



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1898

NEWS RELEASE

Press Contact: Rachel Randles
Director of Marketing & Communications
971.409.3761 (cell / text) • rachel.randles@ohs.org

Students Persevere With Impressive Showing at “Virtual” Oregon History Day; Over 50 Students Advance to National Contest

Portland, OR – May 20, 2020 – Even amidst a pandemic, 141 students from across the state came together virtually to participate in [Oregon History Day](#), the statewide qualifying competition for the annual National History Day® contest. Fifty volunteer judges evaluated over 70 projects online, inspired by the annual theme of “Breaking Barriers in History,” and 56 students qualified to advance to the National History Day® contest, which will take place online from June 14–20.

Working from home, middle and high school students developed their research projects, in the forms of papers, documentaries, websites, performances, and exhibits, persevering through hurdles that the new virtual format presented (for example, students submitting performances had to pivot their projects and provide a written script, including descriptions of settings, characters, and costumes, rather than perform in person). While the virtual nature of the contest created challenges, it also presented incredible opportunities; by removing the barrier of cross-country travel, 100% of Oregon’s qualifying students have registered to present their projects along with over 4,000 students from across the country.

Last year marked the first year that Oregon students placed first at the national contest. Portland high school students [Kyler Wang and Alan Zhou](#) impressed judges with their powerful documentary on the history and destruction of Celilo Falls, [Echo on Falling Water](#). They hope to defend their title this year, with a new documentary on civil rights activist Minoru Yasui, titled *Breaking the Curfew: The Story of Minoru Yasui*, which placed first in the senior group documentary category at Oregon History Day.

St. Mary’s Academy student Anja Jolin is also looking forward to presenting her paper, “Chipping Away at the Bullet Proof Glass Ceiling: Portland Women Breaking Barriers in Policing,” at the national contest next month. When asked why she continues to participate in Oregon History Day each year, she shared:

Oregon History Day has given me the chance to delve into topics that interest me and explore the intricate details and mysteries of historical events. I enjoy connecting local history to broader issues with national significance, such as immigration and systemic gender barriers. Oregon History Day has given me a chance to take my learning outside the classroom and learn about events and people in history and the impact that they have made to society as a whole.

Other notable entries that will represent Oregon include:

- *Fighting for Change: The Integration of Women in the Armed Forces*, a documentary by Evelyn Chen, Flora Huang, and Rachel Wang from Stoller Middle School
- *Operation Firefly: The Barrier-Breaking Battalion*, a documentary by Karalin Reynolds and Rylee Mann from Helix School
- *Jane Austen's Impact on Feminism*, an exhibit by Cassady Kirchner, Eva Norman, and Mina Gregg from South Salem High School
- *Larry Itliong: Overcoming Barriers of Filipino Farm Workers in the Delano Grape Strike*, a website designed by Darsh Mander, Felix Petteni, Namrata Venkatesan, Sophia Pi, and Wenjun Hou from Jesuit High School

While students missed the comradery of an in-person contest, participants like Jolin are thankful that the contest was able to continue, providing some sense of normalcy during an otherwise chaotic school year:

In this difficult time, when so many things are being cancelled, I am very grateful to Oregon History Day for creating a virtual competition and giving students a chance to showcase their projects. While it was disappointing that we did not get to gather together as a community and celebrate everyone's hard work, having a virtual competition has given me something to work toward and look forward to during this time.

A full list of 2020 Oregon History Day participants can be found at ohs.org/oregonhistoryday.

About Oregon History Day:

Oregon History Day, part of National History Day®, is a renowned, evidence-based middle and high school program where students across the state develop historical research projects based on an annual theme. Facilitated by the Oregon Historical Society, Oregon

History Day encourages students to nurture their curiosities by researching topics from any time period or place, or by analyzing a historical event that connects to the annual theme. Students present their work in one of five categories — paper, website, exhibit, documentary, or performance —that can be developed independently or in groups of up to five students for all categories (except paper).

Open-ended topic selections and student-directed inquiries give participants ownership over their projects and give educators the flexibility to adapt the program to fit their curriculum. Educators can narrow the scope of topic selections to align with themes they are covering in the classroom, such as focusing on the diversity of the many people who have shaped Oregon’s history. As students move through the process, they learn to collect, organize, and analyze information through a historical lens by evaluating primary and secondary sources.

Over half a million students across the nation participate, and for the first time ever, the National History Day® office is allowing students to begin work on their 2021 projects now! The 2021 theme is [Communication in History: The Key to Understanding](#). For more information on National History Day®, visit www.nhd.org.

About the Oregon Historical Society

For more than a century, the Oregon Historical Society has served as the state’s collective memory, preserving a vast collection of artifacts, photographs, maps, manuscript materials, books, films, and oral histories. Our research library, museum, digital platforms & website (www.ohs.org), educational programming, and historical journal make Oregon’s history open and accessible to all. We exist because history is powerful, and because a history as deep and rich as Oregon’s cannot be contained within a single story or point of view.