

RESOLUTION CONDEMNING HATE GROUPS

IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

| NAME (PRINT) | ADDRESS AND ZIP CODE (Optional) | Email (Optional) |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| ✓ Randy Blazak Coalition Against Hate Crime | 4613 NE 21 st Ave Portland OR 97211 | blazakr@gucci.com |
| ✓ Dacia Grayber | 5722 SW Garden Home Rd. Portland, OR 97219 | daciagrayber@gmail.com |
| ✓ Shedrick J. Wilkins | 915 NW Naito Pkwy, Apt 134 Portland, Oregon | wilkinsshedrick@yahoo.com |
| ✓ Tony Gibson | 2043 NE Hwy 99 7-712 Vancouver WA 98684 | |
| ✓ Steve Dmy ^{Drury} | 394 NE 4 th Ave - WA | |
| ✓ Nicholas Carroll | 97266 Portland OR | nycarroll@gmail.com |
| ✓ Robert West | | |
| ✓ Jessy West | 13731 SF Starks Portland | Jessywest@engr.com |
| | | |
| | | |

Good afternoon, Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners, and welcome Commissioner Hardesty.

Thank you for having me here today.

My name is Allan Lazo. I am the Executive Director of the Fair Housing Council of Oregon, a private non-profit civil rights organization whose mission is to end housing discrimination and ensure equal access to housing opportunity throughout the state.

I'm here today speaking on behalf of Portland United Against Hate, a coalition of more than 65 community-based and civic groups working to counteract hate in the Portland community. These groups represent many communities most impacted by the current rise of white supremacy and white nationalism today.

Our coalition already has submitted a letter of support thanking you all for your leadership in working to end hate in our communities and condemning the rise of white supremacy and white nationalism.

Coalition members were here just last month reporting on the work we all have done in partnership with the City and the Office of Community & Civic Life.

So, you know the investment that already has been made in our community-based hate incident tracking tool and the numerous community-led resources that have been created and deployed to combat hate in our city.

Portland United Against Hate coalition members already are equipped to respond to, interrupt and prevent incidences of hate.

Our coalition and our community members continue to stand ready as your partners to work together to create policy changes to address the City's role in combatting white supremacy.

We applaud the efforts to empower our city's employees with the necessary knowledge and training to create a Portland that embraces safety and belonging for the diverse members of our community.

From my perspective in a civil rights organization rooted in racial segregation and discrimination in housing, I also particularly applaud the language in the resolution acknowledging our government's role in the systemic and institutional

history of racism in housing that took place across the country as well as right here in our city.

These past institutional practices, again many brought forth and upheld lawfully by government jurisdictions, had their roots in white supremacy. That environment also manifested itself during historical times of rising white nationalism.

We think about these once-legal institutional practices as long gone – made illegal 50 years ago now through the Fair Housing Act, which we commemorated together last year – yet they have created lasting legacies of racial tensions and disparities in our communities.

The intentional racial segregation and denial of opportunity of these long-past policies continue to echo today in areas as far reaching as the racial wealth gap; educational achievement; and violent and deadly encounters between law enforcement and communities of color, across the country and right here in Portland.

Further, institutional and systemic practices and policies also serve to reinforce the hate that spreads to the personal level, on the street level.

We have a history as a city and state that literally intended to separate us; we have groups coming into our community intent on dividing us with hate; but we are thankful for your statement today that we will stand together, united against these historical and systemic forces, united against today's hateful forces, to say that together, we will not tolerate hate but stand united in peace, respect, inclusivity and equity.

Thank you.



Portland United Against Hate

February 7, 2019

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioners Eudaly
Commissioner Nick Fish
Commissioner Amanda Fritz
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

The Portland United Against Hate Coalition thanks you for your leadership in the ongoing effort to address white nationalism and stop the violence instigated by groups of white supremacists.

The resolution coming before City Council on Feb 7, 2019 that condemns white supremacy is an important step in shifting towards a culture of safety, livability, and belonging in Portland. Together we must collectively and clearly say that hate will not be tolerated in this city.

Portland United Against Hate supports this resolution.

Your commitment to pair this condemnation with trainings for all city staff is crucial in that it focuses not only on words but on action.

We see this as a powerful step to equip public employees to be part of the solution. PUAH is here as a resource for our partners in the City. We invite you to call on our network of diverse, skilled members to help tackle these issues.

We know this resolution does not stand alone. It is one in a series of actions taken by Council on this issue. Council has vocalized your opposition to white supremacist groups, calling on the federal government to revoke permits for their gatherings, and partnered with communities to address the impacts of white supremacy and hate violence.

There is more to do. We must look to policy changes to address the City's role in perpetuating white supremacy. PUAH is your partner in this work, offering community leadership and direction. We look forward to continuing our work together to invigorate a culture of safety and belonging for all Portlanders.

Sincerely,

Portland United Against Hate Steering Committee *

Layla Assem, East Portland Action Plan
Mireaya Medina, SE Uplift
Muz Afzil, SE Uplift
Samira Mohamed, Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Rabbi Debra Kolodny, As the Spirit Moves Us

** Organizations listed for affiliation only*

Mayor Wheeler, City Commissioners:

Good afternoon. Thank you for inviting us to speak to this historic resolution. My name is Amy Herzfeld-Copple, and I am the Deputy Director of Programs and Strategic Initiatives with Western States Center.

I grew up in Idaho, a state that has a unique history of successfully countering Aryan Nations activity. I've been active in human rights organizing and advocacy for more than 20 years, including several years as the executive director of the Idaho Human Rights Education Center and most recently as co-executive director of Basic Rights Oregon. I moved to Portland from Boise in 2011, drawn to a community and state that would provide more affirmation and security to start my family—Idaho still lacks nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ people—and because I wanted to be in closer proximity to Western States Center, a group I deeply respect and served on the board of for 11 years before joining the staff team last year.

Western States Center is a thirty-year-old civil rights and social justice organization based here in Portland and serving grassroots justice leaders and organizations in the Pacific Northwest and Mountain States.

Part of Western States Center's work is to monitor white nationalist and other racist and sexist extremist movements, and to work with community leaders to find effective solutions to defend our democracy from the threat that these social movements pose to vulnerable communities and to our democracy itself. We believe that this resolution is the right first step.

The resolution condemns white supremacist, alt-right, and white nationalist hate groups. I want to provide some additional context about these groups and why they present an urgent threat to our City's residents and democratic institutions.

White supremacy is a system of subjugation of people of color to preserve privilege and power for white people, and it's based on three core pillars: slavery and the exploitation of labor and particularly anti-Blackness; the genocide of indigenous peoples and exploitation of their resources; and the control of sexuality and women. It is baked into U.S. history and culture, dating back to our nation's founding with the genocide and forced removal of Native Americans and the shameful institution of slavery, which helped build the U.S. economy into a global powerhouse. Here in Oregon, our own history of Black and Chinese exclusion laws has profoundly shaped our state's demographics and attracted those who sought to create a white homeland in our region. White supremacy is a system that operates within our institutions and endures in everyday life in the United States. And it creates inequities that provide a breeding ground for white nationalism.

This resolution cites several salient examples of how institutionalized white supremacy has shaped Portland's policies and practices today. They include policing and sentencing disparities in our criminal justice system, displacement of communities of color, and disparate access to public services. Nationally, white supremacist policies, including voter suppression laws, anti-immigrant family separation policies, and the protection of Confederate monuments shape our political landscape, creating a climate where white nationalism can flourish.

By contract, white nationalism is a bigoted social movement that seeks to create a white-only ethno state. Its supporters seek to build political power to achieve that ideological vision by implementing extreme racist, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, homophobic and transphobic policies. White nationalists, and the closely-aligned "alt-right" often have deeply anti-government ideologies, making them a threat, not just to vulnerable communities, but to our democratic institutions.

It is troubling that, while the vast majority of Americans reject white nationalists, according to 2018 data that we commissioned in a public polling scan from the Oregon firm DHM Research, 31% of Americans and Oregonians alike agree with a core tenet of their ideology, that: “America should protect and preserve its white European heritage.” This speaks to the urgent need for leaders to send a clear, resounding message that bigotry will not be tolerated in our community, that hateful ideologies have no place in mainstream political debate, and that the goals of white nationalists and other hate movements are incompatible with our City’s goals of upholding inclusive democracy.

This resolution is a laudable first step. Eradicating white supremacy and protecting our democracy from the threat of white nationalism will take a long-term commitment of time and resources from you and your staff, but it is certainly a task worth undertaking. White nationalism and white supremacy have been allowed to flourish in our national climate of rancor and division. This is an urgent challenge that we must face on a national level, we recognize it is not unique to Portland or our region, but this resolution and subsequent actions will be a model for the rest of the country. Western States Center commends your leadership in taking this step at the local level. Thank you.

Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners, thank you for providing us with this opportunity to testify. My name is Eric Ward, and I am the Executive Director of Western States Center.

When I was young teenager, I convinced my mother to give me this amazing t-shirt she had in her dresser. It was golden-yellow and it had Oregon, written in green across the front. I loved that shirt and wore it until it wore out. It was over a decade later before I realized that it represented the late-70s colors of the University of Oregon. That shirt made me feel Oregon was a state that fit well with my tenacious, quirky, respectful and independent personality. While it would be more than ten years before I would come to Oregon, I take deep pride in the fact that in one way or the other, I've called Oregon my chosen home since I was a child. That is why I am here before you today. I'm here speak up on behalf of my home, Portland Oregon.

For nearly thirty years, I have worked with governments, local community groups and national civil rights organizations responding to bigoted movements who utilize violence and intimidation to undercut democracy and the rule of law.

When discussing how to challenge bigoted social movements, it is important to remember that white nationalism is deeply rooted in dangerous anti-Semitism, which falsely promotes the conspiracy theory that Jews are responsible for perceived threats to their goals, including the Civil Rights movement, changing demographics, and expanding rights for women and LGBTQ people. The recent Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, where 11 worshippers were killed shows how deadly anti-Semitism can be when it is allowed to flourish.

Where white nationalist rhetoric is allowed to be pushed into the mainstream, hate violence follows. While hate violence is widely underreported, FBI hate crimes data for 2017, the most recent available, shows that hate crimes spiked 23% nationally, marking a rise for the third year in a row. And, according to a recent report by the ADL, far-right extremists were responsible for every extremist killing in the US last year. The potent combination of bigotry and violence central to the white nationalist movement is a serious threat to community safety.

Sadly, our region has attracted white nationalists and other racist and sexist paramilitary groups because of our history, our demographics, and our reputation as a progressive stronghold. These include anti-government paramilitary groups like Patriot Prayer, the Proud Boys, the Oath Keepers and the 3 Percenters, as well as neo-Nazis and racist skinheads like the Northwest Hammerskins. These groups seek to sow violence and mayhem in our community. They drain public resources, destabilize our public institutions, and threaten the safety of people of color, women, LGBTQ residents, immigrants, and religious minorities.

When people ask me, as they often do, why Portland has been such a nexus for these groups, I'm reminded of a jarring moment from a Patriot Prayer rally. It wasn't an act of violence; it was a conversation between an alt-right activist and a bystander who asked him why he was there.

His response stuck with me: "You can say you don't want us here, but you're doing something we could never do. You're getting rid of your black population." He undeniably had a point. While we, the City of Portland, must draw a clear moral line against hate, we must also remember that one of the keys to our success is to address the underlying systemic discrimination that allows the alt-right, white nationalist and others to perceive that they are welcomed.

That's why I'm happy we're having this critical conversation. I commend you for taking steps with today's resolution to condemn white supremacist, alt-right, and white nationalist hate groups and affirm our City's values of equity and inclusion. This resolution is significant because it recognizes the historic and current harm and trauma that white supremacy has inflicted on communities of color.

It unequivocally rejects organized bigotry that seeks to exploit intolerance and undermine the safety and stability of our communities. It affirms our City's commitment to dismantling white supremacy in our City policies and practices, and it commits to a critical next action, providing training for all city staff to understand the growing threat of bigoted social movements.

We hope this resolution can be an example to other communities around the nation. We look forward to supporting your leadership in any way we can as you implement these goals.

Together we can ensure that bigotry has no place in Portland. Thank you.