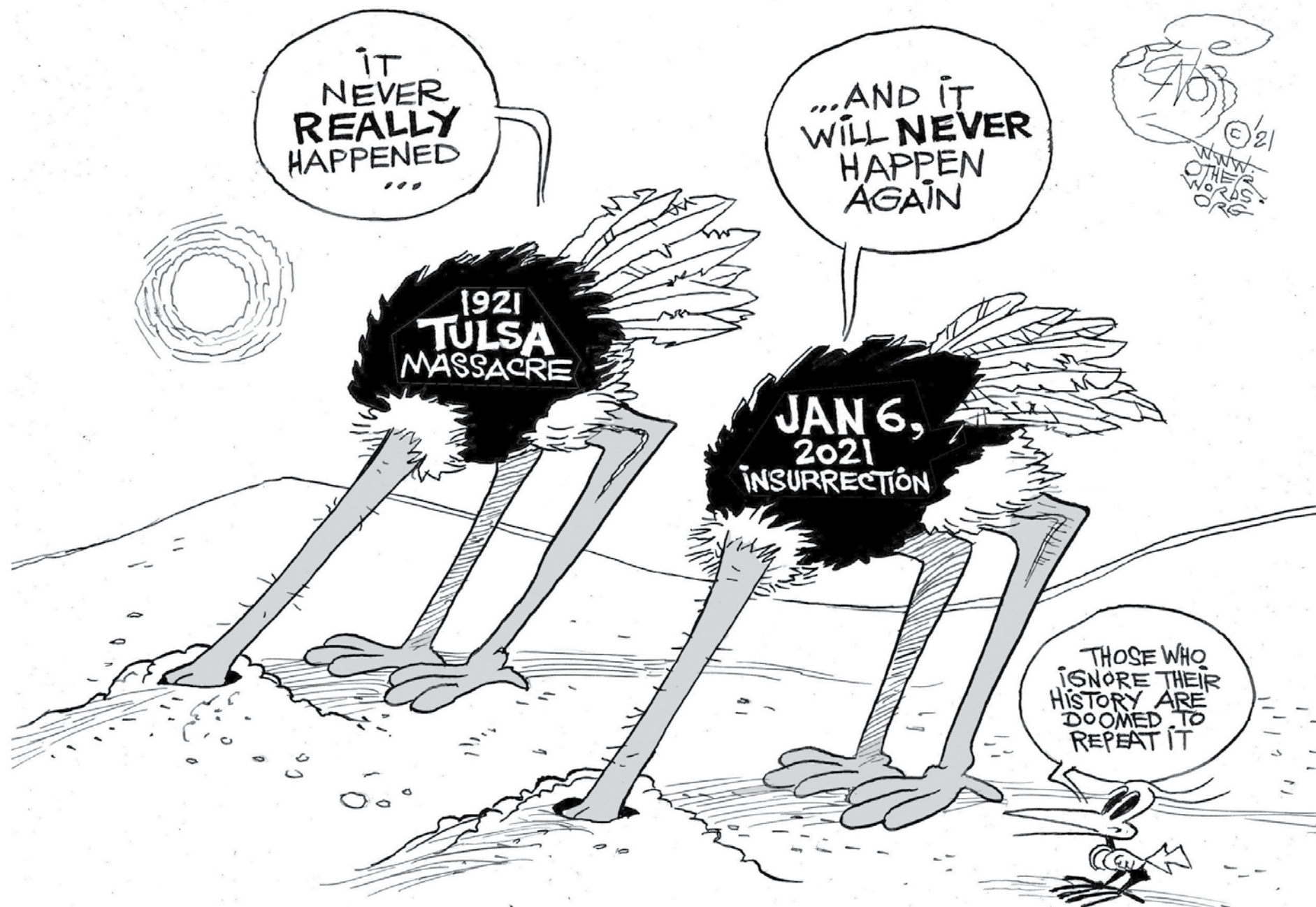


OPINION

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THE UNITED STATES OF AMNESIA



A Meld of Juneteenth and the 4th of July

It's time to change how we interact with each other

BY WOODY BROADNAX

We live in a world of uncertainties, a world where Mother Nature can turn on us, a world where our safety and livelihood, even our very democracy is at risk. Our ancestors knew well that without struggle, progress was impossible. We have lived with struggle: Centuries, decades and now a year of pandemic lockdown.

The people of this country and city have acted to take matters in

their own hands, for better and for worse. Today we focus on the better: Millions of first-time voters casting their ballots, citizens marching in unity for the consequence of Black lives, people calling for reckoning and reforms in policing and justice, and unprecedented numbers holding institutions accountable for diversity and equity.



It's become clear that time has come to change how we see and interact with each other. In Portland it's time to lift everyone above the fray that has consumed our city. Our humanity compels us to protect each other from harm and injustice. Let us repair and

strengthen communities so they nurture and safeguard residents across our city. We begin with this neighborhood, and in this year 2021, we celebrate what I call The Meld.

Frederick Douglas famously asked, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?"

Until the 13th Amendment was ratified, it was nothing. Today we understand events in their historical context and can re-envision their relationship: Freedom for the colonies to grow into an independent nation was made whole when freedom was granted to that nation's slaves. The 4th of July is enriched, heightened and restored because of the end to slavery that Juneteenth celebrates. Yet, over 150 years on, this nation is still imperfect. From Nelson Mandela

we know "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

What does that mean for the people of our city? What does it look like in the United States of American in 2021?

For true freedom, we must change hate into love, division into unification (unity) and stagnation into forwardness. Those are grand aims that can only come about incrementally, through smaller actions. Talk to strangers, check in on a neighbor, dance with each other, buy a tamale.

The celebration of The Meld is a first act. Let's use this opportunity to commemorate true freedom by bringing two dates together, bringing our community together to feast and sing and

dance, to look one another in the eyes and see our shared humanity. Let's establish this moment as one in which we've risen above the fray, when we can take steps to heal our city, establish trust among its residents that justice and prosperity are not only obtainable but inevitable.

Juneteenth and the 4th of July, if melded in the hearts of freedom-loving persons, can vary the complexion of opportunity and establish undisputed justice. This meld of two freedoms can foster human connection, allow us to see the touchstones of our humanity, encourage us to commit to action and unburden us from fear.

Woody "Mr. Juneteenth" Broadnax is a long time community activist from northeast Portland.