SPECIAL SECTION

The Oregonian grew in size and influence under publisher Henry Pittock and editor Harvey Scott, who printed explicitly racist words and ideas for decades. The company opened a larger downtown office in 1892. *Oregonian archives*

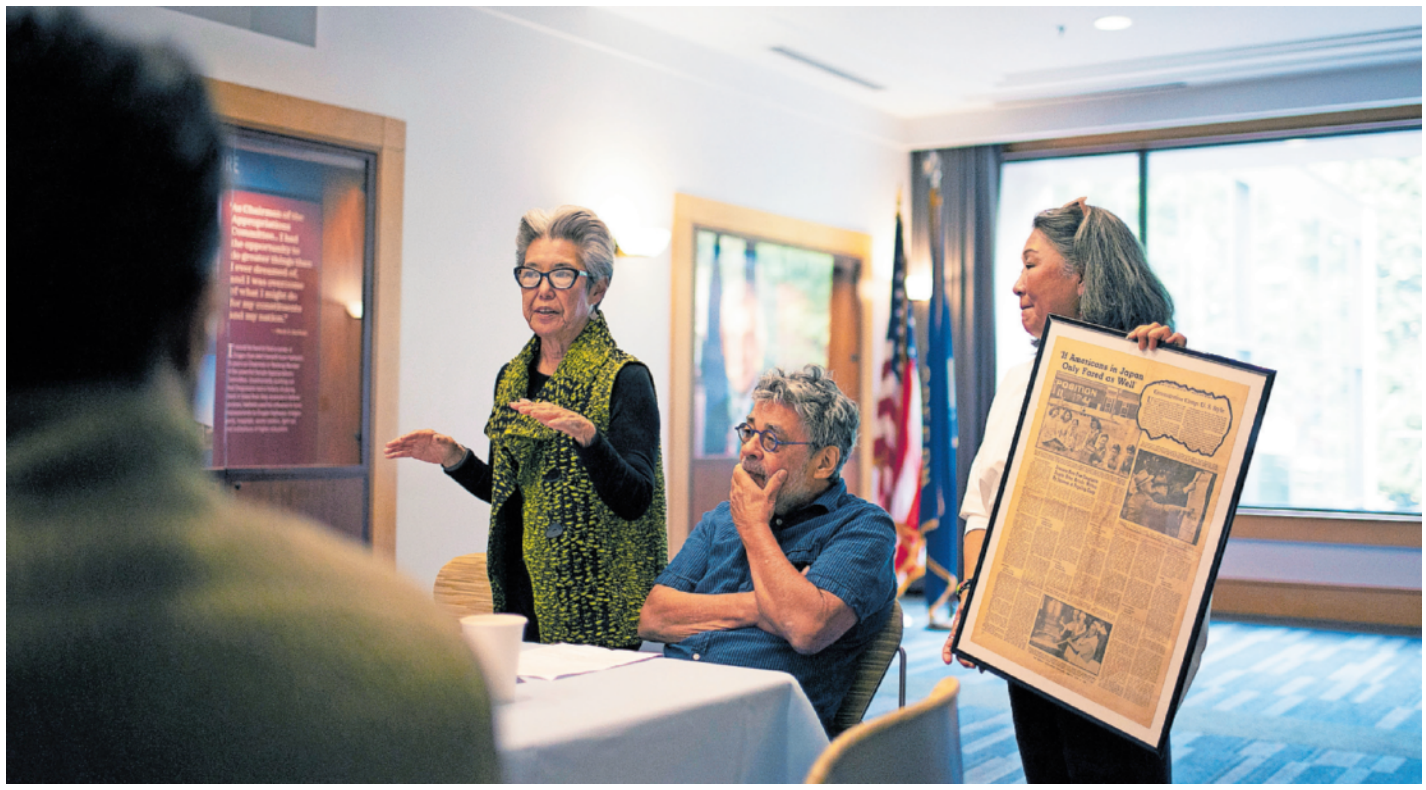
Publishing Prejudice: The Oregonian's Racist Legacy

The Oregonian today embarks on a sustained examination of its history, in pursuit of strengthening the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion. From the paper's founding days through World War II and into the modern justice system, this special section aims to examine how the hateful words published in the paper have echoed through the years.

‘I unreservedly apologize to our readers and our community’

As The Oregonian grapples with its historical prejudice, a pledge to do better

Therese Bottomly



Vicki Nakashima, left, speaks to a group gathered inside the Oregon Historical Society. With her is her cousin, artist Tom Nakashima, whose work is on exhibit at the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, and Chisao Hata, who works at the museum. Hata is holding a copy of The Oregonian that shows inaccurate coverage of Japanese Americans being held at what is now the Portland Expo Center. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

As editor of The Oregonian, the current leader of the newsroom, I unreservedly apologize to our readers and our community for the racism in this newspaper and the legacy it leaves.

For decades following its founding as a daily in 1861, The Oregonian promoted racist and xenophobic views. Editorials and news articles were decidedly on the wrong side of morality. The institution stirred hatred, prejudice and unwarranted fear.

After George Floyd was murdered, thousands of people marched in the streets to demand social justice. Some institutions, including a handful of newspapers, responded to the moment with sustained examinations of their histories in pursuit of strengthening the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion.

The Oregonian/OregonLive looked inward as well.

Oregon was founded as an exclusionary state openly hostile to people of color, and Portland today remains the whitest major city in America. How did the newspaper cover issues of race as the state’s preeminent source of news? How did journalists and editorial writers of the day treat nonwhite people and communities? How did choices of what was published — and what was not — shape the community we live in today?

And what role might The Oregonian have played in failing to seek redress for discrimination and prejudicial policies that laid the foundation for systems in place today?

Or, worse, what role did the newspaper play in sustaining and promoting the dominant white culture in laws, institutions, and policies?

Investigative reporter Rob Davis began his deep examination of the newspaper’s history more than a year ago. He and his editor, Brad Schmidt, spent months reviewing the archives, assessing the evidence and talking to historians and Oregonians whose communities were affected by the coverage.

I thought we would find the newspaper had missed stories, ignored major cultural movements, been behind the times. And, yes, we found sins of omission, to be sure.

But the gravest mistakes were sins of commission.

What Davis found in our archives is sickening. Revolting. Painful. Indefensible.

The newspaper regularly referred to Black Oregonians by using the worst possible slur. The Oregonian belittled victims of actual and attempted lynching, as well as other brutal attacks. The newspaper demonized Black Oregonians and treated them as inferior, celebrating efforts to prevent them from voting, owning homes or having equal rights.

The paper failed to stand for the rights of Oregonians of Japanese descent when they were unjustly and without basis treated as the enemy and imprisoned during World War II.

It would be far too easy, too facile, to say The Oregonian was simply a product of the times. Perhaps its pages simply reflected the racist views of the day. Maybe in that light, it wasn’t so terribly awful.

No, it was.

What The Oregonian published time and again was objectively abhorrent.

The historical coverage was not solely responsible for discriminatory policies, practices or outcomes, of course, but when The Oregonian might have helped forge a better path, it frequently failed to do so. At times, it used its position of power to help lead those discriminatory efforts.

Some people stood up when white Oregonians discriminated against, beat, ran out of town, wrongly jailed Black people. The Oregonian was not among them.

Others spoke against the imprisonment of Japanese Americans in World War II, risking reputation and much more to stand for what was right and moral. The Oregonian did not.

Even worse, the paper attempted to minimize the experience of U.S. citizens who were wrenched from their homes, who lost everything, including their land and their freedom, simply for having Japanese heritage.

For this, and for the racist and xenophobic coverage that led up to it, I feel profound regret and I apologize without reservation.

Newsrooms tend to rush forward from deadline to deadline. We are not good at introspection or covering ourselves. The evidence of this paper’s racist legacy had been archived, page by page, decade by decade, and I am ashamed we did not examine it sooner and with more urgency.

Among those of us who make up the institution today, it may be tempting to say we weren’t here back then, that wasn’t us, we didn’t do it. Judge us for what we are today.

Why should we feel any accountability for what other leaders of the newspaper, particularly Henry Pittock and Harvey Scott, did or failed to do decades or a century ago? This all occurred well before current ownership or leadership.

To be sure, we are not responsible for those wrongs, but we can acknowledge them, humbly and forthrightly. And by recognizing this paper’s historic role in fostering a climate where racism was acceptable, the institution today can learn from those failings and work to correct mistakes we make in more modern times.

Newspapers, like other institutions, reflect the individuals within them at any given time — those who guide them and those who do the daily work.

I am proud of the many changes The Oregonian/OregonLive’s newsroom has made in the interest of more equitable coverage in recent decades and years. For instance, we were among the first news organizations to refuse to publish mascot names and images so offensive to Indigenous and Native people.

We have a longstanding practice of not mentioning race in vague suspect descriptions that do nothing to help catch criminals and can reinforce negative stereotyping. We don’t routinely publish police mugshots when someone is accused but not convicted.

We have long supported the annual High School Journalism Institute and a summer internship program with the hopes of drawing diverse voices to more newsrooms of the future.

While our newsroom is predominantly white, we are working toward building a staff that reflects the diversity of our community — a longstanding goal and one of our greatest challenges. (A quarter of our newsroom staff is racially or ethnically diverse and half are women.)

Even today, we know we still don’t always get it right when it comes to our coverage, and there remains work to do.

Recognizing that, for this project — written by a white male investigative reporter and edited by a white male investigative editor — we shared early story drafts with people of color. Members of our diversity committee helped identify additional reporting opportunities and gave feedback, not only on the words written but the substance of the articles. We asked two former diversity committee chairs, people of color who are no longer at the paper, to review the drafts and provide advice about how to make them better. And we contracted with five BIPOC community members who reviewed the drafts to provide more feedback, with an emphasis on evaluating word choice, checking for blind spots and limiting further harm to communities of color.

This level of outside review is unprecedented for The Oregonian. While we didn’t incorporate every suggestion offered, we followed many — which helped to greatly improve the stories.

Going forward, I pledge to keep readers informed as we assess our steps toward more inclusive — and accurate — journalism. I will be transparent about our progress, or lack thereof, in building a newsroom that reflects our community. I will share top-line results of our internal audit, which will analyze for the first time the diversity of the people quoted in our articles.

I’ll regularly communicate changes in our newsroom beats or structure to ensure we are doing more to cover communities of color today. In that vein, we’re hiring a senior newsroom leader to guide our diversity and inclusion work.

The newsroom leadership is committed to holding listening sessions beginning in early 2023 to hear directly from communities of color about how we can improve our coverage. We’ll use that feedback, along with recommendations from the senior editor for inclusive journalism, to help guide staffing decisions.

This has been a painful and necessary exercise of self-examination. It’s a reminder of the hard work ahead. We must continue to be vigilant about stories we are missing, about recognizing our implicit biases. We know racism remains pervasive and we are committed to shining a light on injustices.

For now, please read the project.

To comment or share a story idea, please email The Oregonian/OregonLive at equity@oregonian.com or leave a voicemail at 503-221-8055.

This history is hard to read but you must. And you must hold us to our pledge to always do better.

Race in Oregon and The Oregonian's historic coverage: 1844-1950

Inside the Morning Oregonian newsroom with editor Harvey Scott at right in 1894. *Oregonian archives*

1844: The Oregon Territory's provisional government passes its first Black exclusion law. Any Black person who settles in the state can be punished by public whipping.

1849: Oregon's territorial legislature passes a second exclusion law, prohibiting Black people from entering or residing in the territory.

1850: Thomas Dryer begins publishing the Weekly Oregonian.

1851: Jacob Vanderpool, a saloon owner in Salem, becomes the only known Black person expelled from Oregon under an exclusion law.

1859: Oregon gains statehood. Among free states outlawing slavery, Oregon is the only one to prohibit Black people from moving to the state in its constitution. Black people cannot vote, own property or use the legal system.

1861: Henry Pittock, after acquiring the Weekly Oregonian from Dryer the previous year, begins publishing it as the Morning Oregonian, printed six days a week.

The Civil War begins.

1865: Harvey Scott is hired as editor.

The Civil War ends. Congress passes the 13th Amendment, eliminating slavery. The Oregonian's editorial page, overseen by Scott, opposes citizenship or voting rights for Black people.

1866: Oregon ratifies the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, granting equal protection under the law to Black people. Oregon's exclusion law becomes moot.

The Oregonian in editorials supports banning intermarriage. Lawmakers soon pass such a ban, punishable by imprisonment of at least three months. The ban stands until 1951.

1868: State lawmakers symbolically repeal ratification of the 14th Amendment. They do not re-ratify until 1973.

1870: Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution gives Black men the right to vote. It becomes law in Oregon, although the Legislature does not ratify it until 1959.

1872: Pittock sells controlling interest in The Oregonian. Scott takes a job as customs collector for the Port of Portland.

1877: Pittock and Scott resume control of the paper. Scott takes a minority ownership interest.

1882: Chinese Exclusion Act, passed by U.S. Congress, bans Chinese workers from immigrating to the United States for 10 years. The Morning Oregonian celebrates it in an editorial, calling it "a great victory."

1900: Oregon voters kill an effort to repeal the exclusion clause. Scott's editorial page opposes the repeal.

1910: Harvey Scott dies.

1919: Henry Pittock dies, handing control of The Oregonian to trustees, not his descendants, for 20 years.

1923: Oregon lawmakers pass the Alien Land Law, prohibiting Japanese and Chinese immigrants from owning land. In the runup to passage, The Oregonian's editorial page foments xenophobia, saying the government should "keep this a white man's country."

1933: Statue of Harvey Scott dedicated atop Mount Tabor in Portland.

1934: After The Oregonian editorializes about immigrants negatively influencing jury verdicts, voters make Oregon one of just two states in the nation where a unanimous jury isn't needed to convict in most cases.

1942: President Franklin Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, creating the program that incarcerates 120,000 people of Japanese descent, the majority of whom are American citizens. The Oregonian supports the incarceration in editorials and downplays its impact in news stories.

1945: World War II ends. The incarceration program concludes, though it takes until 1988 for the federal government to issue reparations and a formal apology to those who were imprisoned. The Oregonian's editorial page opposed financial compensation in the 1970s, but by 1987 supported the payments.

1950: Heirs sell The Oregonian to Samuel Newhouse, whose family's media company, Advance Local, still owns the paper today.

Rob Davis

Fund memorializing longtime journalist helped support work

The Oregonian/OregonLive

The social justice uprising triggered by the murder of George Floyd inspired many businesses and organizations to take stock of how they serve Black people and others of color in their communities.

Media companies nationwide followed suit, analyzing stories from the past that were published — and those that weren't — to trace how those decisions led to harm still felt by people today.

That work inspired journalists at The Oregonian/OregonLive to examine our roots in a state where we knew early leaders supported eradicating Indigenous people and blocking the immigration of others — leaders we soon found were heartily encouraged and directed by the newspaper's founding publisher and editor.

This important, yearlong investigation was funded in part by The John Farmer Memorial Journalism Fund that supports work operating at the nexus of local and national news. The fund, which donated $30,000 toward the project, is named for John Farmer, the late New Jersey Star-Ledger columnist and editorial page editor. The Star-Ledger is among the newspapers owned by The Oregonian/OregonLive's parent company, Advance Local.

Farmer was a longtime journalist who started his career as a police reporter before moving on to cover state politics in Newark and later the White House for the Philadelphia Bulletin. He worked as a city editor, national editor and, after a brief stint as New Jersey Gov. Brendan Byrne's press secretary, Farmer joined the New Jersey Star-Ledger. Farmer retired from the editorial board in 2009, but continued to write a column through late 2018. He died in 2019 at the age of 89.

You can support important local journalism, too, by subscribing to the print Oregonian, to OregonLive.com, or by donating to our other grant-funded projects, such as education coverage partnerships with Report for America.

You can also send tax-deductible contributions to Oregonian Publishing Co. Public Benefits Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit. Mail checks to Oregonians Federal Credit Union, attn: The Oregonian Education Reporting Lab, 336 N.E. 20th Ave., Portland OR 97232.

As with all donations and grant funding, The Oregonian/OregonLive is solely responsible for all content.

John Farmer was a columnist and editor for the New Jersey Star-Ledger, which is owned by The Oregonian's parent company, Advance Local.

Newsroom gathered outside perspectives to enhance 'Publishing Prejudice' project

The Oregonian/OregonLive

The Oregonian/OregonLive newsroom is not as racially and ethnically diverse as the community it serves, and the investigative reporter and investigative editor assigned to this project are white men. To reduce implicit bias and enhance the stories, the newsroom created a novel, months-long review process of iterative feedback before publication.

Members of the newsroom's diversity committee received drafts of the stories in June, and provided valuable feedback on reporting, editing and the project's general direction.

The Oregonian/OregonLive in July contracted with two former newsroom employees, Amy Wang and Eder Campuzano, who each had chaired the newsroom diversity committee.

They reviewed story drafts and provided important guidance, helping identify reporting holes, offering feedback on issues to expand or condense, and providing recommendations on ways to limit additional harm to communities of color through word choice and story framing.

The newsroom contracted with five community members between August and October.

The panelists reviewed story drafts, providing perspectives the newsroom lacks, giving feedback to enhance the reporting with additional facts, and helping identify words or ideas that could perpetuate harm to communities of color.

The panelists are Oscar Arana, Brian Bull, Hong Mautz, Zachary Stocks and Jillian Toda-Currie.

The Oregonian/OregonLive maintained sole editorial discretion over the stories, and it accepted many, but not all, recommendations from outside consultants.

Drafts of the stories were shared in October with the newsroom's diversity committee for a final review prior to publication.

The Oregonian/OregonLive takes full responsibility for the final project, including any potential errors or omissions.

PUBLISHING PREJUDICE PART 1

The Oregonian's racist legacy

Content warning: This story contains detailed descriptions of hate crimes and quotations of racist statements the newspaper printed.

Rob Davis *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

On the first day Henry Pittock printed the Morning Oregonian as a daily in 1861, the owner and publisher said he aimed for his newspaper to be "useful and acceptable to our people."

Through what it covered and what it ignored, in landmark editorials and everyday stereotypes, the newspaper left no doubt in the decades that followed who Pittock's "people" were: white men.

The now 161-year-old daily newspaper spent decades reinforcing the racial divide in a state founded as whites-only, fomenting the racism that people of color faced.

It excused lynching. It promoted segregation. It opposed equal rights for women and people of color. It celebrated laws to exclude Asian immigrants. It described Native Americans as uncivilized, saying their extermination might be needed.

The newspaper helped create the Oregon of today: A majority white state, with the West Coast's smallest proportion of Black residents, anchored by Portland, America's whitest big city. Despite Oregon's progressive reputation and growing population of color, its major institutions — lawmakers, schools, police, housing systems and health care providers — have failed to erase deep-rooted inequities.

Black people die younger than whites and are more likely to live in poverty, be imprisoned or be killed by police.

Black and Native American children are each more likely than white children to be placed in foster care.

Black, Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander populations were hit hardest by COVID-19.

The seeds of such inequalities and many more were planted before statehood and in the years that followed by the white men who dominated Oregon's positions of power, including its longest continuously published newspaper.

"The Oregonian was a racist newspaper," said Darrell Millner, an emeritus professor at Portland State University and authority on Black history in Oregon, calling the paper both a reflection of a racist society and a force helping to perpetuate it.

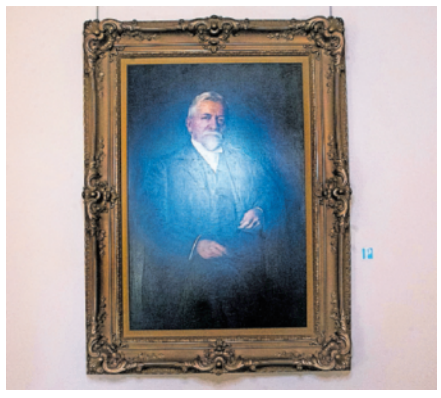
"There is no doubt that The Oregonian provided a lot of social and political cover for racial behavior in Oregon," he added.

Prompted by the 2020 murder of George Floyd and the nationwide protests that followed, The Oregonian/OregonLive assigned a reporter to examine the newspaper's racist legacy, reviewing what it said and omitted in news coverage and editorials throughout its history.

The first installment of this series looks at the two white men primarily responsible for The Oregonian during its first 60 years as a daily paper: Pittock, the publisher and majority owner, and Harvey Scott, the editor and minority owner.

The overtly racist words and ideas they printed from 1861 to 1919 made Oregon a more hostile place for people of color to live. The consequences are still felt today.

Darrell Millner is a professor emeritus at Portland State University and former department chair of the school's Black studies program. He says The Oregonian was both a reflection of a racist society and a force for perpetuating it. *Beth Nakamura, staff*



A painting of Morning Oregonian publisher Henry Pittock hangs upstairs in the Pittock Mansion in Portland's West Hills. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

> **"There is no doubt that The Oregonian provided a lot of social and political cover for racial behavior in Oregon."**
>
> *Darrell Millner*

"That is a long-lasting impact of what The Oregonian put in place. When you spread that kind of bile, it doesn't go away when the people die who initiated it," said Ron Herndon, who studied the newspaper's racist editorials from the Scott era as a Reed College student in the 1960s, then went on to become a target of the newspaper's criticism as the leader of the Black United Front challenging school segregation in the 1980s.

"It is passed on from generation to generation," Herndon said.

Pittock and Scott spent decades treating people of color as inferior to whites, perpetuating stereotypes in the news stories, editorials, cartoons and advertisements they printed. As the newspaper's power grew, it advocated for positions that kept Black people out or drove them away, that limited their freedom and financial opportunities, the places they could live and the justice they received.

Black-owned newspapers like The Advocate spoke truth to power in Oregon for decades, opposing the 1920s rise of the Ku Klux Klan and spotlighting white supremacists like the editor of a Grants Pass newspaper who editorialized about his goal of keeping the city whites-only.

At times, so did some of the state's historically white newspapers. But The Oregonian, which labeled itself the "official paper of the state," spoke to white, affluent Portland, including industries like real estate and banking, which spent decades working to exclude people of color from the city.

The racism printed by Pittock and Scott did not stunt their legacies. Thousands, including Oregon's governor, turned out to celebrate Scott when a statue of him was dedicated in Portland on Mount Tabor in 1933.

Today, more than a century after their deaths, the men remain the namesakes for a mountain, mansion, city park, university building, downtown building and two elementary schools.

'THE OREGONIAN WAS SCOTT'

The Oregonian under Pittock and Scott didn't disguise its view that the United States was a white nation and should stay that way.

A month before the Civil War ended, as the country was considering a constitutional amendment to free enslaved people, The Oregonian in an explicitly racist editorial warned against extending citizenship and voting rights to them.

Black people "as a class possess no capacity of self-government, and the few who are intelligent enough to take part in public affairs are offset by the multitude who do not," said a March 1865 edi-

Along the water in Coos Bay, where in 1902 Alonzo Tucker hid under docks overnight hoping to escape a mob of white coal miners intent on killing him. The next morning, Tucker was discovered on Front Street and was shot and killed. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

torial, written just before Scott was formally hired as editor. "There again, this nation of the white race should well ponder the question before it admits the African, the Mongolian and the Indian to all its privileges."

Pittock was born in London and grew up in Pittsburgh, arriving in the Oregon Territory in 1853 by wagon train as a teenager hoping to make his fortune.

In 1860, he acquired the newspaper, then a weekly started a decade earlier as a Whig party political organ by Thomas Dryer. Pittock transformed it into the Morning Oregonian, a profitable daily news source for which Scott became the public face.

Scott was born in Illinois and left with his family for Oregon in 1852, at age 14. He volunteered as a soldier in the 1855-56 Puget Sound War, fighting "to subjugate the Indians," he said in a later speech, and in 1863 became the first graduate of Pacific University in Forest Grove.

Scott didn't pen all of The Oregonian's unsigned editorials. But he would go on to write what his son once estimated were more than 10,000 pieces during his 40-year tenure at the paper, with "H.W.S." or "H.W. Scott" appearing next to some of his editorials in archival copies.

"The official line of The Oregonian was what he said," said Harry Stein, a Portland historian writing a book about the newspaper. "The Oregonian *was* Scott."

Alonzo Tucker, in the only known photograph of him, which hangs on the wall of the Coos History Museum in Coos Bay. *Coos History Museum*

"Lord, have mercy on a colored man."

Alonzo Tucker's last words, according to a witness

PUBLISHING PREJUDICE: AN OCCASIONAL SERIES

The Oregonian/OregonLive's examination of its history is expected to continue in the months ahead with a look at the paper's coverage during the Civil Rights era.

Throughout the whole of his career at The Oregonian, Scott and his editorial page opposed expanding the rights of women and people of color. In 1866, with Reconstruction underway, an Oregonian editorial openly mocked Black equality and interracial marriage, saying it degraded white people.

"We do not think the social status of the country would be at all improved by (intermarriage)," an unsigned editorial said in May 1866.

Oregon's Legislature banned interracial marriage five months later, a prohibition that stood until 1951.

Scott's editorial page described a supporter of Black voting rights in 1868, a year before Congress passed the 15th Amendment, which gave Black men the right to vote, as "either actually demented or attacked with softening of the brain, and is greatly to be pitied."

The Oregonian helped make Oregon the last West Coast state to let women vote. In 1887, three years after male voters rejected it, Scott wrote that "it is a very simple matter for women of Oregon to get the suffrage if they want it; they have only to ask for it in earnest of the men."

Yet men voted five more times, more than in any other state, before finally approving women's suffrage in 1912. That campaign, championed by people including Scott's sister, the noted suffragist Abigail Scott Duniway, took decades and wasn't successful until two years after Harvey Scott died. Duniway blamed her brother and his "cheap male sycophants who suck their sustenance from your editorial seats" for delaying equal rights.

The newspaper demeaned people of Chinese descent, who worked as laborers in Oregon and were an early target of white supremacy. The headline atop a lead editorial in 1882 called the Chinese Exclusion Act, a law prohibiting Chinese workers from immigrating to the country, "a great victory."

Editorials debased the Indigenous population, frequently using slurs and stereotypes.

Scott's editorial page said it might be necessary to exterminate Native American tribes on the Great Plains in 1867. Other editorials called for consolidating Northwest tribes into a single reservation, disbanding tribes altogether and lowering national expectations of how quickly Indigenous people could assimilate into a white society.

"He is a barbarian, the product of a long line of barbarians," Scott wrote in 1885. "... The Indian is not ready for the white man's law, much less to become a citizen with the right of suffrage."

When voters were asked in 1900 to repeal an inoperative clause in the state constitution that prohibited Black people from settling in Oregon, the newspaper resisted and said the constitution was just fine.

"The more we amend it the more likely we are to worsen it," Scott's editorial page said. Voters agreed.

In 1905, Scott's editorial page supported segregation. The Oregon Supreme Court eventually condoned the type of Jim Crow segregation common in the Deep South, enshrining the practice in law for nearly 40 years.

"Colored people are wise who accept conditions that they cannot change or control, and go their way cheerfully, realizing that, after all, their condition in this country is much improved over that of their ancestors of a century or two ago," Scott's editorial page said.

The newspaper was persistently racist not only in the discriminatory ideas it promoted but in the hateful words it chose to print.

During Scott's early tenure, the most offensive slur for Black people appeared, on average, in 58 pieces a year before dropping almost 80% in the mid-1870s, a review by The Oregonian/OregonLive found. The decline coincided with Scott leaving the paper for five years to work as the Port of Portland's customs collector. The appearance of the word doubled in the decade after Scott returned, the review found.

While Scott's opinions were published daily, less is known about the personal views of Pittock, who gave Scott his platform but left behind few letters or papers. In a 1911 speech, Pittock paid tribute to the late Scott, who had died a year earlier, saying he would never cease to mourn "that great man (who) worked with me side by side."

"Sometimes we differed in policy but we always compromised," said Pittock, who died in 1919.

Scott and Pittock's influence over The Oregonian stretched decades past their deaths. Ownership of the paper was held in trust for 20 years, leaving Pittock's chosen trustees in charge until 1939. Heirs ultimately sold the paper in 1950 to Samuel Newhouse, who died in 1979 but whose family's media company, Advance Local, still owns the paper today.

"Scott and Pittock cast very long shadows at The Oregonian," said Stein, the historian.

EXCUSING, MINIMIZING LYNCHINGS

The Oregonian under Scott and Pittock, and later their trustees, excused and minimized lynching efforts that drove Black people out of Oregon.

The worst example came in 1902.

A Black man named Alonzo Tucker, a boxer and shoeshiner, was accused of raping a white woman, Lizzy Dennis, the wife of a coal miner living in Marshfield, later renamed Coos Bay.

After Tucker's arrest, the local sheriff tried to move Tucker to a boat to keep him safe. But a mob of white coal miners pursued him. He escaped, hiding under nearby docks for the night, only to be shot and killed by the mob a day later.

The miners hanged his body from the Seventh Street Bridge in the most widely documented lynching of a Black man in Oregon. No one was charged.

CONTINUES ON PAGE 6

Continues from Page 5

The Oregonian, owned by Pittock and Scott, labeled Tucker "a brute" in its Sept. 18, 1902, news story. A staff correspondent, William Cuddy, praised the lynchers and called Tucker a racist slur twice in a separate four-paragraph dispatch. The newspaper abhorrently praised the murderers, allowing Cuddy to write that Tucker "lost what little humanity he had and became a wild beast, to kill which was a duty. ... We who have women folks will say to the Coos Bay people: 'Well done!'"

In an unsigned editorial, The Oregonian simultaneously condemned the lynching while denigrating Tucker and other Black residents of Marshfield. It called lynching a disgrace and rebuked the mob, saying Tucker's killing was "a blot upon the history of Coos County." Yet it also called Tucker a "wretch," accepted the allegations as fact and excused his killing because of "extenuating circumstances."

The editorial sympathized with the mob, saying how tempting lynching would be "in a region where a large portion of the population consists of brutal and ignorant blacks" who were "a menace to order and contentment."

"This outbreak was conducted, if there are degrees in crime, with quiet and decorum that contrast favorably with similar affairs elsewhere," the editorial said.

A subsequent editorial acknowledged prejudice in Cuddy's dispatch, saying rapists shouldn't be killed because a jury couldn't impose a death sentence for rape.

"These criminals are neither better nor worse because they are white or black," the editorial said. "They deserve the full penalty of the law."

Not until 1974 did anyone dig deeper. That year, Dinah Adkins, a Coos Bay World reporter, told the stories of three men who witnessed the killing as children. One said he believed Tucker and Dennis regularly met for a romantic liaison in the town graveyard, but that Dennis alleged rape after a passerby spotted the two together.

One man, then a child, said he saw Tucker dying. Tucker's last words, according to the witness: "Lord, have mercy on a colored man."

The Oregonian didn't publish that story, nor did it mention Tucker again until more than a century after his killing.

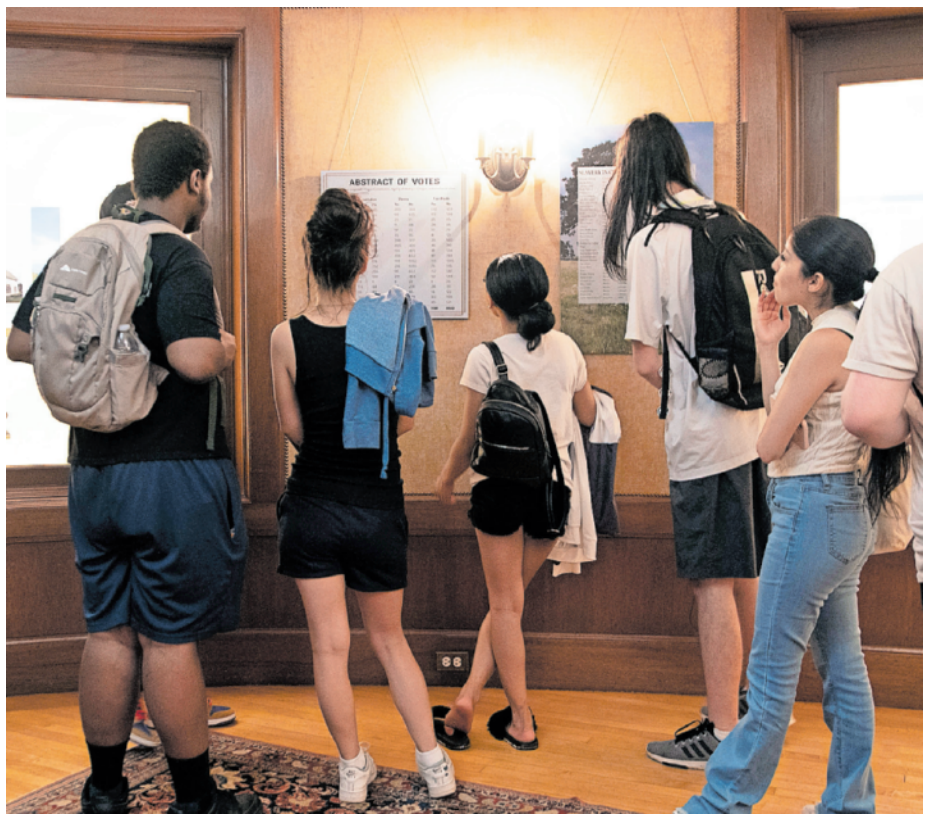
Taylor Stewart, founder of the Oregon Remembrance Project, worked to establish a historical marker about the lynching in Coos Bay in 2021. Stewart said the sympathy given to the lynch mob by The Oregonian and other newspapers "set the stage for the next 100 years of silence on this issue."

"People say, 'Why are there no Blacks in Oregon?' There's a legitimate explanation," Stewart said. "Why would you want to move to a state that has made their desire so expressly known that they don't want you here?"

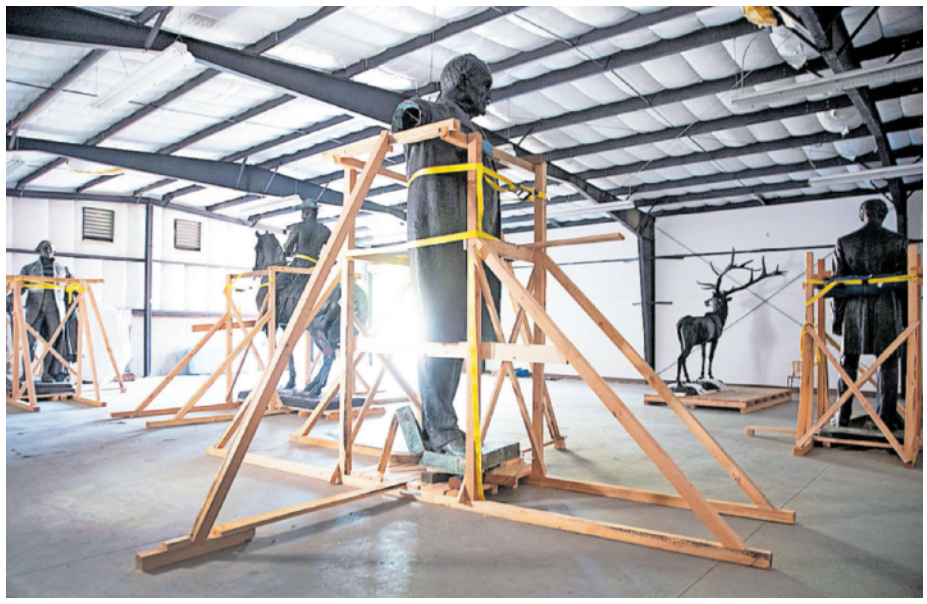
The lynching immediately drove Black people out of Coos Bay, the local Coast Mail newspaper reported at the time. Today, just 1.1% of Coos County residents chose "Black" as a racial identifier, according to 2020 census statistics, roughly 700 people in a county of nearly 65,000 and far below the statewide rate of 3.1%.

Twenty years after Tucker's killing, amid a nationwide resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, The Oregonian under Pittock's and Scott's trustees belittled victims of near lynchings.

In 1922, Arthur Burr, a Black Medford porter, was abducted in southern Oregon by the racist hate group's members and hanged from a tree somewhere in the Siskiyou Mountains before being released.



Students from Rosemary Anderson High School's Gresham campus took a field trip to the Pittock Mansion this summer. The students lingered in the basement, where the Oregon Black Pioneers' traveling exhibition, "Black in Oregon: 1840-1870," was on display. Here, students scrutinize a breakdown of how Oregon counties voted on the legality of slavery and whether to allow freed Black people in the state.



City statues toppled or removed during 2020 protests, including Oregonian editor Harvey Scott, center, are stored in a city of Portland facility. From left are statues of George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt, Scott, the Thompson fountain elk and Abraham Lincoln. *Photos by Beth Nakamura, staff*

At the time, Oregon had the highest reported per-capita Klan membership west of the Mississippi River.

The Oregonian repeatedly identified Burr solely by his race, not his name. In one news story, as Burr prepared to testify before a grand jury, the paper noted his race disparagingly and mocked him as scared to tell authorities about a "'necktie party' at which he was the chief performer."

Burr moved to California. Today, 2.2% of Medford residents checked "Black" as a racial identifier, a disproportionately low percentage.

In 1923, The Oregonian downplayed another attempted lynching.

Perry Ellis, said to be the only Black person living in Oregon City, was nearly hanged to death by six hooded men.

The story landed inside the paper on page 6, under the headline "Negro is kidnaped by gang, he says." The story described Ellis as speaking with a "picturesque" dialect and suggested parts of his story were "ridiculous."

In The Advocate, a Black Portland newspaper then led by civil rights activist Beatrice Morrow Cannady, the attempted lynching was front page news. "OREGON STAGES NEAR LYNCHING PARTY," blared the headline.

Though Ellis' abductors wore white robes and hoods, The Oregonian didn't mention the Klan. The Advocate implicated the hate group on its front page.

Ellis immediately moved away from Oregon, leaving Oregon City without a single Black person.

Almost 100 years later, just 2.2% of its population selected "Black" as a racial identifier in the latest census.

A MANSION AND A MOUNTAIN

Pittock's and Scott's names are still found throughout Portland.

Mount Scott, where he owned land, Mount Scott Park, Mount Scott Elementary and Scott Elementary School each bear the name of The Oregonian's former editor.

An eight-foot-tall painting of Scott hangs in the library on Pacific University's Forest Grove campus, his alma mater that is now home to nearly 4,000 students. The school's Center for Gender Equity and its Student Multicultural Center are housed in Harvey W. Scott Memorial Hall, which opened in 1967.

A bronze statue of Scott stood in a city park atop Mount Tabor until protesters tore it down two years ago. Though the statue now sits in storage, its weathered stone base remains. Beneath faded graffiti, its inscription from 1933 proclaims: "MOLDER OF OPINION IN OREGON AND THE NATION."

Growing up, David Scott said he remembered taking pride in his great-grandfather's statue.

After it was torn down, Scott said he wanted to understand what drove the protesters. He was taken aback after reading what his ancestor had written, particularly about the Indigenous population.

"It's kind of an appalling story," David Scott said.

Scott said it was regrettable to see how many statues had been defaced in Portland in recent years. But he said the protesters' actions were needed to have their grievances heard.

"I took it as a chance to say, maybe we need to learn more and be more aware of what went on," he said.

Pittock, meanwhile, left behind a $7.8 million estate, $141 million in today's dollars. That includes his namesake Pittock Mansion in the West Hills, a 16,000-square-foot French Renaissance style home that now draws more than 100,000 visitors annually, including elementary school students on regular tours.

The nonprofit that manages the home, the Pittock Mansion Society, began looking at Pittock more critically in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, said Jennifer Fang, the society's interpretation and community engagement director, pushing to tell the history of Portland "through a lens that doesn't center Pittock or whiteness." An exhibition opened there this summer highlighting Black people who moved to Oregon from 1840 to 1870, the period of racial exclusion laws.

Part of that fresh look includes considering his newspaper's record of racism and what it means for Pittock's legacy.

"If you're letting Harvey Scott write these things, you're implicated in some way," Fang said.

"When it's this consistent, either Pittock didn't care, which definitely counts as racist, or he agreed with it."

Michael Pittock Mills, the society's past president and a great-great-grandchild of Henry Pittock, said in an email that he grieves "over my ancestors' ignorance and racist beliefs as they were leaders among the Oregonians of the day."

Uncovering and revealing Oregon's racist past may be painful, Mills said, but it is essential to change the future.

"There are things that can be done now to help reconcile those wrongs," Mills said. "Finding the truth, telling the truth, and acting on those truths to alter our behavior is the correct course."

The project, Publishing Prejudice: The Oregonian's Racist Legacy, is generously supported in part by a $30,000 grant from The John Farmer Memorial Journalism Fund. The Oregonian/OregonLive is solely responsible for all content.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

The Oregonian/OregonLive would like to hear what you think about Publishing Prejudice, its project examining The Oregonian's history of racial prejudice. Contact us at equity@oregonian.com or leave a voicemail at 503-221-8055.

PUBLISHING PREJUDICE

The modern impact of The Oregonian's racist history

Content warning: This story contains quotations of racist statements the newspaper printed.

Rob Davis *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

Their words may have been printed more than a century ago. But The Oregonian under Henry Pittock, Harvey Scott and the people picked to run it after their deaths championed discrimination that left a decades-long impact and contributed to lasting harms.

In 1904, a Black man, Oliver Taylor, sued the owner of the Star Theater in downtown Portland after a doorkeeper refused to let him sit in the box seats for a vaudeville show.

"You are colored people," the doorkeeper reportedly told Taylor, "and it is a rule of this house."

The Oregonian, published by Pittock and edited by Scott, sided with the theater owner, a frequent advertiser.

Prohibiting Black people from sitting in box seats wasn't a matter of prejudice, the paper editorialized, it was what theater patrons desired. "It is difficult to understand why any citizen, white or black, will insist on going where he is not wanted," an unsigned editorial said in May 1905.

Black people should accept things they can't change, Scott's editorial page said, "and go their way cheerfully, realizing that, after all, their condition in this country is much improved over that of their ancestors of a century or two ago."

The racist sentiment wasn't universal among Portland's newspapers. A competing daily, the Oregon Journal, took a critical tone in its news coverage of Taylor's lawsuit, saying that Oregon's Constitution disregarded the rights of Black people and stood in "violent opposition" to the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed equal protection under the law.

Oregon's Supreme Court eventually sanctioned the color line in an almost identical case. Once established in the legal system, eliminating it took nearly 40 years.

Signs reading "We Cater to White Trade Only" appeared in Portland restaurant windows. Diners, swimming pools, dance halls and other public places remained segregated like they were in the Deep South until Oregon lawmakers passed a landmark civil rights bill in 1953, more than half a century after other West Coast states.

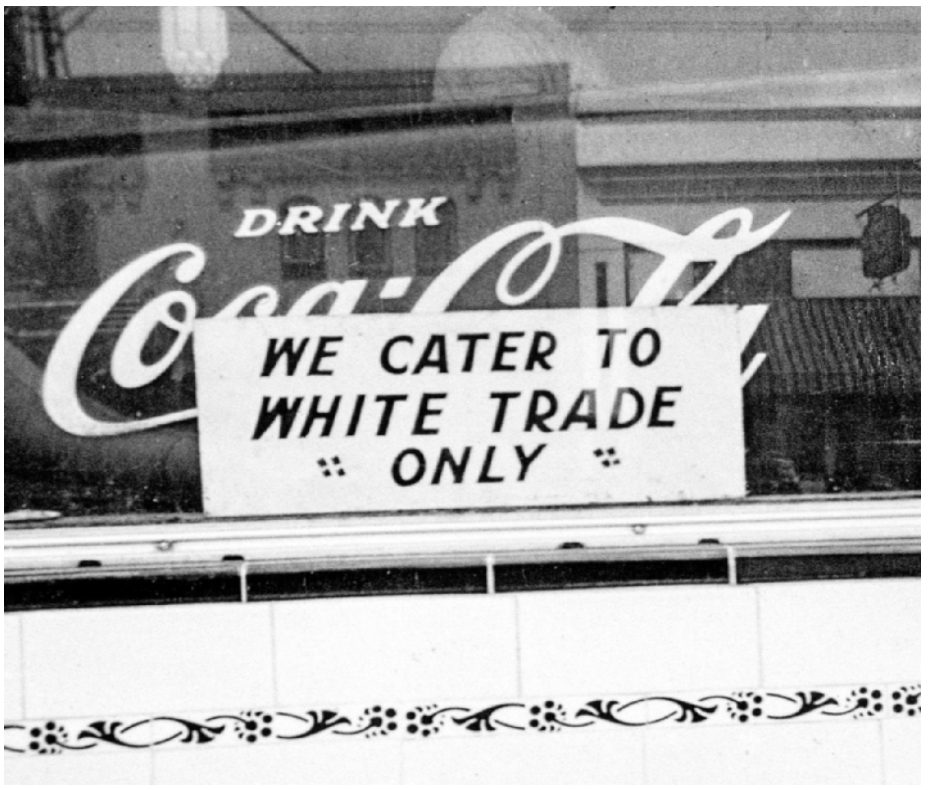
"What The Oregonian editorialized helped make that acceptable as official public policy," said Darrell Millner, an emeritus professor of Black studies at Portland State University, "perpetuating the racial viewpoints prevalent in the white population at that time that found that acceptable."

During the Great Depression, The Oregonian supported another policy change with lasting effects on peoples' lives.

After Pittock died in 1919, he didn't hand ownership to his heirs, instead putting it in a trust for 20 years.

During that period, when it was managed by Pittock's chosen trustee, Ore Price, and edited by Paul Kelty, Scott's nephew, The Oregonian published editorials that promoted white nationalism in the state's justice system, helping Oregon join Louisiana as one of just two states with a jury system that didn't require a unanimous vote to convict.

Voters created the system after a



A photograph captured in 1943 shows a "WE CATER TO WHITE TRADE ONLY" sign hanging in the window of the Denver Cafe in North Portland. Segregation was legal in Oregon until 1953. *Oregon Historical Society*

Beth Nakamura, staff

"The Morning Oregonian led the way. The sensationalism and the reporting and the editorializing created this moment of panic almost, that led people to have to change the jury system."

Aliza Kaplan, a Lewis & Clark Law School professor who has studied the history of Oregon's juries.

A selection of case files about Oregon's nonunanimous jury system is stored at the Criminal Justice Reform Clinic at Lewis & Clark Law School. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

prominent 1933 murder trial in Columbia County. One of 12 jurors refused to convict the defendant, a Jewish man, of murder, resulting in a lesser manslaughter conviction.

The Oregonian wrote dozens of stories about the trial and began editorializing about the need for nonunanimous juries as soon as it concluded.

The newspaper's editorial page complained in a bigoted piece about the impacts to juries from immigrants who'd come from southern and eastern Europe, a coded reference to Jewish people.

In the preceding decades, millions of Jewish people had immigrated to the United States from the region, fleeing religious persecution.

European immigrants, The Oregonian editorialized, were "untrained in the jury system," helping make "the jury of twelve increasingly unwieldy and unsatisfactory."

The newspaper similarly editorialized against "mixed-blooded" jurors and the risk of juries filled with immigrants who lacked "the traditions of the English-speaking peoples."

Oregon voters approved a 1934 measure that allowed 11-1 or 10-2 jury convictions except in murder cases.

"The Morning Oregonian led the way," said Aliza Kaplan, a Lewis & Clark Law School professor who has studied the history of Oregon's juries. "The sensationalism and the reporting and the editorializing created this moment of panic almost, that led people to *have* to change the jury system."

The state failed to track nonunanimous convictions for decades. But the jury system born of prejudice and xenophobia appears to have had a discriminatory effect on people convicted of crimes.

After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2020 that nonunanimous convictions for felonies were unconstitutional, Kaplan, two other attorneys and a team of law students analyzed almost 700 split-jury verdicts that were identified by the state or public defenders. No racial or ethnic group was more disproportionately affected than Black people, their analysis determined. Sixteen percent of those convictions were of Black people, despite them being 3.1% of the state population.

"This is just one part of a system," Kaplan said, "that at every single place disproportionately affects people of color."

It's unclear exactly how many people were affected. Kaplan said the nearly 700 cases are a dramatic undercount of the true number of nonunanimous convictions in Oregon since the 1930s.

The Oregonian ignored the discriminatory foundation of the nonunanimous system for decades.

When the U.S. Supreme Court considered an appeal over its constitutionality in 1970, the newspaper editorialized that state law was "under attack." Maintaining nonunanimous juries tipped the scales of justice "in favor of society" instead of the accused, the editorial board wrote in 1972 after the Supreme Court upheld the system.

The newspaper's editorial board opposed a 1999 ballot initiative to expand nonunanimous convictions to murder cases, saying that Oregon shouldn't join Louisiana as the only states to allow 11-1 or 10-2 murder convictions.

The editorial didn't acknowledge that Oregon and Louisiana were already the only states allowing such convictions in other cases.

"Oregon's jury system isn't broken and doesn't need to be fixed, tinkered with or improved," the newspaper wrote in an unsigned editorial.

The Oregonian finally scrutinized its own role in helping create the state's jury system in a 2017 news story. A subsequent editorial said it was time to end a clearly unjust system.

In Louisiana, The Advocate newspaper in 2018 wrote a Pulitzer Prize-winning, five-part investigation exposing the discriminatory outcomes of that state's nonunanimous jury system, leading voters there to abolish it.

That left Oregon as the only state in the nation allowing nonunanimous convictions until the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed them two years ago.

Yet people found guilty by nonunanimous juries remain imprisoned with no clear path forward.

The project, Publishing Prejudice: The Oregonian's Racist Legacy, is generously supported in part by a $30,000 grant from the John Farmer Memorial Journalism Fund. The Oregonian/OregonLive is solely responsible for all content.

equity@oregonian.com

PUBLISHING PREJUDICE PART 2

The Oregonian concealed consequences of WWII prison camps

Content warning: This story contains quotations from the newspaper's racist coverage of people of Japanese descent before and during World War II.

Rob Davis *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

She was just a schoolgirl, no older than 8. Yet almost 70 years later, Vicki Nakashima still remembers that the magazine article, a piece of family history, felt important enough to bring to show-and-tell.

It stretched across two pages in The New Republic. Vicki's father, Ted, had written it.

"I figured my father being in a magazine was important," she said.

Under the headline "Concentration Camp: U.S. Style," Ted Nakashima, a second-generation Japanese American, gave a searing view from inside the Puyallup Fairgrounds near Tacoma, one of the prison camps the American government initially used to detain people of Japanese descent during World War II.

He described an upended world. Guards with Tommy guns threatened to shoot anyone within 20 feet of the barbed wire fences. Kids played in raw sewage. Bathrooms were off limits after 9 p.m., no exceptions. The line for meals stretched for blocks.

"Dirty, unwiped dishes, greasy silver, a starchy diet, no butter, no milk, bawling kids, mud, wet mud that stinks when it dries, no vegetables — a sad thing for the people who raised them in such abundance," he wrote in the June 15, 1942, article.

"Can this be the same America we left a few weeks ago?"

Less than a month later, Oregon's oldest newspaper, an ardent supporter of the mass incarceration, fired back. The story was authored by a young reporter named Richard Nokes who, decades later, would rise to the position of editor.

The full-page rebuke brushed off Nakashima without doing a basic reporting task: visiting the Washington prison camp about which Nakashima had written.

Nokes' article painted a selective picture of incarcerated life at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition, now the Portland Expo Center, which Nakashima mentioned in passing and where the population peaked in June 1942 at 3,676 people.

The story described the Portland prison camp as "comfortable" and "a temporary refuge," ignoring that its residents had been ripped from their lives. Nakashima was labeled "Japanese" in the headline, obscuring the fact that he was a U.S. citizen born in Seattle. His complaints were dismissed as "bitter." The Oregonian's photographs showed people posed, smiling directly at the camera, far from an accurate representation of life there.

The Oregonian's future editor said he had spoken to hundreds of people imprisoned, writing that they had few objections.

In fact, he wrote, "a vast majority seemed to consider their detention a vacation."

Glaring in its arrogance, The Oregonian's article was in keeping with the newspaper's racist history. From its first days publishing as a daily in 1861 until well into the 20th century, The Oregonian existed as a newspaper by white men, for white men. The consequences were profound. Its white supremacist worldviews — excusing lynching, supporting segregation, stigmatizing people of color — helped shape the state today.

The story attempting to disprove Nakashima's personal experience was characteristic of The Oregonian's racist coverage of imprisonment during World War II. News articles and editorials relied on euphemisms, slurs, stereotypes and labels to conceal the consequences and denigrate the 120,000 people imprisoned without due process, two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens.

"The average reader would think: 'That can't be bad, look at that,'" said Vicki Nakashima, 75, a retired state of Oregon employee who lives in Camas, Washington.

The story is something, she said, for which the newspaper owes an apology.

"It was not right to use the press for that kind of purpose," she said. "I knew my father didn't lie."

Therese Bottomly, editor of The Oregonian/OregonLive, apologized to Nakashima and her family in person in early October, as this story was being finalized.

"I don't know if you understand how important that is," Nakashima told Bottomly.

"The pain and hardships were immense and the apology by The Oregonian doesn't right a wrong," Nakashima later said. "But it does correct the record for future generations."

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

The Oregonian applauded after President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on Feb. 19, 1942, creating the West Coast incarceration program less than three months after the Japanese military's attack on Pearl Harbor killed 2,403 Americans.

The newspaper's editorial board supported the incarceration, falsely claiming that people of Japanese descent had clustered in dangerous places, near the airport, shipyards and Bonneville Dam.

"They might easily become the victims of race riots if there were sudden evidences of sabotage — if, for example, unexplained fires appeared in the northwest forests," the editorial board opined a week later, on Feb. 26, 1942. "And, besides, it is important that we remember that such fires, or other sabotage, actually do remain a possibility."

The Oregonian's publisher, Palmer Hoyt, pushed that narrative when he testified before a Congressional panel the same day. He warned federal lawmakers "a mere dozen saboteurs, given suitable climatic conditions, could have the state in flames overnight," the paper wrote at the time.

Like other West Coast papers that supported the incarceration, The Oregonian's news coverage called the imprisoned people "evacuees" and the places they were taken "evacuation centers" or "relocation centers."

While the sentiments expressed by The Oregonian were widespread, many Americans also rightly criticized the government for violating the fundamental rights of its citizens. When Minoru Yasui intentionally got arrested in March 1942 in an effort to challenge the legality of a curfew targeting people of Japanese descent, The Oregonian labeled him an "alien" in a front-page headline. He was a U.S. citizen born in Hood River.

Yasui was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015, the country's highest civilian honor, for a lifetime of fighting for human rights and his bravery in challenging an unjust detainment that, adjusted for inflation, cost families several billion dollars.

Peggy Nagae, the Portland attorney who led Yasui's effort to vacate his conviction in 1984, said The Oregonian's description of Yasui and other Japanese Americans wasn't accidental.

"It's language to incite," she said.

In a country where studies have documented rising violence against Asian Americans since COVID-19 began, Nagae said the words evoke the same discriminatory language and reactions as when former President Donald Trump described the coronavirus with racial slurs.

Oregon tallied more than 60 anti-Asian bias incidents in 2020.

Those incidents are notoriously underreported; a 2022 Pew Research Center nationwide survey found nearly one in five Asian Americans worries daily or almost daily about being attacked or threatened because of their race or ethnicity.

"The violence that is still happening today," Nagae said, "is the same type of violence that was perpetuated by The Oregonian back then."

It's been Vicki Nakashima's "obsession" to uncover the impact of her father's decision to write about conditions inside Camp Harmony. Nakashima thinks her father withstood the pushback he experienced because "he was undaunted, credible, had a track record of success in his studies, career and community life," she said. Ultimately, Ted Nakashima's life became a model and inspiration for her own. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

Ted Nakashima, in his The New Republic article titled "Concentration Camp: U.S. Style," lamented both the deplorable conditions at the camp in Washington and how wasteful the incarceration was. *Nakashima family*

Between May and September 1942, thousands of people of Japanese descent were imprisoned at what is today the Portland Expo Center. *Oregon Historical Society*

Jeanne Shioshi, left, irons while imprisoned at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition. Shioshi, the editor of her Redmond high school's newspaper, says she can vaguely remember The Oregonian's reporter and photographer visiting because "these were very important people." *Oregonian archives*

'THIS WAS NOT A VACATION'

After being uprooted from their lives, Ted Nakashima and his wife, Masako, were imprisoned in the euphoniously named Camp Harmony at the Puyallup Fairgrounds, an initial stop before moving to the Tule Lake permanent prison camp in Northern California.

His article in The New Republic didn't name the Washington site, only mentioning two relatives kept in Portland at the Pacific International Livestock Exposition, another temporary camp. But his location was soon identified.

Nakashima lamented how wasteful the incarceration was. He had been helping the war effort before being detained, doing architectural drafting for the Army Corps of Engineers and designing defense housing.

He and his wife were building a house in Seattle's Beacon Hill neighborhood. She had painted the bathroom walls a light coral, finishing three weeks before being imprisoned.

With their futures rendered uncertain by Executive Order 9066, they left their home and said goodbye to friends and the life they'd been building. Nakashima abandoned the architectural degree for which he'd been studying at the University of Washington.

"It all seems so futile, struggling, trying to live our old lives under this useless, regimented life," he wrote. "The senselessness of all the inactive manpower. ... Thousands of men and women in these camps, energetic, quick, alert, eager for hard, constructive work, waiting for the army to do something for us, an army that won't give us butter.

"I can't take it!"

Nakashima's allegations alarmed the federal officials leading the war effort. Not because they worried about the deplorable living conditions he revealed, but because they thought his story would feed enemy propaganda.

John McCloy, assistant secretary of war and one of the architects of the forced removal, met with Col. Karl Bendetsen, the Army official who executed the incarceration program, to discuss Nakashima's story three days after it was published. McCloy's diary labeled Nakashima a "disgruntled (slur)."

Nakashima was interrogated, professing his loyalty to the United States and saying the article had been "prompted by a feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction and by a desire to improve conditions in the Assembly center by making the true situation known," according to War Relocation Authority records his family obtained.

Jeanne Shioshi spent four months at the Expo Center site in 1942 before being taken to Wyoming and Idaho, where she was imprisoned until 1945. She is now 99 years old and lives in Portland. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

McCloy soon spoke with the chairman of the American Red Cross about the humanitarian organization investigating prison camp conditions "so that they can say everything is all right in them," his diary says.

The Army also pressured The New Republic. Six months after Nakashima's piece ran, the magazine wrote that it had sent a special investigator to Camp Harmony at the Army's request. The investigator fact-checked Nakashima's claims, reporting that "there seems no doubt that the conditions of which Mr. Nakashima complains were temporary and unimportant."

The Oregonian struck a similar tone, but far sooner.

The 2,125-word story rebutting Nakashima's 995-word article was written by Nokes, then a 27-year-old reporter who had been covering Portland schools.

Nokes penned a first-person account of his visit to the local prison camp in The Oregonian's Sunday magazine, a forum that gave reporters latitude in how they wrote stories.

Nokes noted that Nakashima's article had caused a "coast-wide furore" but "showed nothing so much as that freedom of speech and press exists even for those unfortunate people whom we have found necessary to intern."

In Portland's prison camp, Nokes concluded, conditions were "not nearly as bad" as what Nakashima described. The silverware and dishes were clean, and the meals were adequate. The story emphasized niceties and downplayed the inhumanity of forcing thousands of people to spend months in stinking stables converted into makeshift rooms shared by entire families.

Army inspectors would note around the time of Nokes' visit that the dishes were low quality, dishwashing was not satisfactory and kitchens weren't up to Army standards, according to a history of the site compiled by Densho, a Seattle nonprofit that documents the incarceration.

Of the hundreds of people Nokes said he spoke to, just two were quoted by name. One was Nakashima's brother, George. The "conditions here are really very good except for the lack of privacy and the terrifying noise," Nokes quoted him as saying.

Nokes acknowledged the living quarters were cramped, cold, drafty and noisy, that a single woman complained about flies and the stench of cow manure carrying into the prison camp from a nearby farm. He said a rat and lice infestation preceded a suspected scarlet fever outbreak.

Nokes called those "shortcomings," but made a sweeping generalization that "all the Japanese appear to make allowances," knowing their stay was temporary before being permanently moved to inland prison facilities.

Despite the scarlet fever, the stench, the lack of privacy, the cold, the rats, the flies, the lice, the cramped quarters, the terrifying noise, the elderly people falling ill, Nokes said the imprisoned people reported no "real or fancied grievances."

Jeanne Shioshi, 99, spent four months incarcerated with her family at the Expo Center site while it operated from May to September 1942 before being taken to Wyoming and Idaho, where she was

CONTINUES ON PAGE 10

Continues from Page 9

imprisoned until 1945.

Shioshi, the editor of her Redmond high school's newspaper, says she can vaguely remember The Oregonian's reporter and photographer visiting because she was working on the newspaper at the prison camp and "these were very important people."

Shioshi winced when a reporter read Nokes' description of the imprisonment as a vacation.

"It felt like we'd been put in a prison camp," said Shioshi, who lives in Southeast Portland. "I hadn't done anything wrong. It was just because of race, because of nationality."

People had no privacy, using showers without walls and toilets without stalls, she said.

Clouds of flies were so thick that dead ones dropped off flypaper strips hanging over tables in the dining hall. Temperatures soared above 100 across three days in June and July. And the stench of manure was overwhelming at times. It was shocking for the 19-year-old, who innocently stopped on her drive to the prison camp to pick a bouquet of rhododendron blossoms.

"We were enclosed in a barbed wire fence, armed guards going by," Shioshi said. "This was not a vacation."

REINFORCING FALSEHOODS

The incarceration was built on a lie, one that was reinforced by The Oregonian, a newspaper that for decades had been hostile toward Japanese immigrants.

After Pearl Harbor, then-Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox falsely claimed that people of Japanese descent in Hawaii had aided in the bombing.

In 1982, the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, a federal panel that examined the incarceration, wrote that the government, including the FBI, quickly investigated and concluded people of Japanese descent in Hawaii had not assisted with the attack. But government officials didn't try to convince the public otherwise.

During World War II, no acts of espionage or sabotage were committed by American citizens of Japanese ancestry or by resident Japanese immigrants on the West Coast, the commission said.

"The country was unfairly led to believe that both American citizens of Japanese descent and resident Japanese aliens threatened American security," the commission wrote.

Newspapers across the country echoed the federal government's false claims, helping to stir up fears of attacks by people of Japanese descent. "The press amplified the unreflective emotional excitement of the hour," the commission concluded.

Col. Bendetsen, the military architect of the imprisonment, briefed members of the media in Portland and other West Coast cities, asking them to censor their coverage of the incarceration and withhold sensational photographs, remembering that Americans captured in Japan could be tortured.

In its rebuke to Nakashima, The Oregonian quoted from a recent address Bendetsen had given. "It is doubtless true that many persons of Japanese ancestry are loyal to the United States," Bendetsen said. "It is also true that many are not loyal. We know this."

The government didn't know that. And while it imprisoned thousands of people of Italian and German descent, they didn't face the mass incarceration that people of Japanese descent did on the West Coast, where first- and second-generation Japanese Americans were used as scapegoats, reigniting the racism they'd faced since arriving in Oregon in 1880.

"When people talk about World War II, it seems to justify what happened," said Chisao Hata, creative director for the Japanese American Museum of Oregon, whose parents got married while incarcerated. "But when you understand the entire history of immigration and the laws and attitudes, it was just another racist act that took place. It wasn't an isolated event."

After coming for jobs on the railroad, then in the timber and salmon canning industries, Japanese immigrants faced a hostile populace in Oregon.

Labor unions disdained their acceptance of lower pay. The federal court system ruled them ineligible for citizenship. In 1898, a team of Japanese railroad workers in Clatskanie was assaulted, threatened and forced to leave.

A letter to the editor in The Oregonian described the scene, where a white railroad employee warned the Japanese workers: "If you don't go, we will blow you to hell with dynamite."

The Oregonian was no different. The newspaper used racist slurs to describe the new immigrants, mocked their names and employed demeaning stereotypes.

A surge of racism, including efforts to restrict the sale of property to Japanese immigrants, followed their settlement in the Hood River Valley in the 1910s. White orchard owners banded together in 1919 to form the Anti-Asiatic Association. The newspaper called it the "Hood River Japanese problem."

Hood River was "menaced" by Japanese farmers, The Oregonian wrote in a 1920 news story that uncritically quoted organizers' claim "that unless something is done, the Hood River valley will become Japanese land in 10 years." The county's Japanese population was actually declining, census records show.

In Portland, the Portland Realty Board, which had counted The Oregonian's longtime publisher, Henry Pittock, as an affiliate member, weighed whether to prohibit home sales in white neighborhoods to people who were Black or Asian, saying they would lower property values.

As legislative efforts ramped up to forbid land ownership by people of Japanese and Chinese heritage, The Oregonian celebrated the exclusionary effort in a 1922 editorial, making clear that it wanted to guard against allowing "brown men" into the country.

"They are so prolific that in another generation we may have several hundred thousand Japanese, who, being native born, will be citizens and old enough to vote, though carefully educated by their parents to be loyal subjects of the mikado," The Oregonian editorialized, using a term for the Japanese emperor.

"The problem will then be how to keep this a white man's country, especially as the fecundity of the white stock is falling."

At the time, people of Japanese descent represented just 1% of Oregon's population.

It would take the World War II incarceration program two decades later to achieve many of the aims of those anti-Japanese efforts, imprisoning tens of thousands of the United States' own citizens without due process, costing innocent people their homes, their jobs, their businesses and their college opportunities.

Thousands never returned to the West Coast; those who did faced efforts to keep them away in places like Hood River and Gresham.

Linda Tamura, professor emerita of education at Willamette University and an author of two books about the history of Japanese Americans in Oregon, said the words that The Oregonian used helped create the impression that people were simply being relocated, not having their constitutional rights violated.

Tamura, whose family was incarcerated while her father, Harry, served in the U.S. Army, said the trauma persisted

Images of Japanese Americans being held at what was euphemistically called the Portland Assembly Center, now the Expo Center, are part of the Oregon Historical Society's archive. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

The Hood River Japanese Community Hall was an important gathering place for people of Japanese descent who settled in the rural area, housing community events like plays and musicals. *Densho Digital Repository, the Yasui Family Collection*

Today, on Sherman Street in Hood River, no evidence of the Japanese Community Hall remains. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

when people returned home only to face continued hostility from some locals who wanted them gone.

"They could see it verbally, written, nonverbally. They learned to not talk about it," she said. "That continues through the generations. "We learned to be discreet, to wonder but not always ask questions, because they simply didn't want to bring it up."

REFLECTION, BUT NO APOLOGY

The Oregonian revisited the imprisonment in February 1979 as Portland prepared for its first day of remembrance of the incarceration. By then, Nokes was the editor.

In a column, Nokes suggested he had censored himself in the article he'd written about the Portland prison camp 37 years earlier.

"I recall thinking at the time: 'Wouldn't Japan's newspapers have a field day if they knew that their citizens and Americans from Japanese forefathers were being incarcerated in 'pig pens?'" Nokes wrote.

He recalled the prison camp in bleaker terms, saying it was "a grim place" and noting that incarcerated people had lost their livelihoods. Nokes, who died in 2004, urged readers to remember the prevailing mindset in the "desperately fearful" early days of the war.

Still, he wrote, "none of this is an adequate defense against what was done to Japanese-Americans." He stopped short of admitting any wrongs or apologizing for The Oregonian's role in fomenting anti-Japanese sentiment.

A year earlier, The Oregonian's editorial board had opposed a national effort to make $25,000 reparations payments to people who'd been imprisoned.

Nokes, who oversaw and participated in the editorial board, brought that up in his column and defended the board's opposition, saying it was far better to "pledge that such an act would not happen again."

"Money, as they say, isn't everything," Nokes wrote. He said he wouldn't attend Portland's remembrance ceremony marking the 37th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 that February because "I shall be on the beach at Waikiki."

Nearly a decade later, under new leadership, The Oregonian editorial board supported reparations.

President Ronald Reagan signed legislation in 1988 that paid $20,000 to survivors, about $50,000 in today's dollars, a sum the editorial board said was hardly excessive considering their lost income and trauma.

Gregory Nokes said his father, who joined the Navy in 1943 and served as an officer in China before returning to the newspaper, was a rally-around-the-flag guy who took pride in his role elevating Bill Hilliard to succeed him in 1982 and become The Oregonian's first Black editor.

"I don't think Dad had a racist bone in his body," Nokes, a former Oregonian reporter and editor who has written three books about Oregon's history of racism, said in an email.

"I was just a kid then, but I recall Dad objecting to moving innocent Japanese into the camps," he added.

His father's coverage of the incarceration was likely influenced not only by the Pearl Harbor attack, he said, but also by the Japanese Navy's shelling of Fort Stevens in Clatsop County in June 1942.

The incident, which caused no major damage but left craters at the beachfront installation outside Astoria, marked the only time the U.S. mainland was shelled during World War II.

"You can understand how that evolved because of fears about what was going on," he said in an interview. "It doesn't make it right."

'HATE AND RACISM'

In 2010, while researching family history, one of Vicki Nakashima's cousins discovered The Oregonian's rebuke to her father and emailed it to Vicki.

"Uncle Ted was really attacked by this major Pulitzer Prize winning newspaper," he told her. "What a strong, brave, articulate guy."

"I always knew I took after my outspoken Dad," she replied.

The imprisonment of Vicki Nakashima's parents ended in the winter of 1942-43, federal records show. They secured work release to go to Payette, Idaho, before eventually finding jobs on a Spokane chicken farm.

The family didn't move back to the Seattle area until 1957, when Vicki was 10. Ted Nakashima, who died in 1980, resumed a career in architecture but never completed the degree he had to abandon when incarcerated.

Reading Nokes' story angered Vicki Nakashima. But thinking it would be fruitless, she didn't ask The Oregonian for an apology. In the years that followed, two major West Coast newspapers that supported the incarceration said they were wrong.

The Los Angeles Times in 2017 called its editorial support of the incarceration "shameful" and "explicitly racist." The Seattle Times in March also issued an apology, saying it was "deeply sorry for our harmful coverage of the incarceration of Japanese Americans and for the pain we caused in the past that still reverberates today."

Vicki Nakashima contacted The Oregonian/OregonLive after reading the Seattle Times' apology. She said Nokes' story shocked her, seeing how the paper glossed over the conditions in the prison camp where people were forced to live in livestock stables, atop boarded-over ground where farm animals had defecated.

The incarceration wasn't something her parents talked about; it only came up in passing. While Nakashima rode a horse growing up, it wasn't until her early 20s that her mother explained why she never wanted to go to Nakashima's horse shows. The smell reminded her of the stall where she'd lived at the Puyallup Fairgrounds.

Nakashima knows her father's bravery in writing about his imprisonment served as a beacon for her life, a guide that helped her stand up for others.

It led her into a career that incorporated advocating for diversity, equity and inclusion, both as Oregon's director for multicultural health and later as a volunteer with Partners in Diversity, a nonprofit that promotes a more diverse workforce.

Imagine, she says, the courage it would have taken to openly criticize the government then.

"I'm sure it crossed their minds that they might be kicked out of the United States or something horrible might happen to them," she says.

She doesn't know whether her father ever saw The Oregonian's rebuke. But she has an idea what he would think.

"That was just unbelievable," she said. "Unbelievable. It was blatant lies. Fabrication. It was the worst of what people say about Japanese.

"It was hate. It was hate and racism."

Publishing Prejudice: The Oregonian's Racist Legacy is generously supported in part by a $30,000 grant from The John Farmer Memorial Journalism Fund. The Oregonian/OregonLive is solely responsible for all content.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU

The Oregonian/OregonLive would like to hear what you think about Publishing Prejudice, its project examining The Oregonian's history of racial prejudice. Contact us at equity@oregonian.com or leave a voicemail at 503-221-8055.

What remains of the Harvey Scott statue in Mount Tabor Park in Southeast Portland, where it stood until protesters tore it down in October 2020. Throughout his career at The Oregonian, Scott's editorial page opposed expanding the rights of women and people of color. *Beth Nakamura, staff*

EDITORIAL

Accountability for the past — and for the future

As an editorial board, we often write about the importance of accountability when institutions or leaders make mistakes. Acknowledging and accepting what went wrong in the past is key to correcting course in the future.

That standard holds for us, as well. "Publishing Prejudice: The Oregonian's Racist Legacy" — The Oregonian/OregonLive's deep examination of the virulent hate and institutional racism fostered over time by the newspaper — has been horrifying and humbling to absorb.

The decades-long pattern identified by reporter Rob Davis paints a picture of a news organization that downplayed lynching, supported incarcerating people of Japanese descent during World War II, embraced slurs and stereotypes in its news stories and editorials, and sought to block basic rights for those who were not white and male. And while the newspaper has previously written about its past racism, it's only now that The Oregonian/OregonLive has conducted such an exhaustive look and taken ownership of the profound harm to which such coverage has contributed.

We share in the apology from Editor Therese Bottomly to the community.

"Editorials and news articles were decidedly on the wrong side of morality," she wrote. "The institution stirred hatred, prejudice and unwarranted fear."

It is a difficult legacy to accept, but it is one that indisputably belongs to us.

As we take responsibility for the ugly sentiments expressed in past editorials, we want to be clear where we stand today. This editorial board unequivocally rejects the racism, xenophobia and paranoia that fueled those views. While the role of the editorial board has persisted, the entity itself has evolved, with different perspectives and new people to whom those stances are revolting. Since 2018, the current members have included Bottomly, President John Maher, Director of Public Interest and Accountability Laura Gunderson and Opinion Editor Helen Jung.

Editorial boards advocate for policies, endorse candidates and take positions on matters of public interest, independent of the newsroom. The very nature of what a board does — advance opinions and take sides — seems out of place for a news organization that wants readers to come to their own conclusions. And the wisdom of any opinion is vulnerable to the blinders that any human wears.

But we believe that this longtime institution, as flawed as it may be, should contribute to the discussion and debate of how best to build an equitable, accountable and sustainable Oregon. We love our state and are invested in a future that provides opportunity for all. We draw on our journalistic skills, deep understanding of political dynamics and willingness to ask uncomfortable questions to develop the positions we put forward.

And we are continuing the commitment to equity and opportunity that previous boards have shown over the past two decades.

Editorials in recent years have relentlessly called for educational funding and school investments; pointed out inequities in the classes available to low-income schools; and demanded greater urgency on closing achievement gaps for students of color.

They have pushed for greater police accountability, arguing against expungement of citizen complaints against Portland police; supporting a public inquiry process in police shootings; and encouraging the elimination of contract provisions that hamper investigations into misconduct.

And editorials have advocated for systemic changes and transformative investments for racial justice, urging legislators to refer a change in Oregon's nonunanimous jury verdict to Oregonians; supporting overhauling of discriminatory criminal justice practices; and calling for funding necessary for a revitalization of the Albina district, Portland's historically Black neighborhood that was razed by highway construction and other development.

Certainly, our critics would point to other editorials to argue that we do not prioritize racial justice enough. For example, many objected to our criticism earlier this year of the rollout of the Portland Clean Energy Fund, which focuses on funding projects led by or directly affecting communities of color. But we maintain that the success of that initiative depends on clear objectives, strong oversight and careful financial management. The changes proposed by City Commissioner Carmen Rubio, in our view, reflect exactly the kind of responsible improvements that scrutiny can generate.

Certainly, we may get it wrong in some cases. We have at times reversed ourselves when additional information shows we should. But we aim in every single editorial to provide readers an honest and transparent argument showing how we arrived at the conclusions we did. And every January, we write an overview of the key concerns or issues for the year ahead that show readers our priorities for the year.

We also understand that our opinion is only one of many. We regularly solicit and publish op-eds and letters from community members representing a variety of viewpoints, some of which directly criticize our conclusions. We believe that Oregon is stronger for its diversity — of background, race and opinion — and proudly use our opinion pages to host the open debate that's so critical for our civic health.

We are not the same newspaper as the one published 150 years ago or even 50 years ago. But don't just take our word for it. Read us and challenge us. Write letters and op-eds.

Accountability is more than a one-time apology and we remain on that journey day after day.

The Oregonian/OregonLive Editorial Board