

OPINION

Sugarcoating America's Shameful History

Truth of our history has been written in blood

BY OSCAR H. BLAYTON

The American news media constantly reminds us that the false narrative by Donald Trump and his supporters claiming that Joe Biden did not fairly win the 2020 presidential election is "The Big Lie." But The Biggest Lie, which much of the American news media continues to perpetuate, is "This is not who we are" whenever the notion of white supremacy produces a horrific act of violence or destruction.

There were those who said "This is not who we are" when neo-Nazis marched through Charlottesville, Va., with tiki torches, spewing vile racist and anti-Semitic chants.

There were those who said "This is not who we are" when armed white rioters stormed the Michigan state Capitol while white supremacists plotted to abduct and possibly execute that state's governor.

There are those who continue to say "This is not who we are" each time another unarmed person of color is murdered by a police officer intoxicated by a militarist law enforcement culture.

And there were those who said "This is not who we are" when predominantly white insurrectionists invaded the U.S. Capitol to disrupt democracy in the United States by voiding the free and fair election of Joe Biden as the 46th President of this nation.

How much more murder, may-



hem and raw hatred must be put on full display before Americans finally admit this IS who we are?

As much as America tries to sugarcoat its shameful history, the truth of our history has been

written in indelible bloodstains over many centuries and from sea to sea. Before America was even America, the extermination of Native Americans by European settlers set the tone for the destruction of people and land in the name of civilization and progress.

This has always been a civilization backed up by lethal force, under the guise of law and order, that punishes and executes anyone who appears to be a threat to white supremacy. In the minds of many whites, because Black people were brought here to build and maintain a white Christian country, we are allowed to remain here for only as long as we serve their needs.

To claim that this characterization is far-fetched is to deny the bones of our ancestors at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and scattered across every inch of this land. This nation was founded upon rape and murder and there are those who wish it to continue this way. The death of George Floyd speaks clearly to this point.

Every murdered innocent testifies to the fact that this is who we are. Every individual of the First Nations who dies for lack of proper health care testifies to the fact that this is who we are. Donald Trump could not have gotten away with locking children in cages if this despicable display of inhumanity was not cheered on by millions of supportive bigots. Franklin Roosevelt could not have gotten away with herding innocent

and loyal Japanese Americans into concentration camps without the tacit approval of the majority of Americans, including those of Italian and German ancestry.

There are many white Americans who know this country's major problems are all about race. A large portion of America's white people have a maniacal fear of people of color, who they deem to be "the other," and who they believe want to deprive white people of what they have. But what does the poorest and least educated white person have besides his whiteness? Abandoned by the wealthy elitist of their race, these wretched of the earth are positioned as pawns to barricade the doors to opportunity against people of color. These loyalists of white supremacy diligently carry out their charge without realizing that the only way they can carry out this mission is to remain outside the doors themselves.

Many of the first Europeans who populated this land were from the prisons of England. There are estimates that approximately 10 percent of migrants to America between 1718 and 1775 were British convicts.

The character of the American people is not so saintly as to warrant a blind faith in our goodness in the face of racial hatred

and race-based violence and murder on display every day. Many Europeans who came to America's shores were fine people, but the proof is in the pudding – and we need to put an end to the biggest lie and stop denying that this is who we are.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activist who practices law in Virginia.

Letter to the Editor

On Gun Violence Spike

I read with interest the excellent Letter to the Editor by Sam Sachs of Portland's No Hate Zone ("Our Gun Violence Crisis") and the Charleston Loophole story ("Taking Aim at Gun Law") in the Portland Observer's Feb. 24 issue. The spikes in gun violence in Oregon and across the country need addressing now. With the Biden-Harris Administration now in office, we have a good opportunity to stop the bloodshed!

There are far too many guns available in our society. People in the U.S. are 25 times more likelihood to die via gun violence and mass shootings than people in other industrialized countries. In Portland, there were over 800 shootings in 2020 amidst a 27-year-high in gun deaths. Nationwide, Black men between the ages of 16-34 comprise about 30% of the 40,000 gun deaths each year, while representing

only 2% of the population.

The Portland Gray Panthers is taking action by supporting a boycott against Walmart to get the large corporate citizen to stop its outsized sales of guns and ammo. One in five bullets sold in the U.S. is sold by Walmart.

Two excellent civic leaders -- Keith Wilson, a Portland trucking business owner, and Pastor Matt Hennessee of the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church – were supportive of our efforts to reduce gun violence when they spoke at a Panthers community forum last month.

As we know, there has been a logjam in Congress preventing the passage of sensible gun laws, including a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines. In 2017, U. S. Rep. John Lewis of Georgia, the late African American civil rights lead-

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Creating Community Leaders

FOR 12 YEARS AND COUNTING



The Portland Community College's Men of Color Leadership Program is an innovative program designed to foster educational success for men of color. Students who participate experience an atmosphere of unity and community, strive for academic excellence, and engage with a one-of-a-kind social justice curriculum.



Visit pcc.edu/men-of-color to hear our stories.