

Washington State Bar Association

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Washington state minority bars join Oregon specialty bars in solidarity against white nationalism

SEATTLE [March 13, 2019] — The Board of Governors of the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA), supported by the WSBA Diversity Committee, recently adopted the following statement of solidarity with the Oregon Specialty Bar Associations against white nationalism and the normalization of violence:

Joint Washington Minority Bar Associations Statement in Support of Oregon Specialty Bar Associations

“In the April 2018 issue of the *Oregon State Bar Bulletin*, a statement was published denouncing white nationalism and the normalization of violence and racism. This statement was signed by several minority bar associations, including the Oregon Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Oregon Filipino American Lawyers Association, Oregon Chapter of the National Bar Association, Oregon Hispanic Bar Association, Oregon Women Lawyers, Oregon Minority Lawyers Association, and OGALLA -- the LGBT Bar Association of Oregon. Shortly thereafter, the bar leaders who signed the statement received backlash in the form of threats of physical violence, intimidation, and harassment from members of the public and surprisingly, even from some fellow members of the Oregon State Bar.

We are living in historic times when Americans are confronted with disturbing headlines on a weekly basis. Reports of intimidating behavior and openly violent acts towards people of color are becoming the norm. A surge in white nationalism and the advancement of white supremacist groups is troubling and alarming. These developments must be addressed. Violence, intimidation, and the systematic silencing of oppressed voices has no place in society or our profession.

We, the undersigned minority bar associations of Washington, stand with our sister minority bar associations and diversity representatives in Oregon and commend their bravery in publicly rejecting white supremacy and white nationalism. When fellow attorneys use intimidation, harassment, threats of bar complaints or lawsuits against minority bar leaders who have shown bravery and leadership by vocalizing their concerns about the state of this country, we cannot remain silent. This is unacceptable.

Our organizations are deeply committed to ensuring that the legal profession maintain integrity and vigilance against the normalization of racism. The legal profession as a whole benefits when we intentionally include more voices, experiences, and backgrounds. As attorneys, it is our professional responsibility to combat injustices, advocate on behalf of marginalized groups, and disavow threats of violence and retaliation. As leaders, we have a duty to respond; leadership requires speaking up, even when it is mischaracterized as divisive. We will continue to stand up for our communities and for other groups that have been systematically oppressed. We unequivocally disavow white supremacy and reject any notion that this is ‘too political.’

We will not be silenced.”

For more information, including the Washington Minority Bar Associations signatories, please go to wsba.org.

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA operates under the delegated authority of the Washington Supreme Court to license the state’s 40,000 lawyers and other legal professionals. In furtherance of its obligation to protect and serve the public, the WSBA both regulates lawyers and other legal professionals and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA’s mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. For more information, visit www.wsba.org.

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