

# ***F\*\*\* Your Racist History***

## **E108: *White Homeland: Part 2***

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## **Show Notes**

On this episode of *F\*\*\* Your Racist History*: “White Homeland: Part 2,” we discuss historical efforts by American white supremacists to create white ethno-states *within* the United States via racial separatist movements like the Northwest Territorial Imperative and Oregon’s racist founding history and their state constitution from 1859, which both forbid slavery while also prohibiting Black people from inhabiting land in the territory. Finally, we explore the broader impacts of systemic racism in our cities and suburbs, the creation of our highway infrastructure to aid in racial separatist efforts, and the often destructive effects of gentrification on American communities.

## **EPISODE SCRIPT**

### **Introduction**

Fear: one emotion with the power to move or immobilize millions. Who controls the flow of fear controls the masses. Some of the most brutal regimes of the past came to power when people were at their most desperate moments, downtrodden, challenged, fearing for their prosperity, or fighting for mere survival. One of the most prominent examples of this use of fear-mongering is that of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich.

The German people embraced Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party's message that the Jews (whom they tried to equate with communists and subhumans) were supposedly to blame for their national suffering. In his rousing speeches, Hitler presented the conflict between white Germans and ethnic or religious minorities as a situation of life and death for the country. Non-Germans, or more specifically non-Aryans or non-purebred Germans, were a so-called existential threat.

"There are only two possibilities," Hitler told a Munich audience in 1922. "Either victory of the Aryan, or annihilation of the Aryan and the victory of the Jew."<sup>1</sup>

In one form or another, fear (and the use of manufactured fear to control people) is always at the root of a hate movement, whether it be the fear of losing power, rights, or property, a fear of foreign cultures overpowering the status quo, or, as is claimed by the modern white supremacist movement, fear of total extinction of the white race.

Capitalizing on that notion while in prison in the late 1980s and early '90s for his role in the assassination of a Jewish radio host in 1984, white-supremacist terrorist David Lane drafted in a pamphlet what would become the infamous credo and mantra of white-power extremists worldwide, the "14 Words:"

"We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children," This is sometimes followed by the secondary (and less commonly used) white-power slogan: "Because the beauty of the White Aryan woman must not perish from the earth."

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<sup>1</sup> THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM, "How Did Hitler Happen? | the National WWII Museum | New Orleans," The National WWII Museum | New Orleans, 2017, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/how-did-hitler-happen>.

*Exhibit A:* David Lane gave the white-power movement a simple focal point: protect the future of the white race from, well, everything non-white, implying that their white existence is fleeting; the threat of extinction (or a “great replacement”) looms.

David Lane was one of the leaders of the white-supremacist terrorist group The Order. Formed in 1983, The Order served as a paramilitary arm of the Aryan Nations organization and aimed to form a white homeland in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho via violent insurrection. We’ll talk more about Lane and this group in a later episode.

“Securing the existence of white people” is a broad statement and can be interpreted in many frightening ways. In Hitler’s case, securing the existence of his Aryan nation meant the extinction of Jewish people and other “non-Aryans.” If we look at the Southern slaveholder class of the antebellum United States, “securing their existence” meant attempts at secession from the Union and the establishment of a sovereign slave-owning nation to keep Black people in slavery and whites in power until the end of time. Or, at the very least, to keep whites completely separate from those they viewed as “lower classes of humans,” if they saw non-whites as human beings at all.

In the case of more modern American white supremacists, the movement has been and is idling somewhere in between dreaming of carving out an all-white homeland for themselves within the landmass of the United States or taking violent action and executing non-white people to hasten the result in their own locales. For example, the racist gunman who was responsible for the deaths of 22 people and the wounding of dozens more in a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas, in 2017, was a proponent of separate ethnic states. In his manifesto, he wrote about wanting “a confederacy of territories with at least one territory for each race.”<sup>2</sup>

Dylann Roof, the American neo-Nazi terrorist, instead scorned efforts by white “separatist” groups like the Northwestern Front, which aims to create a sovereign white nation within the Northwestern United States, as ineffective. Roof stated in his manifesto:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Laretta Charlton, “What Is the Great Replacement?,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/politics/grand-replacement-explainer.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Roof Dylann, “Dylann Roof Journal,” *The Post and Courier*, 2016, <https://bloximages.newyork1.vip.townnews.com/postandcourier.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/c/5f/c5f6550c-be72-11e6-b869-7bdf860326f5/584b525a792e0.pdf.pdf>.

“To me, the whole idea [of a Northwest white homeland] just parrallells [sic] the concept of White people running to the suburbs. The whole idea is pathetic and just another way to run from the problem without facing it.”<sup>4</sup>

He ultimately murdered 9 Black parishioners of an African Methodist Episcopal church in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015, in an attempt to further his racist endeavor to secure a white homeland.

Each of these horrific acts of terrorism stemmed from the perpetrators believing they were making a so-called “positive” contribution towards a broader effort to solve the “problem” of Black and brown people encroaching on white autonomy and threatening white prosperity in America. The El Paso gunman even mentioned the “Great Replacement Theory,” a term coined in 2011 by white-nationalist French conspiracy theorist and writer Renaud Camus and channeled by neo-Nazis at the deadly white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017.

The basis of the Great Replacement Theory and the fearmongering behind it is this: white supremacists believe that through non-white immigration and miscegenation—or interracial relationships that produce offspring—the white race is being driven to extinction. Camus wrote about this in the context of Muslims immigrating into France and replacing the white populace there physically and culturally, so it’s important to note that these views span the globe and discriminate equally.

In the last episode, “White Homeland: Part 1,” we dissected racist efforts by the Knights of the Golden Circle, the Confederado slave colonies of Brazil, and Abraham Lincoln’s colonization effort of Île-à-Vache, or “Cow Island,” off the coast of Haiti. These movements were attempts to carve out spaces for white dominance by annexing foreign territory.

Today, we explore similar efforts to create white ethno-states *within* the United States. We dig into Oregon’s racist founding history and its state constitution from 1859, which forbid slavery

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<sup>4</sup> Knute Berger, “Hate-Filled Zone: The Racist Roots of a Northwest Secession Movement | Crosscut,” crosscut.com, July 8, 2015, <https://crosscut.com/2015/07/hate-filled-zone-a-group-of-white-racists-wants-a-nw-secession-a-vile-dream-with-deep-historic-roots>.

while also prohibiting Black people from inhabiting land in the territory. We'll also look at the broader impacts of systemic racism in our cities and suburbs and the creation of our highway infrastructure to purposely divide us and aid white supremacist efforts.

This is episode 8 of *F\*\*\* Your Racist History: **White Homeland: Part 2.***

## Oregon: “Whites Only”

The American Pacific Northwest: territory bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west and the Rocky Mountains to the east. A land of plenty, nature untouched, raw beauty, tree huggers, granola, hippie central. That's how most people see it, anyway. And, while it is all that, it's also so much more.

In 1818, Oregon Country was established by international treaty between the United States and the United Kingdom. It comprised modern-day Oregon, Idaho, Washington, and parts of Montana, Wyoming, and even British Columbia, Canada. Increased immigration to the new United States territory via the Oregon Trail prompted a revision of the treaty in 1846, establishing the modern border between Canada and the U.S. However, by this point in its young history, Oregon Country, or the Oregon Territory as it would come to be known, had already established itself as a white ethno-state, a racial homeland, and it was codified in their racial Exclusion Laws.

Following a fight over a horse, by a freed Black man and a Native American man named Cockstock, which left the Native American and two white men dead in March 1844, a law banning Black people from the area was enacted. Although an original copy of the law does not exist today, pieces of it have survived from later reprints. Somewhat to its credit, it stated that slavery and involuntary servitude “shall forever be prohibited in Oregon,” but showed its true intent when it also said that freed slaves had to leave the state within three years. *Hmm*. The law also stipulated that anyone found to be in breach would be arrested, tried, and sentenced to “no less than twenty nor more than thirty-nine stripes to be inflicted by the constable.” You can brush up on the racist history of constables and slave patrols in episode two.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> McClintock, T. C. (2021). *James Saules, Peter Burnett, and the Oregon Black Exclusion Law of June 1844 on JSTOR*. Jstor.org.  
[https://www.jstor.org/stable/40491550?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Acc034ba2650716a3baed6bf023956fcd&seq=2#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40491550?read-now=1&refreqid=excelsior%3Acc034ba2650716a3baed6bf023956fcd&seq=2#page_scan_tab_contents)

The punishment of whipping was later replaced with hard labor, but the law still remained. In 1849, the Oregon legislature passed yet another Exclusion Law:

“It shall not be lawful for any negro or mulatto to enter into, or reside within the limits of this Territory. Providing that nothing in this act shall...apply to any negro or mulatto now resident in this Territory, nor shall it apply to the offspring of any such as are residents.”<sup>6</sup>

Basically, if you were a person of color and were already in the territory, you’d be allowed to stay...with major restrictions, of course. But, they weren’t letting anyone else in, unless they were white. Their reason? Within the new Oregon Territory’s preamble, the law stated that it would be “highly dangerous to allow free Negroes and mulattoes to reside in the Territory, or to intermix with Indians, instilling into their minds feelings of hostility toward the white race.” *Hmm.*

Elements of this law were baked into Oregon’s State Constitution over a decade later. At the time, the Oregon Territory had less than 100 Black residents in total.<sup>7</sup> Three separate sections of Oregon’s constitution sought to limit the rights of people of color. The Bill of Rights restricted all new people of color from residing in the territory, and it removed the right of existing Black and multiracial individuals from owning real estate and released any existing employment contracts. It also forbid them from holding public office. Another section entitled “Rights of Aliens,” which remained in the state constitution until 1970, stated that only new white residents may enjoy the same rights as so-called “native-born citizens.” Oregon was admitted as a state to the Union in 1859 with no revisions to its Constitution. It was the first state constitution that allowed racist exclusionary text.

**State of Oregon *Bill of Rights* (full text):**

- *Article I: Section 31 - “Rights of aliens; immigration to state. White foreigners who are, or may hereafter become residents of this State shall enjoy the same rights in respect to the possession, enjoyment, and descent of property as native-born citizens. And the Legislative Assembly shall have power to restrain, and regulate the immigration to this State of persons not qualified to become citizens of the United States.” (Repealed in 1970)*

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<sup>6</sup> Nokes, R. G. (2013, August 9). *Dangerous Subjects*. Oregonhumanities.org.  
<https://oregonhumanities.org/rll/magazine/skin-summer-2013/dangerous-subjects/>

<sup>7</sup> Kami Horton, “Oregon’s Black Pioneers,” opb, January 31, 2019,  
<https://www.opb.org/television/programs/oregonexperience/article/oregon-black-pioneers-documentary/>.

- *Article I: Section 35 - “Restrictions on rights of certain persons. No free negro, or mulatto, not residing in this State at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall come, reside, or be within this State, or hold any real estate, or make any contracts, or maintain any suit therein; and the Legislative Assembly shall provide by penal laws, for the removal, by public officers, of all such negroes, and mulattoes, and for their effectual exclusion from the State, and for the punishment of persons who shall bring them into the state, or employ, or harbor them.” (Repealed in 1926)*
- *Article II, Section 6: “No Negro, Chinaman, or Mulatto shall have the right of suffrage.” (Repealed in 1927)<sup>8</sup>*

During the American Civil War, Oregon adopted even more laws intended to keep the state as white as possible. For example, it adopted anti-miscegenation laws, which banned white people from marrying anyone who was a quarter or more Black, Native American, Asian, or Hawaiian. (*How* exactly they calculated that and *who* they assembled to make those determinations is lost to history.) In addition, the state legislature adopted a new law requiring all Indigenous peoples and people of color residing in Oregon to pay an additional annual tax of five dollars (about \$130 today). Why? Simply because they weren’t white, and they had to pay for the so-called privilege of living among, or “burdening,” whites. If anyone was unable to pay, they were forced to perform hard labor such as maintaining public roads and railroads.

Following the end of the Civil War and the ratification of the 14th amendment, which granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States—including former enslaved people—and guaranteed all citizens “equal protection of the laws,” Conservatives (who at the time were the Democrats) took control of the state legislature after the 1868 elections. They immediately rescinded the state’s ratification of the amendment, and were supported at the time by near-universal pleas from Oregonians to leave the Union. This rallying cry for secession would echo throughout the state’s history into the modern day. The newly elected Oregon legislature also refused to ratify the 15th amendment, which said no State could deny a citizen the right to vote on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, and continued to fight that right until 1959. Although only symbolic, as it was obliged to comply under federal law,

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<sup>8</sup> *State of Oregon: Blue Book - Constitution of Oregon.* (2019). Oregon.gov. <https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book/Pages/state-constitution.aspx>

it made Oregon's position on the suffrage of people of color clear: neither Blacks nor their voting rights were welcome in the state.

## KKK in the Northwest

With the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the 19-teens and 1920s, it is no surprise that KKK membership climbed in the state of Oregon given its racist history. By 1923, Oregon's fifty Klan chapters were over 35,000 members strong. It was the state with the most significant amount of support west of the Mississippi River. In comparison, Texas KKK membership at the time was around 2,500,<sup>9</sup> and the state with the most supporters, Indiana, claimed around 240,000 members. In 1922, the KKK even succeeded in putting one of their own in the Oregon governor's mansion, Walter M. Pierce. A frequent guest at Klan rallies, Pierce would later be elected to Congress in 1932 after years of endorsing the white terrorist group and their slogan "100-percent American."<sup>10</sup>

Oregon's neighbor, Washington state, equally embraced the Ku Klux Klan and their racist views. Their membership numbers rivaled Oregon's, and Washington state became known for their KKK "super rallies," following a "Konvention" (spelled on-brand with a "K") in July 1923 that drew over 50,000 attendees. Over the next few years, Klan Konventions continued to host many thousands of spectators. Members and non-members alike joined in on the racist pageantry; these gatherings often included fireworks, 21-gun salutes, patriotic (and factually misrepresented) reenactments of American history, cross-burnings, and fiery pseudo-religious racist sermons. These events were designed to entice white Americans, specifically nonmembers, who they could mesmerize (and frighten) with their rousing "white's only" propaganda and fear-mongering of a Black takeover.

Although turnout at these racist rallies was high, general public acceptance of the Ku Klux Klan remained relatively lukewarm in the Pacific Northwest. Klan members often criticized Oregon newspapers for not publishing their anti-Catholic conspiracy theories. Washington officials concerned about optics banned Klan masks and robes at political rallies and sometimes withheld permission for planned Konventions. Almost as quickly as the Ku Klux Klan rose in the

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<sup>9</sup> Ku Klux Klan 1915. (2020). "*Klan Day at the State Fair of Texas*" Booklet, 1923. Utxas.edu; <http://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/taro/utcah/04008/cah-04008.html>

<sup>10</sup> Bruce, B. (n.d.). Fall of the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon During the 1920s. *Voces Novae*, 11(2). <https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1126&context=vocesnovae>



Northwestern states, their numbers soon began to diminish. Nevertheless, racist sentiments have remained.

## Continued Discrimination

In 1923, the State of Oregon passed laws that prevented Japanese people from owning property and allowed cities to deny them and other people of color business licenses. During World War 2, 4,000 Oregonians of Japanese descent were placed in internment camps and anything of value was stripped from them—we'll discuss Asian internment camps in detail in a later episode. During this time, the Oregon legislature also urged Congress “to deport immediately after the war, all alien Japanese and all Japanese of American citizenship who have indicated dual citizenship...”<sup>11</sup>

## 49 States and the “Reich of Idaho”

The Northwest Territorial Imperative, a movement also known as the Northwest Front (and mentioned by white-supremacist killer Dylann Roof in his manifesto), started in the 1970s as a white separatist initiative seeking to establish a mono-racial country, meaning a “white’s only” homeland. The initial primary supporters of this effort were the late Richard Butler, leader of the violent Idaho-based Aryan Nations organization, and Robert Miles, a white supremacist pseudo-Christian pastor from Cohoctah, Michigan. When they were still alive, both Butler and Miles urged white Americans to flock to the Pacific Northwest, where they could maintain a white racial majority. Richard Butler originally referred to his vision of a white ethnostate as the “49 states and the Reich of Idaho.”

In 1986, at the Aryan Nations Conference in Hayden Lake, Idaho, where the theme was “Northwest Territorial Imperative,” opinions on the venture were initially split among white supremacists. Some chapters of the KKK and many neo-Nazis approved of the plan to carve out 10-percent of the United States for a white homeland. While others, especially the southern chapters, argued that they should fight for the home they had. They believed the South could rise again.

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<sup>11</sup> Perry, D. (2020, June 14). *Oregon’s founders sought a “white utopia,” a stain of racism that lives on even as the state celebrates its progr.* Oregonlive. <https://www.oregonlive.com/history/2020/06/oregons-founders-sought-a-white-utopia-a-stain-of-racism-that-lives-on-even-as-state-celebrates-its-progressivism.html>

White supremacist Harold Covington led the Northwest Front initiative until his death in 2018. He joined the neo-Nazi National Socialist White People's Party (previously known as the American Nazi Party) the same year he joined the U.S. Army in 1971. Two years later, Covington was discharged and decided to roam the African continent. He became inspired by South Africa's apartheid government; an oppressive racial segregation system enforced there until the early 1990s.

In 1976, Covington was expelled from Rhodesia (modern-day Zimbabwe) after sending threatening letters to a Jewish congregation there. Upon his return to the United States, he advocated for his new paramilitary group, the Northwest Front, clearly stating its intentions; "of course, it's racism. What's wrong with racism? It's the purest form of patriotism."<sup>12</sup>

It is unclear who is leading Covington's separatist movement today or even how many people might be involved. However, it is still active with continued (and growing) support from known white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups worldwide. And, the desire to establish a white homeland in the Pacific Northwest continues to be a driving force. The racist separatist doctrines held by Richard Butler, Robert Miles, and Harold Covington certainly did not die with them. They continue to inspire new generations of white supremacist activity at the expense of innocent lives.

## Dylann Roof

On June 17, 2015, a young neo-Nazi named Dylann Roof walked into the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, locally endeared as "Mother Emanuel," in Charleston, South Carolina, and opened fire on a Bible study group praying inside. The victims, six women and three men, were all African-American members of the church, and the horrific act of deadly terrorism devastated the entire community. It's believed the church was targeted by Roof because of its historic association with the Civil Rights movement.

Following the murders, Dylann Roof's manifesto was uncovered online. In it, he claimed to take inspiration for the killings directly from Harold Covington, even paying homage to him in the title, *The Last Rhodesian*. In his manifesto, which Roof published on a public website, he blames Black people for America's problems and claimed that segregation was a "defensive measure,"

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<sup>12</sup> MICHEL, C. (2015, July 7). *Want to Meet America's Worst Racists? Come to the Northwest*. POLITICO Magazine. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/07/northwest-front-americas-worst-racists-119803/>

echoing Harold Covington's racist "white homeland" views. Covington later said before his own death that the mass murder committed by Dylann Roof was just a "preview of coming attractions." Sadly, in this regard, he wasn't wrong.

## Portland MAX Train Killing

The long history of white supremacy and restrictive, racist laws in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest of America has also given rise to other violent events in recent decades. In 1988, Ethiopian immigrant Mulugeta Seraw was murdered by neo-Nazi skinheads in Southeast Portland. The 28-year-old man had been saying his goodbyes to friends when the group of so-called "white pride" skinheads approached and started shouting racial slurs and obscenities. Quickly, things turned violent. Seraw was brutally murdered with a baseball bat and kicks from the steel-toed boots of the racist skinheads—and the city's image as a place of peace and tolerance was shattered. The crime seemed to shock the city of Portland, but it shouldn't have. Racist skinheads (let alone racism in general) had noticeably been prevalent for years by the time of Seraw's murder. The powers that be had simply ignored the warnings—something that continues to this day.<sup>13</sup>

More recently, in 2017, a white man named Jeremy Christian boarded a full MAX commuter train in Portland. He began screaming at two young women and directed anti-Muslim slurs at them, claiming that people of color were "ruining the city."

Bystanders tried to intervene and physically move the aggressor away from the young women, but he only became more agitated. A man named Taliesin Myrddin Namkai-Meche was trying to record the disturbance when Jeremy Christian swiped the phone out of his hand and plunged a knife into his neck. He also attacked two train passengers named Rick Best and Micah David-Cole Fletcher. Namkai-Meche and Best died as a result of their wounds, and Fletcher was severely wounded.

The racist attacker was charged with two counts of murder and one count of attempted murder. An Oregon jury found him guilty in February 2020 and eventually sentenced him to two life sentences in prison without parole.

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<sup>13</sup> Denson, B. (2014, November 13). *1998 story: Legacy of a hate crime: Mulugeta Seraw's death a decade ago avenged*. Oregonlive. [https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2014/11/1998\\_story\\_legacy\\_of\\_a\\_hate\\_cr.html](https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2014/11/1998_story_legacy_of_a_hate_cr.html)

Over the last year, since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, hate crimes in the state of Oregon have increased over 300-percent. The Asian American and Pacific Islander (or AAPI) communities reported 42-percent of all the occurrences, highlighting a nationwide surge in anti-AAPI sentiment and attacks.<sup>14</sup>

A recent (2021) survey by the *Salem Statesman Journal* also found that almost 40-percent of Oregon residents believe that white people are unfairly discriminated against and that America (*get this*) should do more to preserve its white, “European” heritage, (*hmm*) despite the fact that Oregon is already an overwhelming 86-percent white today (and only 2.2-percent Black). The survey also showed that about 11-percent of Oregonians support outright white nationalist principles and anti-establishment militia groups.<sup>15</sup> That doesn’t sound much like “peace and love” coming from a state that is mostly known for its “hippie” culture.

## Conclusion

So, what’s the moral of this wannabe secessionist story?

It’s not that there are sects of radical white supremacists mobilized by fear of white oppression or “replacement” that would rather slice off whole sections of the country for Aryan safe spaces than cohabit with non-white people. Of course not, that’s nothing new. Instead, where Americans may often go wrong here is believing that these are *fringe* movements that don’t have any connection to their own daily lives. That is a huge mistake.

We can point to movements like Northwest Territorial Imperative and call them fringe, alt-right, white nationalist, extremist movements. Still, the reality is there are elements baked into our larger systems that breed inequity right in our own backyards. And, there are still plenty of us who would rather turn a blind eye to it than face the truth about our past and present. Just ask yourself how millions of Germans were able to ignore the rise of Adolf Hitler’s diabolical Reich. Then, look around, and ask yourself again if we might be experiencing something similar right now.

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<sup>14</sup> Wilson, C. (2020, May). *Oregon Hate Crime Reports Up 366% Amid Coronavirus Pandemic*. Opb; OPB. <https://www.opb.org/news/article/hate-bias-crime-incidents-covid-19-asian-americans-oregon/>

<sup>15</sup> Lugo, D. (2021, June 14). *4 in 10 Oregonians agree with core white nationalist arguments, survey reveals*. Statesman Journal; Salem Statesman Journal. <https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2021/06/14/survey-reveals-scale-oregonian-support-white-nationalist-ideals/7657355002/>

Many Americans live in the suburbs, a trend which can be traced back to the end of World War 2 with something called Levittowns. Levittowns were named for the original construction company that developed them, Levitt and Sons. They built eight suburban housing complexes in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and Puerto Rico in the early 1950s and '60s. These were modern communities at the time, chock full of amenities like bowling alleys, grocery stores, and affordable two-bedroom homes, perfect for G.I.s returning from war and their growing families. This type of suburban housing development became hugely popular, and community subdivisions much like Levittowns still dominate the American real-estate market. Sounds sort of idyllic, right?

What's not so well-known about Levittowns is that their creator, William J. Levitt, refused to sell his homes to people of color.

Per Julie Lasky from the *New York Times*, "Early [Levittown] leases barred homeowners from renting or selling to those who weren't 'Caucasians,' although they stipulated that people of color could work as domestics."<sup>16</sup>

Rather than calling this out as a United States constitutional violation, the Federal Housing Administration instead made segregation a requirement for housing developers to qualify for subsidies through the program.<sup>17</sup> Effectively, Levittowns were legal, government-sanctioned, whites-only communities, and they weren't the only of their kind. Often called "racial covenants," racist language codified in official real estate documents was rampant across the country until the 1960s. This language, such as the owner being prohibited from reselling the property to a Black family, was often required by banks in order to be approved for a loan. The argument at the time was that families of color moving into white neighborhoods would allegedly lower property values and increase crime rates. Some of that racist language is *still* present in home and real estate covenant documents today; University of Washington researchers, for example, recently uncovered racial covenant language "affecting about 20,000 properties" in Washington state's King County, which includes the city of Seattle.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Julie Lasky, "Levittown, N.Y.: The Original Starter Community," *The New York Times*, December 19, 2018, sec. Real Estate, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/realestate/levittown-ny-the-original-starter-community.html>.

<sup>17</sup> "A 'Forgotten History' of How the U.S. Government Segregated America," NPR.org, May 3, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/526655831>.

<sup>18</sup> Heidi Groover, "Racist Restrictions in Old Home Deeds across Washington State Will Get Expanded Scrutiny," *The Seattle Times*, May 1, 2021,

We like to think of the Jim Crow era as separate drinking fountains and segregated buses in the South, but the effects of white separatism within the housing market throughout the United States can still be felt today. This is the origin story of many modern American suburbs and communities, and it was followed up with mortgage discrimination, predatory lending practices, and redlining that still stubbornly persists to this day despite the illegality and inhumanity of it all. We'll go much more in-depth into things like racist lending practices and redlining in a later episode.

Still, even when communities of color did manage to carve out prosperous neighborhoods for themselves, U.S. infrastructure (and, of course, American racists) had a habit of running right through them. Per the Department of Transportation, the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1957 displaced over 475,000 households and 1 million people from 1957 to 1977.<sup>19</sup> Most of these households displaced by our national interstate system belonged to communities of color.

Just one example of many is the New Orleans neighborhood of Tremé, a historically black enclave founded in 1783. Tremé was one of the few places in New Orleans where free people of color could buy property prior to the Civil War, and it became a vibrant cultural center for the black community even during the Jim Crow era.<sup>20</sup> Then the national highways came.

The Claiborne Expressway cleaved the neighborhood into fragments, leading to business closures and displaced residents. Now, 80 years later, President Joe Biden is attempting to right some of these wrongs, and has proposed removing the Claiborne Expressway. Current residents of Tremé have major concerns, however.

Today in cities across America, real estate developers are going into lower-income neighborhoods and redeveloping them. A process known as gentrification, it drives property values up, attracts new businesses, and draws wealth, but it often has the effect of displacing existing lower-income residents. Residents of Tremé and other similar neighborhoods worry

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<https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/racist-restrictions-in-old-home-deeds-across-washington-state-will-get-expanded-scrutiny/>.

<sup>19</sup> Suzanne Gamboa et al., "Bulldozed and Bisected: Highway Construction Built a Legacy of Inequality," [www.nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/america-highways-inequality/index.html), June 18, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/america-highways-inequality/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> "Treme Neighborhood | New Orleans," [www.neworleans.com](http://www.neworleans.com), accessed June 30, 2021, <https://www.neworleans.com/plan/neighborhoods/treme/>.

these efforts to remove expressways and reroute highways could lead to further displacement and gentrification within their communities.

While this is progress, why must it always come at the expense of the poor and predominantly people of color? Is there not a better, more equitable way to achieve progress?

Writer Douglas Perry put all of this into context in his June 2020 piece for *The Oregonian*. He said, “Progressive white Americans might reject racism and insist there’s no place for it in today’s society, but that doesn’t mean they want to give up the advantages it’s provided them. Institutionalized racism created intergenerational wealth for some and not others; it shaped the geography of the cities and towns we traverse every day.”<sup>21</sup>

And, it’s true. Intergenerational wealth spells security and prosperity for the future. Much of that comes from owning land property and tangible wealth accumulated from one generation to the next. If parents or grandparents were systematically excluded from building that wealth because of the color of their skin until recently, it almost certainly impacts the financial security of current and future generations.

So, here we are today. There’s a lot of controversy right now over attempts to critically examine America’s history, especially its racist history and how it still impacts us as a nation. Places like Idaho and Tennessee have passed laws banning the teaching of a legal and academic concept called Critical Race Theory in public school and universities. Basically, this ensures students and teachers will be allowed fewer opportunities for thoughtful and informed conversations about how racism may have impacted our development as a nation and a “united” people, even when some of those very people are still dealing with the generational aftershocks caused by practices like segregation and discrimination. No discussions about race relations, at least, not truthful and fully informed examinations of how our past affects our present. In effect, this ensures more whitewashing of our history to make it seem more mild and patriotic than it was. Land of the free, home of the brave—no exceptions.

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<sup>21</sup> Douglas Perry | The Oregonian/OregonLive, “Oregon’s Founders Sought a ‘White Utopia,’ a Stain of Racism That Lives on Even as State Celebrates Its Progressivism,” oregonlive, June 14, 2020, <https://www.oregonlive.com/history/2020/06/oregons-founders-sought-a-white-utopia-a-stain-of-racism-that-lives-on-even-as-state-celebrates-its-progressivism.html>.

But the truth is, there are exceptions, and this podcast hopes to shine a light on just some of the more hidden flaws that have led us to the divisions and inequities of today. If we can't face the truth of who we are, how can we ever hope to be more? Addressing these issues and staring down the truth doesn't diminish America—it makes us a more honorable people able to make informed decisions and changes for a better future for the whole of our nation. It makes us stronger. The truth will set us free, folks. We just have to be brave enough to see it.



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## Source Notes

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/politics/grand-replacement-explainer.html> - The Great Replacement

- The gunman responsible for the 2019 Walmart massacre in El Paso, TX, mentioned the “Great Replacement” in his manifesto that appeared online just before the attack.
- Charlottesville, VA 2017- “You will not replace us.” Obvious nod toward Replacement Theory
- This theory can be traced back to a French writer named Renaud Camus.
  - Per Chatterton Williams: “The great replacement is very simple,” Mr. Camus has said. “You have one people, and in the space of a generation you have a different people.”
  - Not a new concept: Charles De Gaulle and Enoch Powell talked about this during their height.
  - “What has changed immensely in America since 2017, the first year of the Trump administration, is the relentless demonization of nonwhite immigrants, economic migrants and asylum seekers from the highest levels of institutional authority. Many of these American white nationalists likely still haven’t heard of Renaud Camus, but the term he has introduced into the international white nationalist discourse has proved infectious and taken on a life of its own. The New Zealand shooter used it, too.”
  - “...replacement theory has given white supremacists, the alt-right and identitarians like Richard Spencer cover, and allowed them to argue that they are not racist, but anti-globalists out to destroy a system that aims to eliminate identity and diversity through rapacious capitalism.”
  - “One very clever move these identitarians make — and, it has to be said, this is an exploitable opening provided to them in part by the progressive left — is to cynically proclaim their “whiteness” as just another form of diversity that is in danger of erasure. This is why you see in the [El Paso manifesto](#) a disdain for ‘shameless race-mixers’ who ‘destroy genetic diversity.’”
  - The El Paso manifesto supports the segregation of races into their own territorial groups for the sake of racial harmony. “A confederacy of territories with at least one territory for each race.”
  - White ethnostate dreams: Richard Spencer is a proponent. Northwest Territorial Imperative
    - NTI: Montana to Oregon and Washington State. Declare this space an Aryan homeland.
  - The Turner Diaries: a favorite of Timothy McVey
  - The Camp of Saints: a French text about Replacement Theory that has been referenced by Steve Bannon.

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/a-pacific-republic/#.YNB4LC1h1QI> - Excerpt from 1839 article from *The Oregonian and Indian’s Advocate*

- Who would lay claim to the Oregon Territory? U.S., Great Britain, or Russia?

- “The author begins the excerpt reproduced above by placing this debate in its geopolitical context. After dismissing the possibility that either Great Britain or Russia would gain permanent hold of Oregon, the author argues that either “Oregon will fall into the limits of the United States, or an independent transmontane nation will be raised up.” He concludes that the latter was more likely, as the Rocky Mountains were a natural barrier to the expansion of the United States. “Nature herself,” he writes, “has marked out Western America for the home of an independent nation.” This form of geographic determinism was common in the early nineteenth century. Even Thomas Jefferson believed that the Pacific slope of North America would be the home of a “great, free and independent empire,” populated by American settlers but separate from the United States.”
- The Wolf Meetings: a series of 1843 meetings in the Willamette Valley to discuss establishing Oregon as a free and independent nation. This is thought to be the origin point of the theory.
  - Settlers even voted to establish independence, but a Methodist mission employee convinced them to accept a resolution to postpone independence for four years. This gave the U.S. enough time to “extend its jurisdiction over the growing Willamette settlement.”
- “Three years later the United States and Great Britain agreed to separate their claims at the Forty-ninth Parallel. Oregon soon became a U.S. territory, while the northern portion of the former Oregon Country became part of the British Empire.”

[https://books.google.com/books?id=rDtEAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA248&lpg=PA248&dq=Thomas+Jefferson's+“great,+free,+and+independent+empire.”&source=bl&ots=v8cgZbzBeZ&sig=ACfU3U1RGRXRKKbHTKWMtL4r2a43TVNz8w&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi\\_vLb3z6jxAhWUSzABHc50CrMQ6AEwCXoEACQAw#v=onepage&q=Thomas%20Jefferson's%20“great%2C%20free%2C%20and%20independent%20empire.”&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=rDtEAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA248&lpg=PA248&dq=Thomas+Jefferson's+\) - The Writings of Tomas Jefferson, Volume 6

- From a letter dated November 9, 1813
  - Dear Sir,-- Your favor of October 18th has been duly received, and I learn with great pleasure the progress you have made towards an establishment on the Columbia river. I view it as the germ of a great, free and independent empire on that side of our continent, and that liberty and self-government spreading from that as well as this side, will ensure their complete establishment over the whole.”

<https://crosscut.com/2015/07/hate-filled-zone-a-group-of-white-racists-wants-a-nw-secession-a-vile-dream-with-deep-historic-roots>

- The remoteness of the Pacific Northwest has made it a hotbed for utopia seekers.
- “In the 1990s, when Richard Butler and the Aryan Nations were making headlines, a joke went around that America consisted of the “49 states and the Reich of Idaho.” Their racist “dream” of a separate nation — a nightmare, more accurately — didn't die with Butler.”
- Dylan Roof manifesto referenced the Northwest Front, “a white supremacist organization seeking to create an all-white “homeland” in the Pacific Northwest.”

- Roof referenced the White Flight: “Roof was critical of the Northwest Front for encouraging separatism instead of action. Wrote Roof, ‘To me the whole idea [of a Northwest white homeland] just parallels [sic] the concept of White people running to the suburbs. The whole idea is pathetic and just another way to run from the problem without facing it.’”
- The Northwest Front wants to create a Northwest American Republic of all whites, no gays, no Jews, and is championed by Harold Covington.
- Covington refers to the destiny of an all-white Republic in the Northwest as the “Northwest Imperative.”
- Per Joseph Ellison, writer for Oregon Historical Quarterly: “Remoteness and isolation have always fostered the spirit of self-reliance and independence.”
- “The region had never been friendly to blacks, and laws were passed to restrict their rights and even their presence in the region, most infamously Oregon’s voter-backed decision to exclude all blacks from the state, whether slave or free. Oregon is the only state to enter the Union (in 1859) with such a racial exclusion law embedded in a state constitution. One town in Oregon flew the Confederate flag during the war, and it still flies along I-5 in southwest Washington.”
- “During the 1860s, the notion of a Pacific Republic movement became mostly a scheme to assist the South by turning the West Coast into a friendly foreign power as a way of furthering Southern causes, like the expansion of slavery into the West. One plan outlined in 1860 indicated “slaves were to be procured by inviting coolies, South Sea Islanders, and negroes to immigrate to California, and then reducing them to slavery. The new Pacific Republic was to feature an aristocracy with inherited nobility and limited suffrage.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/realestate/levittown-ny-the-original-starter-community.html>

- Levittown, N.Y.: The Original Starter Community by Julie Lasky, Dec 19, 2018

- Levitt & Sons built several cookie cutter suburbs full of two-bedroom homes for returning WWII vets.
- “Levittown has been lauded for offering the American dream of homeownership, and derided as a model of suburban monotony and intolerance. But a key trait of the 71-year-old development in Nassau County is its stickiness.”
- “Also, the community’s much-documented history includes ugly chapters of racial exclusion and book banning. The early leases barred homeowners from renting or selling to those who weren’t “Caucasians,” although they stipulated that people of color could work as domestics. Bill Griffith, the cartoonist who for more than 40 years has revisited his Levittown childhood in his “Zippy the Pinhead” strip, recalled ethnic blocks of Italians and Jews (“I was neither,” he said) reflecting the makeup of settlers from Queens and Brooklyn.”
- “Bob Koenig, the vice president of the Levittown Historical Society and Museum, who has lived in the hamlet since 2002 and has composed and recorded affectionate songs about it, described Levittown as ‘a starter community.’”

It set the tone for suburban America and keeps a tight hold on old-school values like civic responsibility and neighborliness, he said: ‘You feel like you walk out of your house and you see a real enactment of ‘Father Knows Best’ or ‘Leave It to Beaver.’ But not necessarily in a bad way.’”

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/how-did-hitler-happen>

<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/david-lane>

<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/07/northwest-front-americas-worst-racists-119803/>

### Northwest Front

- Main goal is to expel anyone who isn’t white to create a mono-racial country in the Northwest.
- It would comprise Washington State, Oregon, Idaho, and western Montana.
- Harold Covington is the group’s leader. (Was, he died in 2018)
  - First became a neo-Nazi in 1972
  - Went to Rhodesia and joined the White People’s Party
    - Was deported for anti-Semitic activity
- The number of supporters is unclear-- Poverty Law Center lists them as the foremost White Nationalist group in the region
- Not a new idea for the region
- Oregon was founded as a White Homeland
- In 1857, 83% of people working on the state’s constitution voted to ban POC from residing in the state.
- It was the only state admitted to the Union with Exclusion Laws
  - And they remained until 1926
- They did not ratify the 15th amendment until 1951, and the 14th (for the second time) until the 1970s.
- Portland is the whitest metropolis in the U.S., and the Black population is declining in the city.
- Richard Butler founded the Aryan Nations in the 1980s which pushed the Northwest Territorial Imperative
- Washington State’s population is 4% Black, Oregon 2%, Idaho and Montana are less than 1%

<https://reportingtexas.com/texas-separatists-aim-to-go-mainstream/>

- Texas Nationalist Movement was formed in 2005 with the ultimate goal of #texit-seceding from the Union.
- It currently claims over 400,000 supporters
- A State Senator called the movement “white nationalist” which they deny.
- The president claims that they represent the population of Texas.

- Side note- all of the people pictured in this article are white men

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-white-history-racist-foundations-black-exclusion-laws/>

- Oregon started as a white-only state
- Laws aimed to make the state a “white utopia”
  - "The idea was that white folks would come here and build the perfect white society."
- 1844- first exclusionary law stating that any Black person had to leave the state within three years or be lashed up to 39 times every six months.
- 1849- Black people were barred from moving to Oregon Territory
- The Constitution barred Black people from becoming naturalized in the territory
  - Racist language wasn't removed until 2002, and 30% of people voted to keep it.
- Portland is the whitest city in America
- Over 87% of the state's population is white, less than 2% is Black