

Secondary Sources: Document 1

EXCLUSION, WHITE SUPREMACY, AND DESIGNING A WHITE HOMELAND 1840S-1920S

Even before Oregon was a state, early American pioneers worked to create a land where only white people could live. In 1844 the first American settlers in Oregon set up a temporary body of government called the Provisional Government of Oregon. The Provisional Government passed a law to ban slavery. This was not because the settlers believed in racial equality but because they didn't want white workers to have to compete with slave labor. To create a white homeland, all blacks—both slave and free—had to be excluded.

Peter Burnett, a pioneer and judge who strongly believed in the exclusion of black people from Oregon wrote,

The object is to keep clear of that most troublesome class of population. We are in a new world, under the most favorable circumstances, and we wish to avoid most of those evils that have so much afflicted the United States and other countries.

By excluding black residents, early pioneers thought they could create an all white territory and avoid the race problems that had led to the American Civil War.

In 1850, the U.S. government passed the Oregon Donation Land Act, which led to a practice that would later come to be known as “homesteading.” This law granted 640 acres to married couples who settled in Oregon prior to 1850 (320 acres to be in the wife's name) and 320 acres to immigrants arriving after 1850. Under the law, only whites could claim such land. (Individual who were ½ Native American Indian/Alaska Native were also eligible to provide for the offspring of white men who had married Native Americans/American Indians/Alaska Natives earlier in the pre-territorial period.) Even without the racial restriction written into the law, it would have been impossible for most black Americans to take advantage of the Land Act because in 1850, most blacks were still slaves. Slaves were not considered citizens of the United States.

Portland State University Black Studies Professor Darrell Millner considers the Donation Land Act the most important anti-black pioneer law because it gave all of the land to one group of people and denied it to everyone else (interview, 6/2017). If one group has all of the land and resources, they will naturally accumulate more wealth and power. The Act of 1850 helped to establish a pattern of injustice in terms of race relations in Oregon that affected all later generations.

When Oregon created a state constitution in 1857, the authors included a clause to prohibit black citizens from living here. Article 1 Section 35 stated that, “No free Negro or mulatto... shall come, reside, or be within the state or hold any real estate, or make any contract, or maintain any suit therein....” Thus the constitution not only excluded blacks from Oregon, it also made it illegal for them to own property, engage in business, or access the legal system. The public adopted this

exclusionary clause into law through a popular vote. This language was not removed from the state constitution until 2002.

The addition of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution after the civil war legally made enforcement of these Oregon provisions unconstitutional. However, through private practices and public traditions, Oregon remained a place where hostility towards blacks and other non-whites and restrictions of their civil rights and opportunities were routinely a part of Oregon racial life.

During the Civil War, Oregon passed more laws prohibiting people of color from voting, witnessing in court, or inter-marrying with white people. Later, many counties and cities added “sundown laws” that required black people to be out of town by sundown, or suffer consequences. Sundown Laws were not technically “laws” that had been passed by a governing body, but were instead a system of practices, customs and traditions. Nevertheless, they were effective at discouraging black people from traveling in or through Oregon.

In reality, very few people were formally excluded from living in the state. The lasting impact of the exclusionary laws and the Land Act was that they communicated to black people that they were not wanted here. Combined with the institution of slavery, which limited the number of black people who could make personal decisions about their lives, the laws effectively deterred black people from coming to Oregon.

The impact of the first pioneers, their laws and their beliefs rippled decades into the future. In the early 20th century, Portland and Oregon had the largest Ku Klux Klan (KKK) west of the Rockies and the largest per capita in the entire country! One of the KKK’s central beliefs was in a philosophy of white supremacy. In February of 1922, so many people were initiated into the KKK in Portland (over a thousand,) that the only place that could hold the crowd of was the municipal stadium (where the Timbers now play.) KKK members used to march in the Rose Parade and in 1923 the man elected governor of Oregon was Walter Pierce, a klan member from La Grande. He later served as Oregon’s representative to the U.S. Congress in the 1930s.

Organized black resistance also began to strengthen in the early 20th century. The Portland branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the oldest continuously chartered branch west of the Mississippi, started in 1914. One of the founding members, Beatrice Morrow Cannady, worked for fifteen years to limit the showing of *The Birth of a Nation*, a film used by the KKK to support white supremacy. Cannady was also the editor and owner of the Portland newspaper *The Advocate*. Through the newspaper, Cannady was able to keep her readers informed of KKK activity around the state and confront racial discrimination practiced throughout Portland and Oregon.

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HOUSING DISCRIMINATION AND REDLINING 1920s - 1960s

Around the turn of the 20th century, a small black community had settled in Portland. Many worked for the railroad as Pullman Porters (attendants to people traveling in sleeper cars), so they lived in the Northwest district near Union Station, the area now known as Old Town and the Pearl District. Within this neighborhood black residents owned businesses such as cafes, barber shops, and the Golden West Hotel—the only hotel in Portland at the time where African American travelers were allowed to stay.

As the city continued to grow and develop downtown, the black community grew as well, eventually expanding across the river around 1910, to the area of the modern day Rose Quarter (home of the Moda Center, where the Blazers play), which was still within walking distance to the train over the Broadway Bridge. In the mid-to-late 1800s, this area had been controlled by the Union Pacific Railroad and had been home to many European immigrants who also worked for the trains or on the docks.

White residents on the east side of town did not want Blacks moving into other neighborhoods. They believed (incorrectly) that if a black family moved into their area, it would lower the value of their house. Many white Portlanders were also prejudiced against Blacks and wanted them to live in a segregated neighborhood.

House sales often included “restrictive covenants,” which prohibited selling a house to black homebuyers and people of other races, religions, and national origin, in white neighborhoods. The Oregon real estate industry also adopted the National Association of Real Estate Board’s “code of ethics,” which stated:

“A Realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood”

(June 6, 1924. <http://archive.realtor.org/sites/default/files/1924Ethics.pdf>).

This was coded language intended to support restrictions on blacks and other non-whites. Additionally, banks and other financial institutions often refused to lend money to black homebuyers who wanted to purchase a house outside of the Albina district. Banks created maps of the city and drew actual red lines around low income and racially- identified neighborhoods, indicating that they would not grant loans to people from those neighborhoods. This discriminatory practice is known as “redlining.” As a result, half of Portland’s black population lived in Albina in 1940, because it was difficult for them to buy a house anywhere else. By 1960, four-fifths of the city’s 15,000 black residents squeezed into the two-and-a-half-square-mile district.

In 1926 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that restrictive covenants were legal, making the practice popular in white neighborhoods across the country. In 1948, the Court reversed this decision, claiming that restrictive covenants were “unenforceable.” However, Portland realtors continued to find ways to maintain segregation by refusing to show houses to black clients, canceling appointments to look at houses, and taking houses off the market until they found white buyers.

Blacks who tried to live in white neighborhoods were met with threats and harassment. In 1929, Dr. DeNorval Unthank, a black doctor, and his wife, moved to Portland. They moved into Ladd’s Addition, an all-white southeast neighborhood in 1930. His house was vandalized and his neighbors created a petition asking him to leave. Someone even left a dead cat on his steps as a threat. Eventually, the couple felt unwelcome enough that they moved. They also tried to live in Westmoreland, another white neighborhood in southeast Portland, but their house was again vandalized. The windows were broken more than once and neighbors petitioned them to leave. Unthank’s family needed to move two more times before they found a neighborhood where they could live in peace.

In 1957 Oregon passed its first fair housing legislation. The Fair Housing Act did not mean that the redlining practices would immediately come to an end, but at least it gave a legal recourse to people who faced discrimination. The first people to successfully file a claim under this legislation were Rowan and Parthina Wiley. They had originally been approved to build a house in the Parkrose neighborhood, but when the bank found out they were not white, it canceled the loan and the contractor refused to build the house. Even after the Wiley’s won their case and built their house, arsonists burned it down. The family refused to abandon their dream however, and rebuilt the house where they lived for many years.

Even though restrictive covenants, redlining, and other forms of housing discrimination are technically illegal today, the practices laid the groundwork for keeping most black residents in one area of the city, making for a racially segregated Portland.

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VANPORT 1942- 1948

During World War II, Portland and Vancouver attracted thousands of workers to build ships for the war. The Kaiser Company Shipyards went from employing a few thousand workers, to over 90,000. One of the problems with so many people coming to the area over such a short period of time was that there were not enough places for them to live.

In 1942, Edgar Kaiser, owner of the shipyards, enlisted the help of the U.S. Maritime Commission to build the largest government-funded housing project in the country. This new town, located just North of Portland near the Columbia River, could house up to 40,000 people and was built in 110 days. It was named “Vanport,” a combination of “Portland” and “Vancouver.” Vanport soon became the second largest city in Oregon.

Many new black residents came to the area during this time to take advantage of the new jobs. Between 1940 and 1950, the black population of Portland (including Vanport) grew ten times larger than before the war. Aside from San Francisco and Oakland, California, this increase was more than any other West Coast city.

Despite experiencing such large growth, Blacks were still a minority, even in Vanport. During the wartime peak in the early 1940’s, 6,000 of Vanport’s 40,000 residents were black. Established white Portlanders still considered Vanport a “colored” area, although for most of the city’s history, black families made up less than 25% of Vanport’s population. Because Vanport was so big, it had its own government. It also had schools, community centers, daycare centers, a movie theater, a police station, a hospital, and after the war, a college (which later became Portland State University). The housing in Vanport was segregated by race; black residents were restricted to the more undesirable parts of the development. But the schools and community centers were integrated. The first black educators to be hired in the state of Oregon were in Vanport.

After the war, many residents of Vanport moved away because they no longer had jobs through the shipyards. But many stayed, including many black residents who could not find housing within the city of Portland. The housing units in Vanport were meant to be temporary. They were quickly constructed and by the late 1940s, began to deteriorate.

On the morning of May 30th, 1948, the rising Columbia River threatened to break the dikes around Vanport. City officials notified residents that they should not be alarmed and that they would be given adequate warning if they were in danger. Because officials could not find a place in the city to relocate Vanport residents, they did not evacuate. That afternoon, the dikes broke, flooded the development and within hours wiped out virtually all housing units. Vanport became a lake.

Most people were able to evacuate in time, but they lost all of their belongings. In the official report, it was announced that fifteen people lost their lives in the flood. The number of displaced black

Vanport residents almost equalled the entire population of the Albina neighborhood (the only place in the city where Blacks were permitted to buy houses). Around the time that black Vanport refugees started crowding into this neighborhood, many white people in the Albina neighborhood moved out of the area to the suburbs. Known as “white flight,” this migration of white people from inner-city areas to the suburbs was common in the 1940s and ‘50s in urban areas around the country.

Many members of the black community worked to provide aid to the Vanport refugees. Dr. DeNorval Unthank, a doctor in Portland, worked to provide medical care to those in need. The local branch of the Urban League, a national organization dedicated to helping Blacks secure employment, housing, and civil rights, stepped in to facilitate the infusion of black Portlanders into the city. Edwin “Bill” Berry moved from Chicago to Portland to head this effort and eventually became the executive director of the Urban League. Berry went on to lead many more campaigns aimed at increasing opportunity for the city’s black population.

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CIVIL RIGHTS LAWS 1950 - 1953

According to the state constitution written in 1857, African-Americans were not allowed to live in Oregon. The constitution also prevented blacks from voting. Many efforts had been made in the 1800s and early 1900s to make Oregon laws more just and inclusive. In the four years between 1949 and 1953, civil rights activists achieved many victories in changing city and state law. For more than ninety years after Oregon legally became a state, it was difficult for Blacks to find a job because employers wanted to hire white workers. For much of that time, the only jobs open to black workers were train porters and house maids. During World War II, there was a greater need for workers to build ships and do other things to help with the war effort, but after the war many of the blacks who had moved to Portland for ship-building jobs were out of work and found that many potential employers refused to hire them because of their race.

In 1949, the black community, led by Edwin “Bill” Berry of the Urban League, worked to pass the Fair Employment Act in the state legislator. This bill made it illegal for employers and unions to discriminate against someone based on their race, religion, or national origin. This included hiring, firing, and promotions. This meant that if a worker felt that an employer acted with prejudice, the worker could file a complaint with the Bureau of Labor, and the Bureau would investigate and potentially “correct the wrong.” Oregon was the sixth state in the country to pass such a bill.

1951 saw the repeal of several discriminatory laws and practices. For one, the Oregon legislature repealed the law that made interracial marriage illegal. Up until 1951, black drivers (and other people of color) had to pay extra for driver’s insurance; the state insurance commissioner eliminated this. The governor also signed an executive order telling the National Guard not to practice or tolerate discrimination.

Segregation in Portland during the early-to-mid twentieth century was not as obvious as in the American South (e.g. water fountains and buses were integrated), but segregation was legal and upheld by Oregon courts. Most stores, hotels, and restaurants (known as places of “public accommodation”) did not permit black people in their establishments. Other places intended for public amusement or recreation such as swimming pools, skating rinks, and theaters also refused service to Blacks. Many white business owners felt that they should have the right to choose who they served. Between 1893 and 1953, African-American leaders attempted to pass a civil rights bill in Oregon that would make this kind of discrimination illegal, but were repeatedly defeated. Edgar Williams from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had been battling for a public accommodations law since he came to Oregon in 1918. Such a bill had been introduced in the legislator seventeen times since 1919.

In 1950, the NAACP, under the leadership of Otto and Verndell Rutherford, and the Urban League helped to pass a civil rights law in the city of Portland with the support of reformer and mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee. Later that year, it was repealed when the majority of Portland citizens voted

it down. Finally, in 1953, the Oregon Legislature approved a state civil rights bill called the Public Accommodations Law in response to the encouragement and pressure from black residents and civil rights organizations. Since no Blacks served in the state legislature at this time, the bill was carried there by white legislators Mark O. Hatfield and Philip S. Hitchcock. The law made it illegal for motels, hotels, restaurants, and other places open to the public to discriminate based on race, religion, or national origin.

The bill did not make racial discrimination a criminal act. Instead, the person discriminated against could file suit for damages not exceeding \$500. Many people were not willing or did not have time to file suit. In fact, many businesses continued to discriminate against black citizens without consequences. Nevertheless, the law was certainly a victory for the black community of Portland and all nonwhite residents of the state. When the bill was signed, Edgar Williams, who had been fighting for this civil rights bill for the past thirty-two years, recalls tears running down his cheeks. This had been a long time coming.

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BLACK COMMUNITY IN ALBINA 1904s - 1960s

In the 1940s and '50s, and even into the '60s, Portland was very racially segregated. Most businesses downtown would not serve African-Americans, although the Public Accommodation Law of 1953 helped to bring positive change. Real estate discrimination throughout this time period, however, meant that much of Portland's black population lived in one area of the city: the Northeast neighborhood of Albina.

While such racial discrimination created many hardships and much inequity in local black lives, black residents succeeded in creating a vibrant black community that flourished on and around Williams Avenue in the '40s and '50s in spite of such barriers. One resident of the neighborhood recently reflected, "It was a wonderful place for an African-American to live" (*Jazz Town*. Aired on OPB April 25, 2016.). During and after WWII, the number of black-owned businesses—such as dry cleaners, restaurants, clubs, shoe repairs, and grocery stores—increased. The Knott Street Community Center offered a preschool, athletic opportunities, dances for teenagers, theater classes, and arts and crafts. The center was very active and events they hosted were well-attended; in just the month of December, 1956, there were over 24,000 visitors

Many city clubs, such as Kiwanis, Rotary, and Lions, did not allow black membership, and other clubs, such as the Elks and Masonic Lodges, were segregated (one for white members, one for black members). In 1902, the white women of Portland had voted to exclude black women from their clubs, so the black women in Albina started their own YMCA in 1926. The building contained a gymnasium, a stage, and an auditorium. White people referred to this space as the "Colored YMCA." In the 1950's, many local groups, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Urban League, used the building for meetings. In 1959, the YMCA sold the building to the Elks and it became an African-American branch called the Billy Webb Elks Lodge. Billy Webb was one of the only places in the area that black residents could rent for birthday parties, wedding receptions, and other events.

During this time, the Williams district developed a rich music scene and became a hotspot for jazz musicians. Big-name stars made a point of stopping in Portland to visit Albina's music clubs and stay in the neighborhood. Some of them played in big venues downtown to white audiences in the 1940s and early '50s, but were not allowed to stay in the hotels or eat in the restaurants. In comparison, the Williams Avenue district felt like an island of racial tolerance—a place where all races were welcome to enjoy the music. Jazz performers who visited black-owned clubs in Albina included Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Thelonious Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie.

Church was another central gathering place for Portland's black community. Earlier in the twentieth century, black churches such as Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and Mt. Olivet Baptist Church moved from the Northwest side of the city to the East side. In the 1950s and '60s, African American churches in Portland (and around the country) connected people through their faith to the civil rights movement. In 1961, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited the city and met with African-American church leaders at Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church. On September 22, 1963, 1200 people gathered outside of the Vancouver Avenue Church to honor four girls who had recently been killed in a Birmingham church bombing. The crowd marched throughout the streets of Portland

in the name of peace and freedom. This was one of the city's largest gatherings in support of civil rights.

Albina was never a completely segregated neighborhood. Although most of Portland's black population lived there by the 1960s, the district was *made up of people of all colors*. Even though Albina was considered "run-down" or "blighted" by some people who lived in other parts of town, it was a safe and welcoming home for many who lived there. Shirley Nanette, who grew up in Albina, remembers:

We had Irish people. We had Japanese people. We had Indians. We had Mexicans, and we had black people. We all lived together Growing up in the neighborhood was a wonderful experience, because people bonded together.

(<http://www.opb.org/artsandlife/series/jazztown/portlands-great-jazz-neighborhood-albina>)

While this artificially-created black neighborhood did provide some measure of community, security, and comfort to Portland's black residents, Blacks also paid a heavy price as a consequence of the white racial discrimination that created this racially-isolated area. Economic opportunities for residents were limited as white businesses and economic institutions chose to locate in other geographic areas. Blacks who traveled outside of this area were subject to special forms of negative racial attention because of police profiling and *private white behavior*. City services, such as road repair and maintenance of facilities like schools and sewers, were substandard. Political representation in the city government was minimal, if anything at all. Having their "own" community was indeed a mixed blessing imposed on the city's black population. [VC3]

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URBAN RENEWAL AND DISPLACEMENT 1950S-1970S

“Urban renewal means negro removal.”

-James Baldwin, 1963

In the mid to late 1950s, most of Portland’s black population lived in the Northeast neighborhood of Albina. This was the part of the city where real estate agents allowed African Americans to buy homes because most white neighborhoods did not want black residents. At the same time, most banks would not give home improvement loans to people living in Albina, a practice known as “redlining”, preventing homeowners from maintaining their properties. Additionally, racial discrimination made it difficult for black Portlanders to secure jobs. In addition, the house stock in the Northeast area was among the oldest in the city and deemed less desirable to whites seeking the American Dream of moving to the suburbs.

When the city of Portland decided to fund new development projects, they looked to tear down parts of Albina to construct new buildings and highways. In 1956, Portland residents voted to build the Memorial Coliseum. The city destroyed the homes of 150 people to make room for the Coliseum, which was completed in 1960. Many of those homes housed black people. Those who lost their homes moved further northeast, but still in the neighborhood of Albina.

In 1958, the city created the Portland Development Commission (PDC) in order to guide future development and apply for federal funding. Headed by Ira Keller, the commission valued new construction over maintaining pre-existing communities. In 1962, the PDC published the Central Albina Study stating that Albina was in “advanced stages of blight,” and the neighborhood was “beyond rehabilitation.” Their recommendation? “Clearance appears to be the only solution to... avoid the spread of that blight to surrounding areas” Instead of coming up with solutions to help the residents of Albina, the Commission advised that the city demolish the neighborhood. There was no mention of the history of discrimination that had led to the perceived blight, nor was there a plan for relocated people who would lose their homes.

As recent gentrification of much of the Albina area demonstrates, the PDC was clearly incorrect about what constituted “blight” and whether or not the buildings in Albina could be “saved” rather than destroyed. It should be noted that no representatives of the black or Albina communities participated in the deliberations or decisions of the PDC.

In 1960, the city built Interstate 5 through Albina, taking the homes of about 300 more people, plus several black-owned businesses and social clubs. When Legacy Emanuel Hospital wanted to expand their campus in the late 1960s, they asked the PDC for help. The city cooperated and secured 188 houses and several businesses for demolition without first making their plan public. Even more black families needed to find a new place to live while the heart of their neighborhood was

destroyed. To make matters worse, federal funding for the hospital expansion ran out before they could build, which meant that houses and businesses were torn down but nothing was built in their place. For decades, blocks of former neighborhoods sat as vacant lots. By the early 1970s, more than 1100 housing units had been lost in lower Albina, and the black population in the area shrank by two-thirds.

The city of Portland justified taking people's homes under the legal principle of "eminent domain." Eminent Domain states that the government is allowed to take people's property as long as the homeowners are paid fairly. It is the government who decides what is "fair," which creates an obvious case of conflict of interest. When people lost their homes to the Emanuel Legacy expansion, they were only given ninety days to leave. Many people also felt they were not given fair compensation. For example, resident Thelma Glover bought her house for \$4,900 in 1948. Twenty-two years later, after Glover had added a garage and finished her basement, the government gave her \$5,000.

Meanwhile, residents of Albina worked together to resist "urban renewal" and maintain their community. Protesters picketed Emanuel Legacy Hospital and the opening of the Fremont Bridge in 1973. Mayfield Webb, attorney and president of the Portland Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), along with local ministers and activists, pressed the city to invest in housing and neighborhood improvements in parts of Albina north of Fremont Avenue. They created the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Plan (ANIP), which worked to install and repair streetlights and sidewalks, maintain homes, and clean alleyways. Dozens of block group leaders managed projects while volunteers carried out clean-up work. Albina Neighborhood Improvement Plan accomplishments include the planting of hundreds of trees (their program partly inspired Portland's Urban Forestry Department!) and creating DeNorval Unthank Park.

Displacement Timeline

1956 Portland voters approved the bond measure to fund building the Memorial Coliseum.

1960 Memorial Coliseum completed. Homes of 150 people destroyed.

1958 Creation of the Portland Development Commission (PDC).

1962 PDC published the Central Albina Study.

1960s Building of I-5. Destroys homes of about 300 people, plus businesses and social clubs.

1970s Emanuel Legacy expansion. 188 houses and several businesses destroyed

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POLICE AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY 1960s - 1980s

In the wagon train era local police authorities were assigned the responsibility to exclude Blacks from Oregon (with the application of public whipping if necessary.) In the modern era, police have been charged with profiling of non-whites, killings unarmed black youths, and supporting patterns of racial discrimination in the legal system. The relationship between the police community and the black community has been a flashpoint of contention in the area's racial dynamics.

Four-fifths of the city's black population lived in Albina; more than sixty percent of some Albina neighborhoods were black. Meanwhile, ninety-nine percent of police officers were white. In the early 1960s, forty-five percent of all arrests in Portland were of black people, yet Blacks made up less than five percent of the overall population. This meant that majority black neighborhoods were patrolled by white police, who were more likely to arrest Blacks than Whites. Additionally, many officers were not actively supportive of racial equality. According to a 1966 survey of Portland police, eighty-six percent of officers believed that the Civil Rights Movement was "moving too fast," and more than half believed that racial equity was happening "much too fast" (Serbula, L. and Gibson, K. "Black and Blue: Police-Community Relations in Portland's Albina District, 1964-1985. *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, 114 (1). 2013. Accessed 26 August, 2017).

Portland police treated black neighborhoods differently than other areas of the city. For example, they tended to stay in their cars in Albina, whereas in other districts they walked the streets. In Albina, police were assigned to travel two to a car, whereas in other neighborhoods, only one officer was assigned to a car. One young Portland resident, William Sanderson, told the *Oregonian*, "Where else but in Albina do cops hang around the streets and parks all day like plantation overseers? Just their presence antagonizes us. We feel like we are being watched all of the time" ("Bitter, Frank, Articulate, Youth of Albina Speaks Up." *Oregonian* Aug 6, 1967, 74).

The police even illegally monitored civil rights and anti-poverty organizations that were working to improve Albina neighborhoods. Organizers planned an event in Irving Park on July 30, 1967, called "Sunday in the Park." Portland police and some FBI agents showed up to patrol the event.

Frustrations with police and the city came to a head in Irving Park, leading to direct confrontations between black residents and officers. Local youth were so angered by unresolved problems in their neighborhood, that some people began to riot and set fire to buildings. It took two days to put out all of the fires. One person was shot and fifty people were arrested.

After the Irving Park riot, the police increased their surveillance of Albina neighborhood activists. In 1969, a class action lawsuit was filed by fourteen complainants on behalf of 20,000 black residents against the mayor, the city council, and thirty-eight police officers. The lawsuit asked them to stop the systematic harassment of Blacks by the city and the police force. A U.S. district court ordered Portland police to stop using "insulting, denigrating or ethnically derogatory terms" towards

Blacks, to stop the use of shot-filled “slap gloves” and leaded batons, and to instruct all officers that they needed to have a search warrant before entering an Albina resident’s home (citation).

The judge’s order was one small positive step, but Portland police behavior sometimes went beyond intimidation and harassment. Sixty percent of people killed by Portland police in the 1970s were black, even though African-Americans made up only seven percent of the population. Between October 1974 and March 1975, four black men were shot and killed by Portland police. The Black Justice Committee, led by Charlotte Rutherford and other local activists, called for a federal investigation into the deaths. There was so much outcry from the community after the fourth death, that the police department agreed to hold a public inquest hearing. The jury determined the killing was justified by a five-to-one vote. The one dissenting vote belonged to the only black member of the jury.

On March 12, 1981, four Portland police officers dumped dead possums on the doorstep of a black-owned restaurant. The black community took this as an act of intimidation, similar to Klu Klux Klan behavior. Activists and residents marched and called for the firing of all officers involved, the formation of civilian review board, and better training and supervision of the police. At the time, Charles Jordan, the first black citizen to be elected to the Portland City Council, oversaw the police bureau. Jordan ordered that two of the officers involved in the incident be fired. Mayor Frank Ivancle responded by removing Jordan from overseeing the police bureau, and two months later the two fired police officers were rehired and given back pay. The black community was outraged, and black leaders feared that the City’s decision to support these officers would inspire white supremacists to participate in similar acts of intimidation.

Activists kept fighting. In 1982, the Black United Front filed a complaint with the United Nations Commission on behalf of human rights against the City of Portland and the State of Oregon for violating the human rights of black people within the criminal justice system. As one outcome of the possum incident of 1981, the city council voted to establish a citizen’s review committee and public approved it. However, the review committee could only offer non-binding recommendations and could not discipline officers or investigate citizen complaints. By 1987, only two of the committee’s twenty-eight recommendations had been fully implemented.

One other incident in the 1980s led the black community to again rally against the police. On April 20, 1985, Lloyd “Tony” Stevenson, a black off-duty security guard, walked to a convenience store near his house and witnessed a store owner struggling with a man suspected of stealing. Stevenson attempted to intervene and help, but when police showed up, he was the only black man at the scene. Police threw him to the ground and put him in a chokehold, which ultimately killed him. A public inquest determined that the death was a homicide, but the grand jury decided not to bring charges against the officers. The city awarded \$600,000 to Stevenson’s family (a wife and five children), but the officers who killed him were never held accountable.

On the day of Stevenson's funeral, two other white police officers pushed the incident to a higher level of controversy when they made available to fellow officers t-shirts with the slogan, "Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em," suggesting that in the future, police should shoot rather than choke blacks. Those officers were also allowed to remain on the force, enraging the black community.

By the end of the 1980s, there had been little improvement in the relationship between Portland's black community and the police. The three things that activists wanted most— reduction in police brutality, civilian oversight, and more black officers—had not happened.

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SCHOOL SEGREGATION AND INTEGRATION 1964-1980s

Even though the Civil Rights Movement of the fifties and sixties focused on integrating schools in the American South, Portland has its own history with trying to desegregate schools. By the 1960s, most of the black community in Portland lived in predominately black neighborhoods in the Albina district. By default, because students went to neighborhood schools, the public schools in Portland were not racially integrated.

In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that segregating students by race was unconstitutional. They found that schools for African-American students were unequal to schools for white children in terms of resources, opportunities, and academic achievement. Between 1954 and 1962, the Portland School Board stated that even though segregation existed in Portland's schools, it already had a policy of equal education and therefore did not need to take any action towards desegregation.

In 1962, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) officially charged that racial segregation inequality existed in Portland's schools. In 1963 the school board appointed a committee to study the issue, and in 1964 the committee reported the existence of unequal educational opportunities. For example, schools with high percentages of black students experienced a higher rate of teacher/ educator turnover and offered fewer youth programs. Additionally, their students generally achieved lower scores on standardized tests.

In response to the report and in an attempt to desegregate, Portland Public Schools (PPS) started a voluntary transfer program so students could go to schools outside of the Albina district, while providing more support and resources to Albina schools. However, this did little to address segregation and by 1968, seventy-three percent of black elementary students were still enrolled in nine of ninety-four elementary schools. During the 1970s, under what was called "The Blanchard Plan" (named after school superintendent Robert Blanchard), PPS made it mandatory for a certain percentage of students in Albina schools to be bused out to schools in other parts of the city. Nearly ninety percent of the students bused were black. The plan called for no mandatory busing of white students. In addition, every year a grade level in every school in the black community was closed and those students were forced to be bused to outlying white schools.

There were many problems with the busing program. First of all, the NAACP had initially recommended that the busing of students go both ways: black students would be bused into majority white neighborhoods, while white students would be bused into Albina. The PPS plan, however, only required black students to be bused out. PPS began closing schools in the Albina district due to low

enrollment, adding to the feeling of “disinvestment” in Albina. Black students were scattered across the city, so they could not build a school community in their own neighborhood. For example, 451 King Elementary School students were bused to thirty-nine different Portland schools. Some kids were transferred to classrooms with no friends from their home neighborhood and felt isolated. Additionally, black student achievement did not improve from the busing program.

In 1977, the school board voted to close Jefferson High School and bus students from Jefferson to other schools outside of Albina. The black community fiercely opposed this idea. One Albina community member asked:

“Why should our children be expected to do all of the desegregating? Why doesn’t the community participate? Their children don’t have to ride busses and face strange new schools where they are unknown and many times not wanted. I want my child to get the best possible education and if that means busing her across town I don’t mind. But I think white parents should meet us halfway. All they have been expected to do so far is to let us go to their schools.” (“Community Rejects Racial Plan” *Portland Observer*, June 16, 1977, p. 1)

In response to the proposed closure of Jefferson High (otherwise known as the “Newman Plan,” named after, Jonathan Newman, the member of the school board who proposed it,) the black community organized protests in the winter of 1977-78. The Community Coalition for School Integration formed in 1978 and began its own investigation into how to desegregate schools. After a year of study and research, they came forth with a program of recommendations to make the burden of desegregation more equally shared by black and white students. The school board ignored their recommendations.

In 1979, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare stated that the Portland Public School District placed greater burdens for desegregation on black students versus white students. But they said this was not unlawful. The Black United Front, a new organization with a more militant and aggressive approach to protest, was formed by the black community. They organized for a school boycott of all black students the summer of 1979. Finally, PPS discontinued the Blanchard Plan and the closure of Jefferson High.

To address the ongoing problem of school segregation and inequity, PPS negotiated with the Black United Front to adopt a new plan in 1980. But activists continued to work to protect Albina schools. In 1982, the Black United Front and other community members protested a PPS board meeting over the proposed closure of Boise Elementary School, the last K-8 school in Albina. Portland Public Schools voted to close Boise even after previously promising to community leaders that they would keep it open. The activists succeeded and the school remained open.

Jefferson High School also remained open despite low enrollment. Portland Public Schools turned it into a performing arts magnet school, which helped attract new students. But a gang-related shooting on the school’s steps, in 1988, prompted many students to leave. Concerns around school

closures, school inequality, and how to address these issues continue today. However, the gentrification of the area with the arrival of many new, young white families and their children has created a very different dynamic regarding educational issues and decisions in the area.

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RACIST VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACKS 1980S-NOW

In the late twentieth century, Portland became a hotbed of neonazis, skinheads, and other hate groups. After the murder of a black man on the streets of Southeast Portland, the city even earned the nickname “Skinhead City.”

In 1983, a white supremacist group called “The Order,” organized in Washington state. The Order wanted to overthrow the United States government and establish a white homeland in the Pacific Northwest. Later named the “Northwest Territorial Imperative,” the idea was that white people from around the country would flood to Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Wyoming, and parts of Montana, force out all people of color, and create a Whites-only colony.

Members of The Order saw themselves as soldiers for this cause and created a list of people who they considered racial enemies. To fund their organization, they robbed banks and armored cars. They were able to steal millions of dollars, which they then gave to other white supremacist organizations including later leaders of the Northwest Territorial Imperative Movement.

In 1984, a few members of The Order murdered a liberal radio talk show host in front of his home in Denver, Colorado. Many members were sent to prison in association with this murder, and other members who committed bank robberies were arrested after a shootout in Southeast Portland. They were also sent to prison. This effectively brought an end to the organization.

Around this time, a former Ku Klux Klan leader from California named Tom Metzger, founded a pro-white racist group called the White Aryan Resistance. He recruited young punks (called skinheads) in Portland to become members of his group and encouraged them to use violence against their racial “enemies.” One group of skinheads associated with Metzger and the White Aryan Resistance in Portland called themselves East Side Pride.

In 1988, three members of East Side Pride murdered a twenty-eight-year-old Ethiopian man named Mulugeta Seraw in front of his apartment in Southeast Portland. Seraw had moved to Portland to go to college. The murderers said that they killed Seraw because of his race, and Metzger praised them for doing their “civic duty.” The skinheads were convicted for their crime and sent to prison. A lawyer from the Southern Law Poverty Center (an anti-racist organization) sued Metzger claiming that he had encouraged the young men to commit violence. The lawyer won the trial and the judge demanded that Metzger pay Seraw’s family 12.5 million dollars in damages. The White Aryan Resistance went bankrupt as a result.

In the nineties, different groups of skinheads began to fight with each other. Some groups were racists and other groups were anti-racist. There were some instances of the groups actually battling in the streets. This, combined with the national attention brought by the Seraw murder and trial, earned Portland the nickname “Skinhead City.”

In 1994, another white nationalist group called Volksfront started in an Oregon prison. Volksfront formed from several other skinhead groups, including East Side Pride. Members of Volksfront were responsible for attacks on people of color and anti-racist activists in Washington and Oregon, and one member was sentenced to eleven years of prison for attacking a Jewish temple in Portland. In 2004, one member beat a homeless man to death in Tacoma, Washington, with the hopes of gaining more status within the organization. According to some people, when a member of Volksfront “drew blood” from an enemy, they earned a pair of red shoelaces. After several members were connected to violent crimes, Volksfront disbanded in 2012.

Unfortunately, the internet has made it easier for white supremacists and other racists to meet and organize “under the radar.” More recently, Oregon came to national attention in 2017 after Jeremy Christian, a white supremacist, stabbed three people (killing two) [SA6] who were trying to protect two girls from Christian’s racial and religious verbal attacks on a MAX commuter train. The rise of the “Alt Right” is once again bringing racist hate groups into the news and into politics. Additionally, with over 300 members, a violent street gang called “Brood” is currently considered the largest white supremacy group in the state.

Portland formed a Coalition against Hate Crime in 1997 to help identify and address hate groups before they become a danger. They have worked with police and other agencies to combat hate when it arises, but clearly there is still a lot of work to do.

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