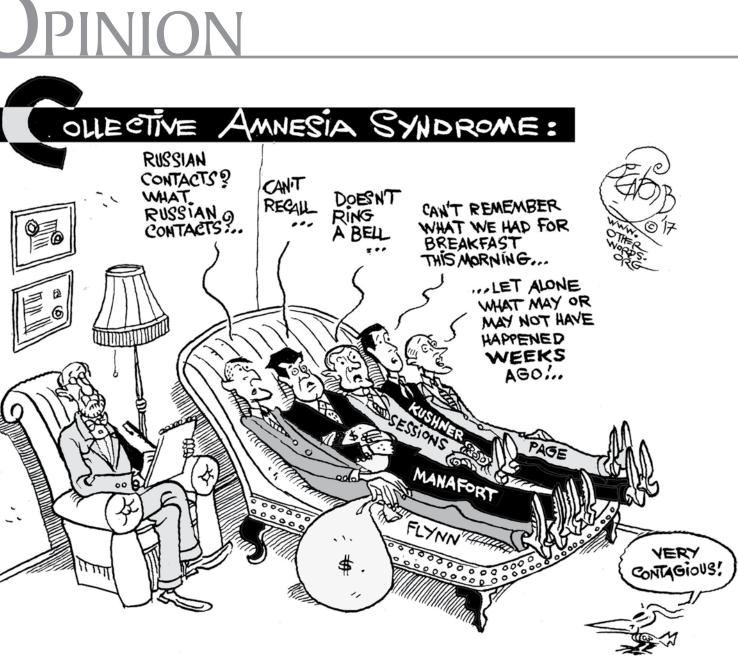


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Fueled by Racism and White Supremacy

The common thread behind

Let's call it what we grieve the loss of

common thread in the discussion

around their murders. Media coverage and public

conversations include terms like, "standing up to hate," "the altright," "ethnic slurs" and "biased language." This incident was fueled by racism and white supremacy, period. To call it anything less is to ignore the fundamental reason for the murders. Unless we acknowledge this reality and use these words, we will not be able to address the root causes of the problem. Words matter.

The reality is that people of color

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every day in Portland. We fear for our children and ourselves because the current political and social climate has emboldened bigots and white supremacists to be more comfortable, public, and aggressive with their hate. We are frustrated and disgusted when folks are surprised that such overt racism and hatred could exist in progressive, Portland, Ore-

experience racism and harassment

We need to be willing to admit that racism exists in our community and explore the root causes of blatant aggression. White allies must not assume that they've "got this," just because they consider themselves progressive or liberal. They must be willing to admit that in addition to the rise of deliberate racist aggression, under Portland's progressive veneer hide layers of institutional racism and a long history of oppression against people of color.

The hard truth is that Portland is progressive in a way that benefits white, straight, able-bodied, Christian men. Look at the data before you jump to the defense of Portlandia.

So, what are you willing to do to fight racism and help dismantle we are unable to correctly define. white supremacy? Educating yourracist history of exclusion and vi- man Rights.

olence against people of color, and understanding how the ghosts of that not-so-distant past still haunt us today, are good first steps.

You can also ask yourself a couple of questions, "Why does it take the death of two clearly courageous white men to spark this huge outcry, while many were silent after young and black Larnell Bruce was run down and murdered by white supremacists last year in Gresham?" Do you notice any reluctance or discomfort on your part to use terms like, "racism," "white supremacy," or "genocide?" "Why or why not?"

Connecting with, and supporting, social justice organizations will make you a better ally, and elevating conversations about racism and white supremacy in your existing networks will also help the fight.

If it is a true aphorism that, "If we don't go within, we will go without," then we must look within ourselves, and at our governmental actions, to determine why we cannot use the language of reality. People of color are going without and dying and we do not have the luxury of talking in euphemisms.

We cannot solve a problem that

Dante J. James is director of self about Oregon and Portland's Portland's Office of Equity and Hu-

Meche, many of us have noticed a