

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

# A flashpoint in the history of segregation

Surprise and unexpected enlightenment are the joys of traveling. That is what happened to my wife and me during a recent tour of New Orleans.

It was offered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Our guide was John Klingman, whose architecture training was at the University of Oregon. An emeritus professor at Tulane University, Klingman has been involved in several New Orleans design projects, over decades.

Klingman walked us through the French Quarter and the Garden District while explaining the city's complicated racial history. Having been under French ownership, then Spanish and French again, prior to the Louisiana Purchase by the United States, New Orleans' history and culture are more exotic than any other American city I've visited.

New Orleans is renowned for its food, its partying and rich culture. The city is also a beacon for preservationists. Preservation is about more than structures. It is also about the story they tell — the role those buildings played in a city's history.

One destination we visited left an indelible impression on our group. In the Lower Ninth Ward lies the McDonogh 19 Elementary School building, which sustained flooding damage during Hurricane Katrina. This place carries enormous significance in the desegregation of New Orleans' schools in the wake of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Our guide was Leona Tate, who was one of the three African American girls who entered the school as first grad-



Leona Tate was among the first graders to help desegregate New Orleans schools.

ers in November 1960. She described being escorted into the schoolhouse by U.S. marshals while angry white adults shouted derision and profanity at them.

Within days, white parents withdrew their children. The windows of the three girls' classroom were covered with paper, to shield the girls from seeing the heckling whites. When asked where she and the other two girls played during recess, Tate said it was under the stairs. In recounting this part of her life, Tate's equanimity and resilience were remarkable to observe.

Tate and her program director in this project, Tremaine Knighten-Riley, a former high school teacher, have developed

a novel plan for preserving and interpreting this building's history while also doing adaptive reuse that creates affordable housing for seniors. The building's main entry, stairway and landing are called the Principal's Office exhibit. It will contain a dramatic and cinematic recreation of that first day when Tate, Gail Etienne and Tessie Prevost entered the building for the first time. Surrounding that space are the new apartments. Residents will move into those spaces on Dec. 15.

Tate's overarching goal in reclaiming the McDonogh story is to counter racism. The Leona Tate Foundation for Change purchased the building in Jan-



Leona Tate's overarching goal in reclaiming the McDonogh 19 story is to counter racism.

### LEARN MORE

To learn more about Leona Tate, go to: [www.leonatafoundation.org](http://www.leonatafoundation.org)

uary 2020. The two women continue to raise funds to complete the project. Meanwhile, Tate is also executive director of the nearby Lower Ninth Ward Living Museum.

The conceit of our times is that technology allows us to live beyond the reach of history. When Tate speaks to young people about her 1960 experience, she is very surprised with the disconnect of time — with how children think this was so long ago. At a time when America is being confronted by an awakening to the legacy of slavery and the price of racism, this New Orleans project is compelling and timely.

Steve Forrester, the former editor and publisher of *The Astorian*, is the president and CEO of EO Media Group.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Fallacy, indeed

Wow! The Nov. 30 letter by Brian Lavelle, "Fallacy," certainly contained many multisyllabled words in defense of *The Astorian* taking a handout from the government.

There are a few misconceptions put forward, however. The original letter did not conceive of a monolithic "deep state" with one will. That thought is from Lavelle.

In his letter, Lavelle drifts off to politically attack the last administration, which was not referenced, and had nothing to do with refuting the original letter.

He laments the "willfully ignorant or paranoid," again referencing the "deep state." It seems that Lavelle is obsessed with a fear of the "deep state" idea.

The basic question, honestly asked, remains unanswered. Why does *The Astorian* seek tax credits from the government? And what is the requirement to receive them? Perhaps an independent journalist will research the agreement and report.

ROBERT LIDDYCOAT  
Seaside

### Thank you

On behalf of the board of directors of the Eugene Schmuck Foundation, I would like to thank Matt Brown and Jeff Mitchell of Manzanita Links, who made the 2021 Manzanita Open Golf Tournament possible.

Matt and Jeff graciously provided their advice and experience to help create a seamless, fun and successful event. This year the Eugene Schmuck Foundation raised \$76,653 in much-needed funds, which are given back and reinvested in our community.

We also want to give a big "thank you" to the many volunteers, supporters, donors and sponsors who have made our foundation a success.

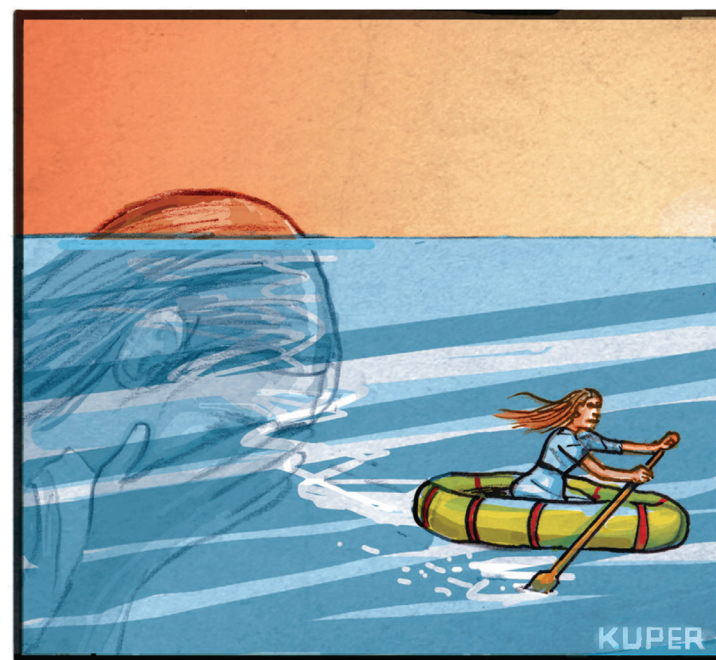
I am personally grateful for the dedication of my fellow board members Corey Douma, John Durkin, Beth Gienger, Tom Moore, Breanna Stephens, Dave Stephens, Karen Stephens, Connie Vander Waal, Sally Vanebo, Camy VonSeggern and Erick White. This year we also welcome Breanna Stephens, Chris Bennett and Troy Bowers to our board.

Please join us for the next Manzanita Open Golf Tournament, planned for May 13, May 14 and May 15. We look forward to seeing you there!

DAVID MATTHEWS  
President, Eugene Schmuck Foundation  
Manzanita

### We just need the will

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact across the globe, with millions of lives and livelihoods



## LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to *The Astorian*. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

lost, unlike anything we've experienced in decades.

The last time the entire world was this focused on a pandemic was over two decades ago, when HIV/AIDS was killing almost 4,000 people every day, and new infections were doubling every year. Since then, the global response to

to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil. Send via email to [editor@dailyastorian.com](mailto:editor@dailyastorian.com), online at [bit.ly/astorianletters](http://bit.ly/astorianletters), in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR., 97103.

AIDS has largely been a success story, with millions of lives being saved through testing, treatment and prevention efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to stop or even reverse this progress.

For World AIDS Day — Dec. 1 — it's important to remember HIV/AIDS is still

a crisis. In 2020, there were 1.5 million new infections, and 680,000 AIDS-related deaths.

People living with HIV/AIDS are at more severe risk of COVID-19, and live in parts of the world with limited access to COVID vaccines.

Sub-Saharan Africa is home to almost 70% of people living with HIV, but less than 5% of the population has received at least one dose of the COVID vaccine. We have the power to beat both of these viruses. We just need the will.

That's why it's so important that U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, and Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, show support for programs that support the fight against both COVID and AIDS, like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, one of the most effective and efficient health organizations on the planet.

MICHAEL KALKOFEN  
Beaverton