

It is a shame that only now that we are finally recognizing injustices that have occurred for years in Oregon. However, even if it is long past time for action to be taken, I applaud this legislation which declares racism to be a public health crisis in Oregon. It begins to gather data on the need for resources in various diverse communities, and then fund interventions to address health issues and those impacting them – such as housing, food access, safety, education, transportation, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Yes, I copied part of the law. This legislation is far reaching in its scope and yet it may only scratch the surface.

When I came to Oregon in 1990 from the South, one of the first things I learned was that Oregon was a stronghold of white supremacists. White supremacy may have been somewhat beneath the surface. But not any longer. We have seen racism emerge in more frequent and overt actions against people of color. And many people are finally becoming aware that the fabric of our society is tattered and torn with unseen and unpublicized injustices. Turning back the tide and creating a new society will be no mean feat. And educating those of us who may not recognize our own subtle patterns of racism will be a journey. But this law shines a light on racism here in Oregon, providing the impetus for change. And change cannot come soon enough.

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