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phone number on all correspondence. Thank you.**



TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA

■ Polo



A SPAMI response to our times

I am a SPAMI (Spanish Pop/Asian Mom/Muslim Islandboy). Saying so may sound exotic, pero you know, we're not a big deal where we're from. Indonesia, where families live and love in 700 languages.

Another fun fact: Ethnic ambiguity provides SPAMIs with certain secret super powers. Among them, our ability to flow in and out of River City's 70 or so vigorous ethnic streams and our robust mainstream. We are by nature and nurture, an observant and flexible folk.

For the record too, I'm one of those smart-alecky Affirmative Action admits, a beneficiary of monumental 1970s American social engineering that produced a generation of ethnic minority and immigrant mechanics. A national mood swing that landed our crew smack in the middle of many of our nation's most destructive and most instructive intersections. Our cohort has sorrowed and celebrated a lot. We are consequently, tried and true blue believers in America. Our shared America.

For all that, our generation of community mechanics has arguably earned some perspective on early morning White House tweets. And about that, please let me suggest this: Our nation's 45th chief exec doesn't matter so much. Not really.

Yes of course, President Trump has let *andjing buruk* (unruly dogs) off leash. But just as certainly, most Americans are good. Our institutions are good.

Good evidence

Evidence? Here're three bites.

Soon after our household resettled in Oregon, I received notice to report to the Selective Service System. To join a war in the very neighborhood our familia just fled. Evidently, congress had decided to fund this system in an effort to more equitably distribute the burdens of soldiering among all American social classes. That's good, right?

Bad for sure was the string of U.S. presidents who had committed tons of treasury and misery to crushing several Southeast nations' families where they sleep, work, and shop. But balancing all that was Oregon's senior senator — whose modest church sponsored our refugee family — quietly counselling our father to send me to our grandpa in the Netherlands. Wait there, he said, until President Nixon winds down the draft and his ugly

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war. The beauty of democracy is in its mix.

America's institutional goodness righted our ship's really bad starboard list.

Next example: Fast forward to a lovely Oregon autumn morning in 1997. A friend is returning our son after a sleepover. As she parks curbside, she and her son and mine see me facedown on S.E. 21st Avenue. A young blonde cop is cuffing me. Her knee is planted on my back. Alhamdu'lillaah, none of them saw her a minute earlier, dangerously adrenalized, her gun in my face.

After a year of trying and trying to ask her, her sergeant, their precinct commander, and their bureau boss, who on earth she thought she was taking out, I gave up. Maybe she was after a dangerous Mexican or an angry Arab. That ethnic ambiguity thing has a downside too.

A month later a former Portland police chief, asked me to lunch. He said he was sorry. He said I was a good man. I cried. We laughed. Over fragrant Viet noodle soup, this broad-shouldered, big-hearted, blue-collar white guy and I talked about our shared decade of him believing in our ethnic streams' belief in participating in local governance. We talked about how he and we had made community policing work. About how these braided beliefs, like our city's confluence of rivers Willamette and Columbia, make *our* idea of Portland possible.

Settled and New Americans' expectations of the best, our very best, always make it happen.

My last example: Our national and state constitutions' nail-biting insistence on free individual expression has long permitted certain Portlanders their racist rants. On April 25 of this year, 82nd Avenue of Roses Parade organizers cancelled their annual celebration for fear of mayhem from opposing ultra-right and radical-left demonstrators. After police dispersed both groups on April

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