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PSU Proposes Race Studies Mandate

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Supporting diversity in the workplace



The Portland Observer

Volume XLV • Number 8



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Wednesday • April 21, 2021

Committed to Cultural Diversity

Ex Cop found Guilty

Verdict sets off jubilation around city

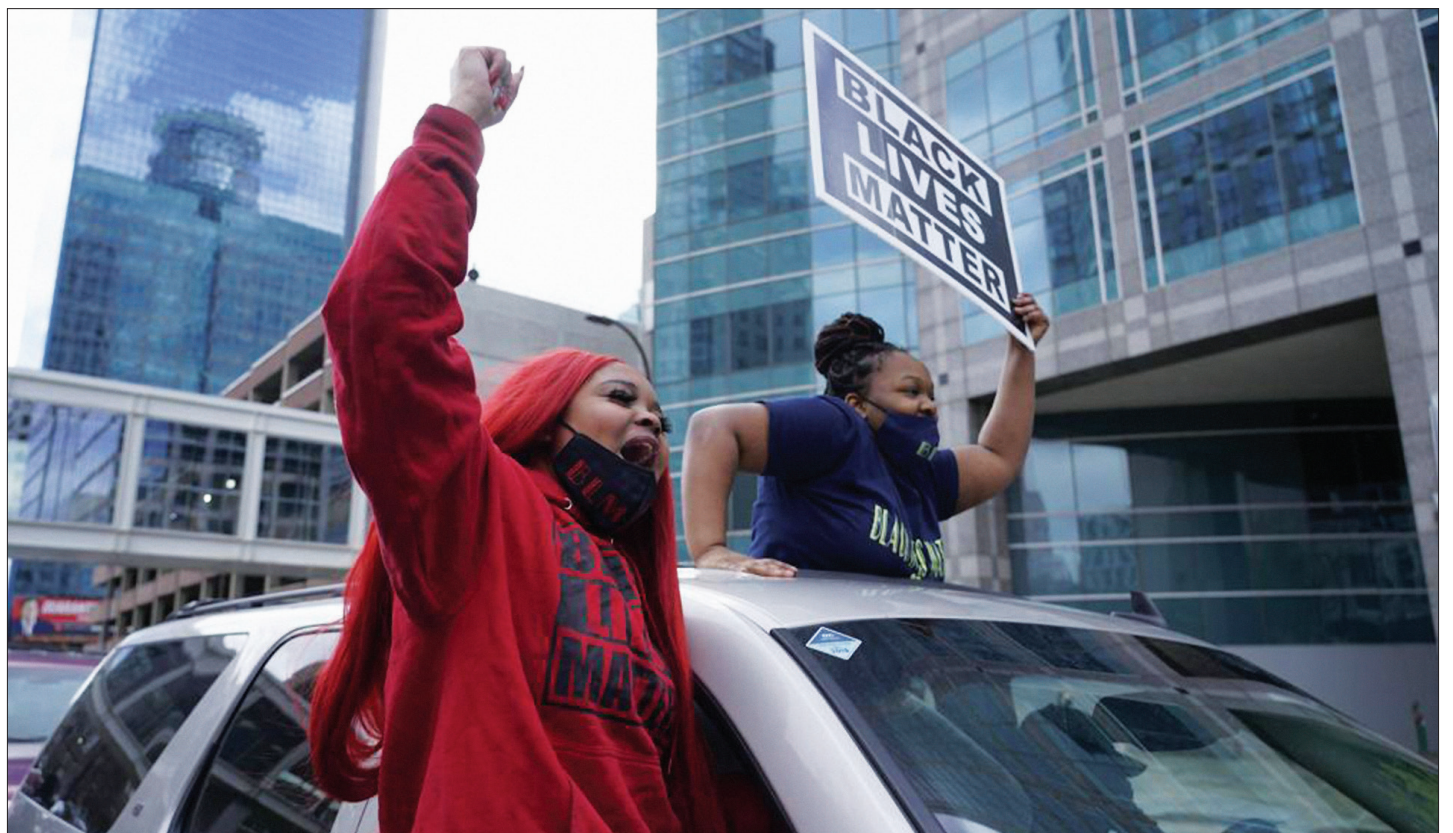
Former Minneapolis Officer Derek Chauvin was convicted Tuesday of murder and manslaughter for pinning George Floyd to the pavement with his knee on the Black man's neck in a case that touched off worldwide protests, violence and a furious reexamination of racism and policing in the U.S.

Chauvin, 45, could be sent to prison for decades.

The verdict set off jubilation around the Minneapolis. People instantly flooded the surrounding streets downtown, running through traffic with banners. Cars blared their horns. Floyd family members who had gathered at a Minneapolis conference room could be heard cheering.

The jury of six white people and six

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



People in Minneapolis cheer Tuesday after a guilty verdict was announced at the trial of former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin for the 2020 death of George Floyd.

PSU Proposes Race Studies Mandate

'This is something that is needed,' college professor says

BY BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Advancing the understanding of hate and committing a campus to racial justice progress is being put to the test at Portland State University.

A proposal coming before the PSU Faculty Senate in early May would require all undergraduate students to complete courses in race and ethnic studies.

"This is something that is needed," Ethan Johnson, chair of PSU's Black Studies department told the Portland Observer. "The university has touted itself as the most diverse university in Oregon, and as one of the largest institutions of higher learning in Portland; it should lead in that area."

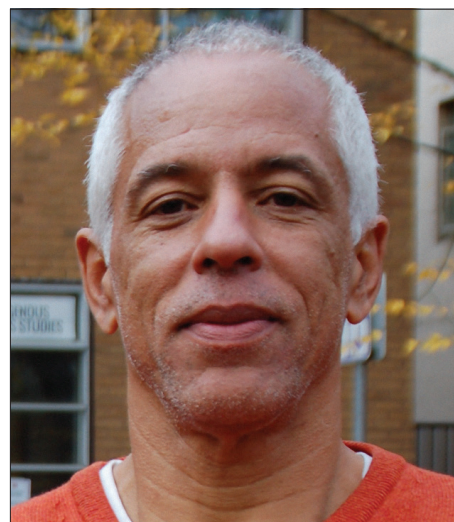
Johnson said the proposal would require all undergraduate students to take two courses in race and ethnic studies and set up a committee to administer the curriculum. If passed, the added classes would also build support for the creation of conditions for a master's degree program in the PSU School of Gender, Race and Nations.

"We have a master's certificate, but not a master's program," he said.

Johnson says a vote for the proposal will help fulfill a Senate resolution to promote diversity on campus, not only by expanding race and ethnic studies, but also gender and sexuality studies.

The idea behind the new courses requirement originated with the School of Gender, Race and Nations in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and suggestions for curriculum that can enrich the students' learning experiences, Johnson said.

But the effects of broadening the access



Ethan Johnson

to racial and gender studies can be even broader, according to experts.

California Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond, who led President Biden's education transition

team, was recently quoted in the New York Times as saying ethnic studies is a reminder that education is an essential strategy for combating hate.

"We are reminded daily that racism is not only a legacy of the past but a clear and present danger," she said in the March 31 article. "We must understand this history if we are to finally end it."

Johnson hopes Portland State will follow this national trend, as the California state university system passed these requirements in 2016 and Oregon recently passed a K-12 requirement for all students to take race and ethnic studies throughout their studies.

According to the National Education Association, early efforts a decade ago around ethnic studies were often met with opposition, but have gained traction in recent years, and following California and

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PSU Proposes Race Studies Mandate

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

Oregon, in 2019 Vermont and Washington passed similar laws, and a new Connecticut law requires high schools to offer an ethnic-studies class by 2022.

Washington Education Association President Kim Mead said these efforts are important for minority students.

"We know that when students see themselves, and their experiences and cultures in the classroom, they are more engaged in learning, which translates to academic success," she said.

Johnson said the Faculty Senate was presented with two motions, one to have race and ethnic studies for all students by offering a domestic course that focuses on racism in the United States, and an international course on colonial racism in Europe.

The second motion concerns the makeup of the committee that will design the race and ethnic studies curriculum. Johnson said it should be composed primarily of faculty from the School of Gender, Race and Nations, which includes Black Studies; Indigenous Nations Studies; Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies;

and Chicano/Latino Studies.

"We are the experts in the field of race and ethnic studies, which is what we do throughout our departments," he said. "Others can be on the committee, but we argue that other departments don't solely focus on race and ethnic issues."

Some, he said, are concerned about pushback from students who don't want to take a race and ethnic studies course, Johnson said, so his proposal includes more support for professors.

"Professors may have to deal with students who lack knowledge or just don't think they should have to take the course," he said. To ease the burden on professors, the proposal is recommending that teaching race and ethnicity classes count toward a professor's teaching load and tenure.

Johnson said there is strong student support for the proposal across the school, including the Associated Students of Portland State University.

"We think this will make Portland State a more attractive place for those interested in race and ethnic studies, but also to students who are Black, indigenous or people of color, too," he said.

AN EVENING WITH NIKOLE HANNAH-JONES

**FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2021
4:30 - 6:00 PM**

Oregon Educators are invited to hear Nikole Hannah-Jones
Moderator - Ken Boddie, KOIN News Anchorman

Photo credited to James Estrin, The NYT

"IN A COUNTRY BUILT ON RACIAL CASTE, WE MUST CONFRONT THE FACT THAT OUR SCHOOLS ARE NOT BROKEN. THEY ARE OPERATING AS DESIGNED"
- NHJ, CREATOR OF THE 1619 PROJECT

Nikole's lead essay, "Our Democracy's founding ideals were false when they were written. Black Americans have fought to make them true," was awarded the 2020 Pulitzer Prize

If you have questions, please send them to ORABSE.org@gmail.com
To RSVP, visit the 'News and Events' tab at ORABSE.org

FREE VIRTUAL EVENT • SATURDAY, MAY 1, 2021 • 6 PM

Black Health Matters

Everyone's invited to this year's Virtual Community Supper!

Tune in on May 1, 2021 at 6PM (PDT) to celebrate Black health and 15 years of NxNE with our entire community! We'll also connect with a few extra-special guests – Nikole Hannah Jones, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and founder of *The 1619 Project*, and actor Aldis Hodge of *One Night in Miami*.

Pull up a virtual chair and RSVP here: avcast.me/nxne

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