

JOAN KVITKA

2309 SW 1st Ave. #1842

Portland OR 97201

503.318.4550 jkvitka@me.com

Learn4LifeNow

The Past is Never Dead, it isn't even Past.

William Faulkner (1897 - 1962)

As an award-winning Social Science teacher in Portland Public School classrooms for 30 years, the former Education Director of the *Lan Su Chinese Garden* in Portland, an Educator Consultant with the *Portland Japanese Garden*, and a published global studies curriculum developer, I speak with certainty when I teach that our past is forever with us. Yet, the past can be so deeply buried as to render it dead and gone for those who tread in its indelible footsteps. Our great Democracy is grounded in discourse; silenced voices, however diverse, only assure that our understanding, application, and exercise of Democratic justice remains incomplete.

I am hopeful that with the adoption of SB 280, appropriate money will be authorized for purposes of developing academic standards and materials to support teacher training and classroom instruction as stipulated in SB 739 signed into Oregon law in August 2013. SB 280 will insure that Oregon's full history be inclusive of the true diversity of people, cultures, accomplishments, and struggles under the framework of Oregon Studies.

SB 280 will have profound results on the teaching of Oregon's inclusive history. However, the long shadows of the history of exclusion are also of vital importance in imparting to our students a deep understanding of how moments of darkness in our past can shed light on our collective present and imagined future.

SB 280 curriculum can allow students to investigate Oregon stories of hope and promise, exclusion and inclusion, struggle and success, creativity and community. Please indulge this teacher with what I consider a 'teachable moment' to demonstrate the need for SB 280 to write a more complete Oregon story, inclusive of diverse perspectives that often remain loudly silent in our classrooms.

Below is a sampling of directions for curriculum that can be developed when SB 280 is signed into law.

William Faulkner, the US novelist who penned the words: *The Past is Never Dead, it isn't even Past*, was born in 1897, at the time when one out of every 10 people residing in Portland OR was of Chinese descent. In fact, even before the young Faulkner learned to print his letters at the turn of the century, Oregon's Chinese population was the second largest in the United States.

From Baker, Grant, and Umatilla counties in Eastern Oregon to southern Josephine and Jackson counties, Chinese men migrated thousand of miles to become laborers in the dangerous mines. By the time mining opportunities declined, Chinese men were central to the Oregon workforce—laying railroad lines across the state, clearing land at wages few white men would accept, performing the least desirable work in the canneries of Astoria, as farm workers in the Willamette Valley.

Born in Japan a year earlier than Faulkner, Shizue Iwatsuki immigrated to Oregon's Hood River Valley in 1916 where she struggled to earn a living by growing strawberries and apples while raising three children. Recognizing the rising wave of anti-Japanese sentiment Iwatsuki helped organize the local Japanese Women's Society, intent on helping others learn American customs. While incarcerated at Pinedale Assembly Center, then Tule Lake in

north-central California and Minidoka in southern Idaho, Iwatsuki took a home-nursing course and dedicated herself to volunteer work as a nurse. Returning to Hood River in 1945, Iwatsuki practiced her self-taught skills of writing poetry. In 1974, Emperor Hirohito recognized her as an award-winning poet, and the Japanese government honored her with the Sixth Class Order of the Precious Crown for her cultural and community service.

The following brief timeline are excerpts from *Looking Back in Order to Move Forward: An Often Untold History Affecting Oregon's Past, Present and Future*. This Timeline of Oregon and U.S. Racial, Immigration and Education History is compiled by Elaine Rector as part of Coaching for Education Equity, 2010 <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/412697>

1866 Oregon's citizens did not pass the Fourteenth Amendment, granting citizenship to Blacks. Exclusion Laws were still in effect making it illegal for Blacks to live in Oregon.

1866 Oregon banned all interracial marriages Oregon's ban on interracial marriages was extended to prevent Whites from marrying anyone who was 1/4 or more Chinese, or Hawaiian, and 1/2 or more Native American. It was previously illegal for Whites and Blacks to marry.

1867 Even though the total black population in Oregon in the 1860's number 128, Portland assigned black and mulatto children to a segregated school.

1880's Chinese immigrants were driven by mobs out of Oregon City, Mount Tabor and Albina.

1882 Ignoring the crucial role Chinese immigrants played in constructing the infrastructure of the West, Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act. It suspended further Chinese immigration until 1892. It also made all Chinese immigrants ineligible for citizenship and barred them from several professions including mining.

1903 *The Advocate* started as a weekly newspaper for the "intelligent discussion and authentic diffusion of matters appertaining to the colored people, especially of Portland and the State of Oregon." It featured birth and death announcements, society news, and general good news about African Americans. Articles and editorials about segregation, lynching, employment opportunities and other issues helped keep the realities of "Jim Crow" laws and the pressing need for civil rights on the local, state, and national agenda. The newspaper challenged attempts to deprive black people of their rights, to deny Blacks their humanness, and to degrade their African cultural heritage.

1910, Oregon ranked seventh among states outside the Southwest with Mexican born migrant workers. Between 1910 – 1925, Mexican workers were contracted to work on sugar beet farms and on railroads. Farm workers marked the first Mexican families to settle permanently in the state. Oregon's agriculture relied on the large numbers of Mexican resident and migrant workers until wide spread mechanization in the 1950's.

1920's KKK flourished in Oregon. By the mid 1920's its membership was estimated between 14,000 – 20,000 with numerous sympathizers who were not official members. Oregon's Governor from 1922 – 26, Walter M. Pierce, though not a member, was overtly supported by the Klan and he promoted the Klan's agenda.

1922 Together with Freemasons, Klansmen spearheaded a drive to outlaw private and parochial schools that they viewed as primary obstacles in their drive for "Americanism." The Klan used an initiative that would require all children between the ages of eight and eighteen to attend public schools. The rallying cry of its sponsors was "One Flag! One School! One Language!" Oregonians, by a margin of 11,000, voted to make their state the first in the U.S. to mandate a strict uniform school system. In 1924 the federal court in Portland declared this law unconstitutional. In 1925 in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, the U.S. Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional as well.

1923 The Oregon state legislature, dominated by members of the Klan, passed a number of restrictive laws. The Alien Land Law prevented first generation Japanese Americans from owning or leasing land. The Oregon Business Restriction Law allowed cities to refuse business licenses to first generation Japanese Americans.

1923 An Oregon WWI veteran was denied U.S. citizenship. The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Bhagat Singh Thind could not be a naturalized citizen. Anthropologists defined people of India as belonging to the Caucasian race. A previous ruling had affirmed that immigration law referring to "white" meant "Caucasian" as it applied to denying citizenship to light skinned Japanese

immigrants. In this case, Justice Sutherland argued that the "common man's" definition of "white" did not correspond to all "Caucasians". Even though Indians were considered "Caucasian" they were not "white". Therefore they could not be naturalized. Thus the color of skin became the legal qualification for citizenship.

1926 Oregon repealed its Exclusion Law, which barred Blacks from the state, by amending the state constitution to remove it from the Bill of Rights.

1935 Oregon law officially segregated Mexican students on the basis of being of Indian descent. It made clear to exempt "White Mexicans" those fair-skinned descendents of the Spaniards who do not have "Indian blood".

1942 After the attack on Pearl Harbor, all persons of Japanese heritage living in the western portion of Oregon (and all western states) were forced to move to camps by the Wartime Civil Control Administration. More than 4,500 Japanese Americans from western Oregon were sent to internment camps: 2/3 were American citizens.

1949 Fair Employment Act empowered the State Labor Bureau to prevent discrimination in employment. Oregon's Fair Employment Practices Commission created.

1951 Oregon repealed its law prohibiting interracial marriages.

1952 Hundreds of Oregon Issei, those born in Japan, applied for citizenship after Congress lifted the ban.

1957 Lawmakers passed the Oregon Fair Housing Act, barring practices that had discriminated against African Americans in buying and renting places to live. This law made it illegal for property owners or their agents receiving any public funding to discriminate "solely because of race, color, religion, or national origin."

1959 Oregon finally ratified the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that provided that no government may prevent a citizen from voting based on that citizen's "race, color, or previous condition of servitude" (slavery).

Respectfully submitted,

Joan R Kvitka, MA & MS Education

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