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Support of Whitelandia, the 90-Minute Documentary

On Sunday, September 29, 2013, as President of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA), I met with Tracy MacDonald and Matt Zodrow who were planning to do a 90-minute documentary examining the history of state sanctioned discrimination against African Americans in Oregon and how that discrimination continues to be a destructive force today. They were calling this proposed documentary "Whitelandia" and they wanted to know if the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) would be interested in supporting a factual documentary of the history of African American involvement in Oregon. I informed them that I would share their proposal with the OABA Board at our next board meeting. During this meeting, I informed Tracy MacDonald and Matt Zodrow that the term "Black American" should be used. Also I informed them that such a documentary should include comments from White Oregonians as well as Black Oregonians. And I informed them that the proposed 90-minute documentary should include the entire State of Oregon, not just the City of Portland.

On October 3, 2013, I told the OABA Board about my meeting with Tracy MacDonald and Matt Zodrow, and I emailed the OABA Board members a copy of the proposed documentary "Whitelandia" that I had received from Matt Zodrow so that the OABA Board could discuss it at our November 2, 2013, Meeting. On October 24, 2013, Matt Zodrow emailed the completed documentary proposal for Whitelandia and this information was emailed to OABA Board.

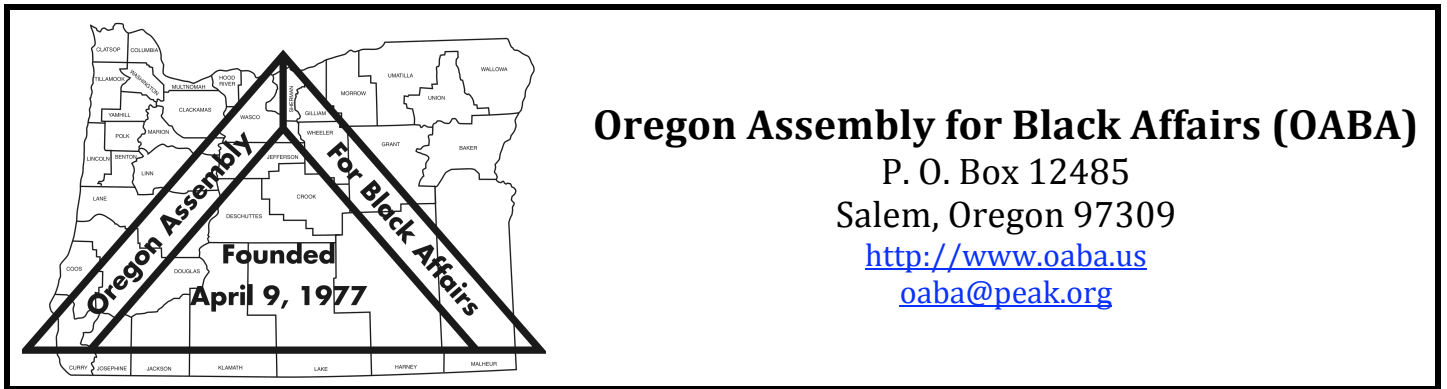
Several OABA Board members provided comments prior to the November meeting. In giving approval of OABA involvement in this project, one board member stated that "'gate-keeper, and such' will do all they can to block such an expose'." Another member wrote "It sound like a pretty good project to me. Do they want funding from OABA?" One OABA Board member reviewed the documents thoroughly and stated that the proposal was very well put together. Also this member expressed that this was an excellent project and raised the question: "have they received commitments from those citizens they want to interview?" Also this board member expressed that it is great that the documentary is a fact based project and not emotion ridden. In additions this Board Member noted, "The economics and system inequities including the law-based engineering that prevented inclusion regardless of Federal law is the story I have waited to see on the big screen." OABA Board of Directors agreed that OABA should support this documentary. I, personally, support this project, and feel that more than one 90-minute documentary will be needed to help the Oregon people (Black and White) to understand how they need to know their histories and learn to work together to build a better Oregon for all people.

Painful history is hard for people to share and understand, but it is easy for people to try to avoid knowing. Yet we need to know it so that we can move forward to benefit all. When Oregon became a state of the United States of America in 1859, the White people of Oregon approved its original constitution with these provisions:

1. **Article I-Bill of Rights, Section 35:** "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."
2. **Article II- Suffrage And Elections, Section 6:** "No Negro, Chinaman or Mulatto shall have the right of suffrage."

Do you want to know how these early provisions of the Oregon Constitution affected White Oregonians' attitudes and actions toward Black Americans or Black Oregonians? "Whitelandia, the 90-minute documentary" will be a good start. My questions to the people (Black and White) of Oregon are:

1. Have, in the past and today, the governments of the State of Oregon and of the counties and cities in Oregon used their laws to discriminate against Black Americans in Oregon?



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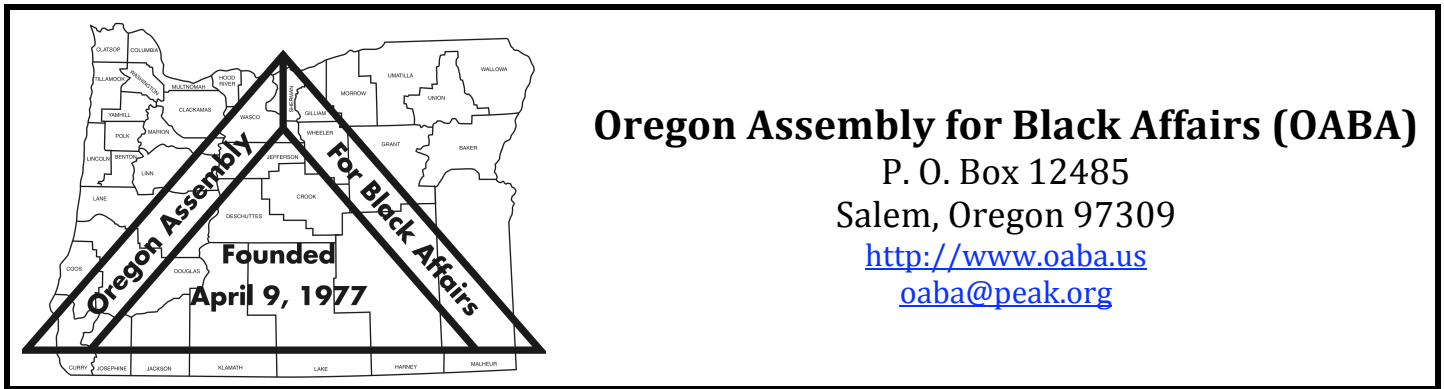
2. Have, in the past and today, these Oregon laws conditioned White Oregonians to believe that it is legally okay to discriminate against Black Oregonians?
3. Have, in the past and today, these Oregon laws conditioned Black Oregonians that there is nothing they can do about Oregon laws that discriminate against them or that cause White Oregonians to discriminate against Black Oregonians?
4. Should Oregon be a State of the United States of America that only White Oregonians can benefit free of discrimination from what Oregon offers?
5. What roles have the public and private institutions played in this state sanctioned discrimination against Black Americans in Oregon and how that discrimination continues to be a destructive force today?
6. Is Oregon education system designed to help all people in Oregon to understand the history of Oregon treatment of Black Americans?
7. Is Oregon judicial system designed to protect the rights and treatment of Black Americans?

Since this 90-minute documentary has received the support of the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) and me, some controversial issues and questions have risen. Last month, I received an email from a White person who wanted to know why I was involved in this project. There are some Black Oregonians who do not think that two White persons should be doing this project. Yet state sanctioned discrimination against Black Americans in Oregon still exists, and we all need to know how that discrimination continues to be a destructive force today.

It is important that I tell this story. It must come from my own words, not from a news reporter or a person who does not understand my life journey and its impact on what I am now doing in Oregon, today, as a change agent. It is important that people who have heard the issues or questions understand that those people who raised the issues or questions might not have been involved with the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) or me during the past forty years in Oregon. Also my Oregon experiences tell me this "Whitelandia" project will benefit all.

My name is Calvin O. L. Henry, and I am a Black American. I use the term "Black American" to describe me and to reflect the racial grouping of which I am a part. This is because it is very important to me that one understands that being "Black and growing up in the United States" is different than any other place in the world and is different than any other racial grouping within the United States. I am a Black American, and I am proud of who I am. And I am not ashamed to state this. The United States is the county of my birth. I am a citizen of the United States. I make no apology for it. I do not believe that I must exhibit a racelessness persona in order to achieve vertical mobility in the United States. I recognize that Blacks in the United States may be descendents of the people of Africa; but their history has evolved differently in many ways. My use of the term "Black American" is not to dismiss immigrants from the continent of Africa, but to recognize the political position that my government had placed upon people like me as well as to recognize the strength of a people.

My first introduction to Oregon was in 1962 when I came to Oregon as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force. I spent a night in Ashland, Oregon on my way to my assignment in Corvallis. When I talked with people in Corvallis about where I had stayed just before I arrived in Corvallis, they were surprised that I spent the night in Ashland. I served my assignment in Corvallis. I spent a tour of duty in Turkey. While I was in Turkey, I learned about the demonstration of Black American Students on the campus of Oregon State University. I served as a Captain in the United States Air Forces. After spending some time in Turkey, I came back to Corvallis to attend Oregon State University in 1969. Also I served as a Captain in the Oregon Air National Guard. I am a Vietnam-era veteran.



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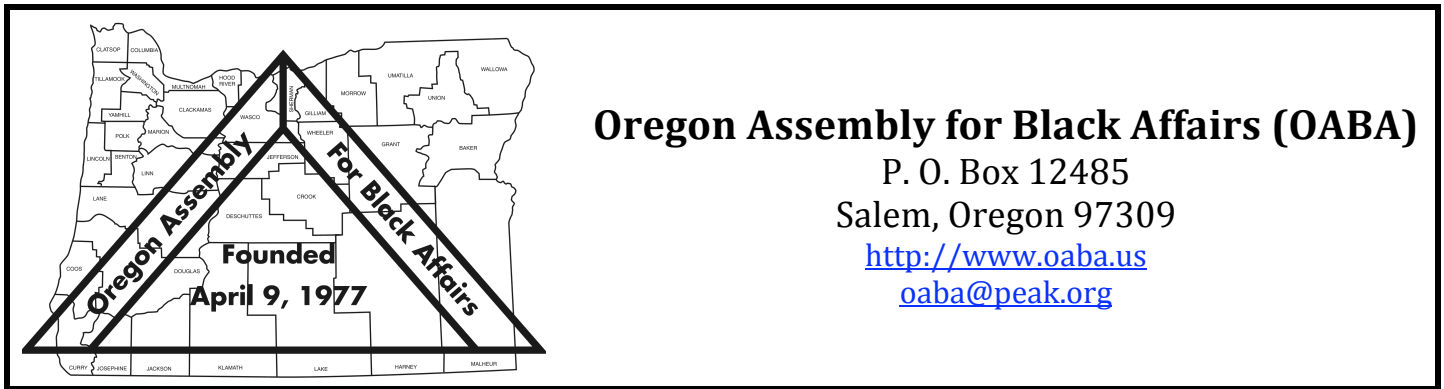
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On February 3, 1970, as a concerned citizen who was interested in equal treatment and justice under the law, I investigated an incident that was brought to my attention by the Director of Minority Affairs at Oregon State University who stated that two Black students had been harassed by the Corvallis Police Department and employees at the Corvallis Payless Drug Store and that these students had been alleged to have been shoplifting. My investigation revealed that three students (two Black students and one White student) had gone to the Payless Drug Store on January 29, 1970, to see if they could lease or rent a stereo set. One of the Black students was followed and harassed by an employee of Payless Drug Store, and he was allegedly accused of shoplifting along with the other two students. The investigation revealed: (1) that the Black students did nothing to warrant harassment from the Payless Drug Store employee and to warrant questioning and checking from the Corvallis Police Department for suspected or alleged shoplifting; (2) that the Black students were harassed by the employee of the Payless; (3) the Black students were checked and questioned by an officer of the Corvallis Police Department, (4) No written report was available February 5, 1970, concerning the incident of alleged shoplifting by three suspects of which two were Black students at OSU; (5) the report, which was finally submitted by the officer conducting the investigation, had indication of another crime "Disturbance at Payless" rather than alleged shoplifting as indicated by this officer early, office personnel at the Corvallis Police Department, Corvallis Police Chief and OSU Director of Minority Affairs. This report did not exonerate the individuals of the unjust accusation nor did it cite them. It was unsigned and no file number; and (6) The long delay in submitting the officer's report and the way it was writing clearly indicated that the Police Department had no intention of filing the report because of possible legal ramifications against Payless Drug Store. The recommendations were: (1) That the police department should stay a neutral entity upholding justice and the law; (2) That The Police Department set its records straight and clear the Black students of any alleged charges; and (3) That Payless Drug Store take action to correct this incident to the satisfaction of the two Black students. Some people in Corvallis did not believe such an incident occurred. This was one of several incidents that led to the establishment of the Corvallis Branch NAACP in 1971.

At the meeting on January 11, 1971, the National Board of Directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chartered the Corvallis Branch NAACP. After I founded Corvallis Branch NAACP, I established the current Salem Branch NAACP in 1974, and I established the Eugene Branch NAACP in 1976.

During the 1975 Oregon Legislative Session, the passage of HB 2729 that gave statutory force to affirmative action in Oregon and created the position of Director of Affirmative Action directly under the Governor of Oregon was a great achievement for Oregon. Working closely with the NAACP and OSEA, it was conceived and co-authored by me, and State Representatives Bill Wyatt and Bill Grannell assured its passage. Passage of this law affected Oregon work force as well as its election process in many ways.

In 1975, I presented the paper "The Need for Political Maturity and Activism among Blacks in Oregon" and it was discussed intensely at the CALMAX SYMPOSIUM, "The Status of Blacks in Oregon," which was held August 23-24, 1975, and hosted by the CalMax Corporation in Corvallis, Oregon. This paper was self-published and copyrighted in 1976. This paper revealed, "During the period 1880-1970, the Black population of Oregon increased approximately 54-fold compared to an approximately 12-fold increase for the general population." The Black population in 1970 was less than 2% of the total population. Also this paper reported, "Historically, Oregon has been a state that has had a low population with respect to ethnic minority group, because it was legal to keep the population low." It explained that gate-keeping is a term used to describe the philosophy and internal politics of Blacks in Oregon who do not want anything sponsored or done by Blacks to be successful unless they approved it. The CALMAX SYMPOSIUM recognized that the economic and political climate of the United States made it imperative that Black people begin to examine where they were in 1975. It noted the observation that most people in Oregon seem to have written off Blacks in Oregon as a viable, political group, which is willing to address its problems in Oregon.



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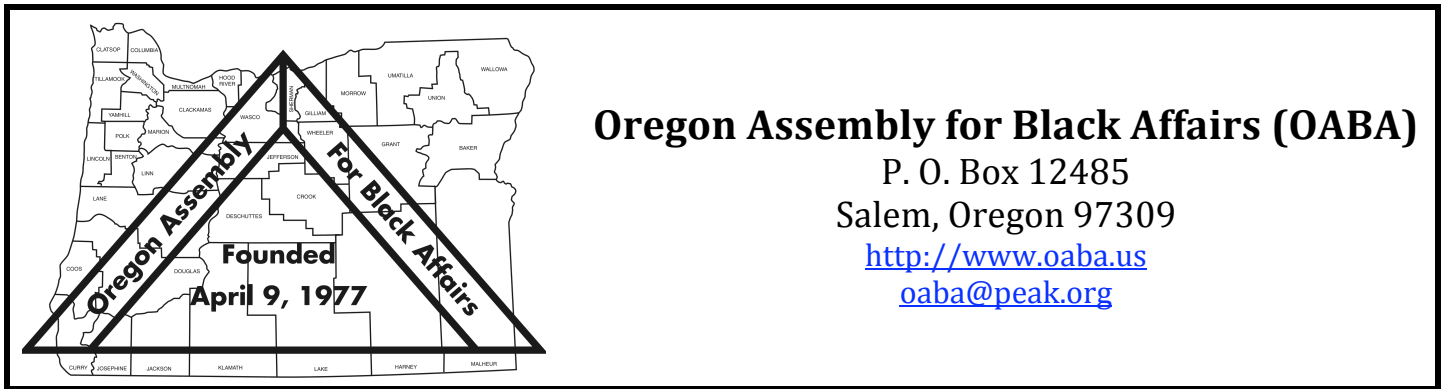
On January 22, 1977, the first Call-To-Action Leadership Conference was held at Willamette University, Salem, Oregon. The purpose of this conference was threefold which was (1) to examine the Oregon Legislative process to determine how it affects Blacks in Oregon, (2) to decide ways in how Blacks could impact it, and (3) to determine the best collective course of action to address the plight of Blacks in Oregon. Among the issues discussed at this Call-To-Action Leadership Conference were employment, education, politics, legal counsel, the criminal justice system, news media accessibility, affirmative action, housing and religion. As a result, on April 9, 1977, the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) was established.

The Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs (OABA) is a statewide corporation committed to improving the status of Blacks in Oregon. OABA was founded on April 9, 1977, and it was established to improve conditions for Blacks in Oregon. It is nonprofit and nonpartisan, but political. Its purpose is to improve the political, educational, social, legal, and economic status of Blacks in Oregon. It uses a political methodology in achieving its purpose. OABA places a major emphasis on building a better Oregon for the Black Community. When OABA was established, Black American political and economical voices were nearly non-existent, and their concerns for each other were indifferent. In many ways, Black Americans were afraid to speak up for each other or do business with each other. The Black Community often left the young Black children to fend for themselves in school settings. The percentage of Blacks in the Oregon prison population was and still is greater than the percentage of Blacks in the Oregon population. Businesses in the Oregon Black Community have decreased. Since its establishment, OABA has been working to lessen these strong disconnects among Black Oregonians. OABA knows "What Benefits Black Oregonians Benefits ALL Oregonians" and this does not work in reverse. OABA is an organization for change.

One of the major events of OABA is the hosting of the Oregon Black Political Convention (OBPC) through its Political Action Committee. The OBPC is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, educational convention that serves as a forum for delegates to discuss issues and conditions, and to establish, through resolutions, the positions of the Oregon Black Community, collectively, on these issues and conditions affecting it. Also this convention endorses candidates running for public offices during the Oregon Primary Election. There have been 19 Oregon Black Political Conventions since OABA began hosting them in 1978. Understanding the role of the citizen in politics is essential to change. Politics plays a key role in everything we do. It is the view of OABA that the OBPC can assist Black Oregonians to understand their issues and to develop their positions on the needs and aspirations of the Black Community by using their power of citizenship to build futures for themselves and their children as well as this nation and Oregon. OBPC delegates recognize and acknowledge that the United States as well as the State of Oregon still suffers from its history of slavery and racism and they recognize that all people must work together to eliminate the impact of slavery and racism.

In its research dealing with legal representation, OABA concluded that because many Black Oregonians have experienced tremendous difficulty in securing effective legal representation, many Blacks in Oregon feel they must bear with, even tolerate, crimes or discrimination against them rather than be further victimized, even humiliated, by not being able to get effective legal representation. I worked for four Oregon Secretaries of State. OABA and I have informed Oregon Governors and Members of Oregon Legislative Assembly about issues and conditions of Black Oregonians. Also members of Oregon Supreme Court, Oregon Court of Appeals and the Oregon State Bar have been informed about how difficult it is for Black Oregonians to receive effective and unbiased legal representation. I have taught at the university.

I am a change agent. I believe that it is imperative that one must understand one's self if one is to be effective as an instrument of educational, economical, social and political change. Also, I believe one must be a long distance runner, not just a sprinter. Being a leader, an organizer, an innovator, an educator, and a writer, I transcend the politics of race, and I recognize that all citizens of society must contribute and be held responsible for the successes or failures of all within the society. Everything is politics and politics is everything. Politics is just a way of influencing the things around us. It is my view that



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without communication, coordination, cooperation and commitment, very little can be achieved effectively. I hold myself responsive, accountable and productive to and for my involvement to benefit society. And I have asked no less of others.

The questions and the examples of our work will tell you why OABA and I support the project **Whitelandia**. Tracy MacDonald and Matt Zodrow came to OABA with the understanding, technical skills and access to equipment to help the people (Black and White) of Oregon to examine their histories of state sanctioned discrimination and to determine how that discrimination continues to be a destructive force today. Since its existence, OABA has been doing this in many ways and having videos of such findings will be helpful.

Therefore, OABA and I support **Whitelandia, the 90-Minute Documentary**, and we urge others to support it.

Calvin O. L. Henry, Ph.D.
OABA President