ON MAY 24, 1924, the Southern Oregon Spokesman published this editorial titled “Let’s Keep Grants Pass A White Man’s Town.” In the opening paragraph, the writer asserts that “Grants Pass has always been a white man’s town” and later goes on to rail against “encroachments” of non-White people, stating plainly, “NIGGER WE DON’T WANT YOU HERE.”

In this year, a White Grant’s Pass family attempted to employ three Black servants in their household, as was the current fashion in the East and South. That employment enraged the local White community and sparked this editorial. Harkening to the preferred racial policies of the pioneer generation, these Grants Pass residents opposed any Black presence for essentially the same reasons as the pioneers — the attempt to eliminate any Black competition for jobs and economic advancement.

While Black populations in larger cities such as Portland had grown by 1924, smaller and more rural Oregon towns sought only homogenous, White populations. One method to achieve that outcome was through the adoption of “sundown” policies, under which all Blacks were required to be out of town by the time the sun went down. White such policies did not have the weight of “official laws,” those found in violation could expect consequences ranging from harassment or brutality by the police to assault by local, private citizens.

Finally, the editorial makes clear that the ultimate resolution of this issue will be a resort to violence if necessary — the underlying premise of all White supremacist policies.
1902–1914

TWO NEWSPAPER CLIPS from the early twentieth century demonstrate how White supremacy — the belief in a superior, White race — was perpetuated through forced assimilation of Indigenous communities. The 1902 editorial below describes Native people as “peculiar, distinct, separate semi-barbarous people” who could only be saved by being “absorbed [sic] by the nation.” The 1914 image and rhyme on the right reinforce those beliefs, describing how “Little Red,” only became American when he was forced to give up his “Injun” name.

By the turn of the twentieth century, White people firmly controlled social, political, economic, educational, and cultural levers of Oregon life. Native populations had been removed to reservations, yet their culture survived. Many “progressive” Whites set out to do with education what had not been done with guns and plows — to transform and absorb Indigenous people, whether they wanted to or not, into the “superior” White culture and erase their “inferior” languages, practices, and traditions.

While practitioners of White supremacy believed it possible to make an Indian into an American, but as the editorial describes, they still did not believe such a transformation was possible for Blacks.

![Wallow Chieftan, October 30, 1902](image1.png)

![Cottage Grove Leader, July 1, 1914, p. 4](image2.png)

![A Real July 4 American](image3.png)
1949

**This Marketing Letter** from the Lake Oswego Development Company invites a potential buyer to view a tract of land in Lake Oswego, a suburb of Portland, Oregon. Advertising the district as “The Way to Live,” the company also assures that “the property is definitely restricted to the white race,” requiring an in-person meeting to accept the offer — presumably to ensure only Whites purchased property.

As demonstrated in this letter, suburban development following World War II was part of a trend to keep races separated and to reinforce a White-controlled racial hierarchy born out of Jim Crow laws of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That separation has been a key to the creation and continuation of White supremacy through land ownership.

In its ability to affect the destiny and daily lives of non-White targets, White supremacy can be seemingly invincible. But because it is founded on false, irrational, illogical, and unsupportable assumptions, it is also vulnerable, weak, and ultimately indefensible when exposed to the light of truth, rationality, and honest, close examination. The most effective antidote to ignorance and fear is cross-racial, personal, interactive knowledge of the unfamiliar.
1781–1785

**THOMAS JEFFERSON**’S *Notes on the State of Virginia* was never intended to be a full-length book but was profoundly influential in how Europeans understood the young American country as well as how Americans viewed Jefferson’s home state of Virginia. Jefferson did not believe the United States could prosper as a multi-racial country, and those beliefs were blueprints for race relations adopted two generations later, when framers of the Oregon Constitution crafted racial policies in the state. Excerpts from Jefferson’s draft of the book, which he first wrote as memoranda in 1781 and expanded through 1785, are reproduced here.

The excerpts below describe Blacks as naturally inferior to Whites, which became the very basis for White supremacy policies underlying “manifest destiny” claims of the pioneer generation. Jefferson goes on to describe Blacks as not feeling grief, or at least not for long, allowing him to escape the guilt of enslaving humans, even if he considered them naturally inferior. Observations such as the ones Jefferson penned were reflected on and replicated throughout U.S. history. They also formed some of the reasoning behind anti-Black arguments made during the Oregon Constitutional Convention in 1857.

“I advance it therefore as a suspicion only that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments of both body and mind.”

“(T)heir griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and soon forgotten with them.”
1900–1902

**WITHIN A SOCIETY** defined by White supremacy, racism could be both extreme, as in the case of a violent lynching, or casual, as in the use of the demeaning “n-word” in a mundane advertisement. On the left is a graphic account a group of miners in Marshfield, Oregon, who took the law into their own hands and lynched Alonzo Tucker, accused of assaulting a White woman. Above, the D.M. Averill & Co. advertisement for fireworks on July 1, 1900, included “Nigger Chasers,” a thinly masked threat of violence toward Blacks.

In this environment created by White supremacist practices, non-White people could not control whether they encountered one, both, or neither of these examples of real and implied violence. Consequently, the stress of racial consciousness, whether on the surface or in the ever-present subconscious, is a burden non-Whites carry that often goes unrecognized by White people.
1904–1916

**THESE TWO ADVERTISEMENTS**, published in the early to mid 1900s in La Grande and Klamath Falls, Oregon, echo anti-Chinese sentiments during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1882, Congress passed the first Chinese Exclusion Act, which specifically banned entry of Chinese laborers into the United States. In 1902, the law was renewed and made permanent; it was not repealed until 1943.

On March 1, 1904, (top right) the owners of Pap’s Chop House advertised in the La Grande Observer for “white help only” and guaranteed patrons would receive polite, clean service where “no Chinaman has prepared your food.” In this advertisement, the restaurant owners revealed that racism and ethnocentrism — a belief in the superiority of one’s own ethnic group — were acceptable to newspaper readers.

On February 21, 1916, (bottom right) Roberts & Hanks hardware store owners participated in a “Pay-up Week” campaign designated by the Klamath Falls mayor and endorsed by the Klamath Falls Businessmen’s Association. The campaign was intended to encourage people to pay their debts to local-run businesses, and many hoping to collect advertised on the page. In their “The Chinaman Always Pays His Debts” advertisement, the hardware store owners explicitly state that White people are superior to Chinese people.
1910–1916

**THE POWER OF NEGATIVE STEREOTYPES** lies not in some truth or insight they capture, but rather, in their usefulness to the dominant culture. When consistently attached to non-White individuals and groups, stereotypes marginalize and dehumanize their targets, such as in these two advertisements published in newspapers in Medford and Ashland, Oregon. Blacks were often labeled as lazy, shiftless, prone to criminality, and dangerous as a way to rationalize imposing discriminatory treatment on them. Native Americans were typically portrayed as sullen, untrustworthy, dishonest, and suspicious, when doing so served the need to direct special, negative treatment toward them.

Ironically, such depictions could be flipped in the case of Native Americans, while still not acknowledging their basic human qualities. When the notion that dishonesty is the default quality of Indigenous peoples, those who defy that description are elevated by the unexpected rarity of their exceptionalism. Their nonconformity to the assumed norm singles them out and raises them to the epitome of the quality for which they now stand, in its most rare and eminent expression.
AGATHA CHRISTIE is one of the world's most popular authors of mystery novels. The novel shown here is one of her most successful. Written in the 1930s, it was an example of how casually acceptable the use of demeaning racial language was during that time. The book was eventually made into a popular movie in 1965, titled Ten Little Indians, with numerous remakes into the twenty-first century. The basic plot of the novel remained the same, but the evolution and imagery of the title changed dramatically over time. It is perhaps a revealing and hopeful sign. Change is possible. While it is not possible to determine whether such change is driven by increased sensitivity or the pressures to preserve profitability, it still stands as evidence that the influence of White supremacy is not immutable.
1946

**ON A MAJOR TRANSPORTATION ARTERIAL** at 5474 Northeast Sandy Boulevard in Portland, Oregon, stood the Coon-Chicken Inn, a popular restaurant defined by the prominent display of a demeaning, negative Black stereotype. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Black Oregonians endured the constant reminder that it was acceptable in a White supremacist society for their race to be publicly debased and humiliated.

The ideals and images of White supremacy co-existed deep into the twentieth century and beyond. While those who embraced the most extremist views on racism and violence became a minority — rather than a majority — of Oregon’s White population, the legacy of earlier generations continued to flow through the channels of Oregon life on many levels.

At times, that legacy can be detected in a continued pattern of advantage and special privilege enjoyed by Whites, embedded in the institutions and operations of Oregon life, of which they may be generally unaware. Non-Whites in Oregon consistently resisted and contended with the often submerged, yet powerful, forces of historic inequality. The physical reminders of that legacy, such as photographs and menus, are preserved in the Oregon Historical Society Research Library collections.