previously it was limited to disability or religious belief. ■

Jesse Hagopian and Dr. Wayne Au will speak 7 pm Friday, March 4, at First Christian Church, 1166 Oak Street. The event is free and open to the public.



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