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TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo

Simply solid, Portland

A River City expression of sorrow, and gratitude, for Nepal

Portland is a complex place. Oftentimes, accountings of how each of us got here, and explanations of what we daily do to make our homes here — are so painful. Our personal, our familial and communal stories, are sometimes so conflictful. So irreconcilable. And so often open to a hundred irreconcilable interpretations. Endless arguments too.

Take our shared history of the settlement of this auspicious place, this confluence of our two river matriarchs, just 60 urgent salmon miles from that grand clockwise sweep of Pacific peoples, products, and ideas that has enriched our interdependent continents and island nations longer, much longer than any grand elder's memory.

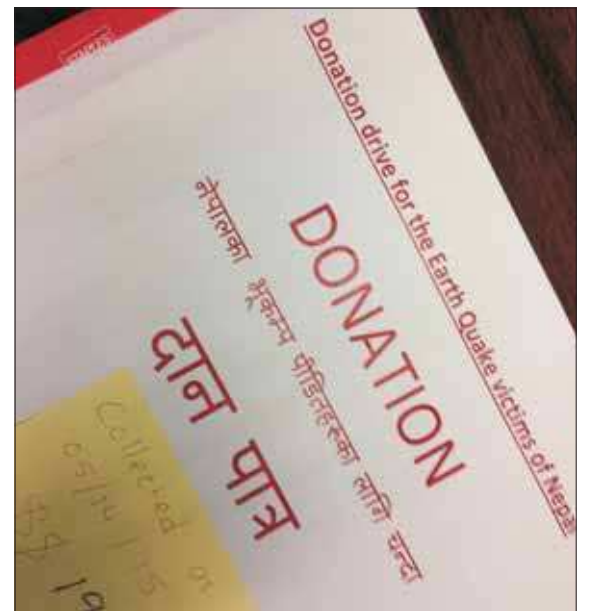
Indeed, according to the archeological record — that is, what's etched into river rock and what's left in human, bear, and fish bones — vigorous families have lived and loved here 140 centuries before the afternoon President Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery paddled into the metropolis of Celilo. U.S. Army Captain Meriwether Lewis and Second Lieutenant William Clark entered a congress of nations and a mix of politics and commerce as complex as any 19th-century capitol city. Ken Burns documentaries notwithstanding.

An awful century followed Lewis and Clark's reconnaissance, deeply wounding native nations and the nascent American nation alike. The attempted ethnocide, so dehumanized both oppressor and oppressed, so disabled both sides' children and their children's children, that today's descendants from their excesses are still unable to feel or heal the wrong done. Done here.

Two centuries of migrant resettlement followed. White families migrated east to west; Chinese, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Punjabis, Japanese, and Koreans sailed west to east; ambitious Mexican and Southern Black families moved north.

A century of wild mainstream mood swings followed each next ethnic stream's arrival, terribly distorting both our muscular majority society and our vigorous minority communities. All of that, not so different from damming our Pacific Northwest rivers, and the damage done to our natural and human environments.

Portland's last half-century (along with establishing our nationally envied ethos of ecological



A silence followed, during which Portlanders both settled and new, rich and poor, shared a world of sorrow and common cause. Bhutanese Oregonians had delivered a New Portland narrative.

sustainability) has been defined by wounded families fleeing the ugly endgame of western imperialism in Asia, Oceania, and Africa; in Eastern Europe and our Arab world. Families escaping all that cruelty, then made their homes here. The port part of Portland.

A quick look at the Mexican-, Hmong-, Samoan-, Somali-, Iraqi-, Viet Kieu-, Khmer-, Filipino-, and Palestinian-Portlander faces around our family's Sunday kitchen table will affirm how grand our city is. How difficult too.

Searching for a shared narrative

Portland is a U.S. gateway city. As such, America's past excesses and future promises reside right here. Right now.

The present disparities between Portland's neighborhoods and our schools are shocking. The task of reconciling into a single harmonious narrative, what each of us has to daily do to nurture and

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