

MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## RACIST INCIDENT IN LEBANON, OREGON

First, we send our deepest sympathies to all the Black students, Black families, and allies that were impacted by the recent portrayal of blackface by seven students that occurred this past weekend. This act was inappropriate, insensitive, and racist.

Blackface is the practice of non-Black people darkening their skin in a deliberate attempt to make a mockery and to impersonate Black people. This old and disgusting tactic dates as far back as the 1820's when white entertainers in the United States held minstrel shows. During these shows, white people attempted to reappropriate the Black culture for their own social and economic gain. It is a repulsive tactic meant to diminish an entire race.

We believe that the behavior of the students at Lebanon High School does not represent the entire school nor the entire district, however, in the context of other less-visible dehumanizing incidents that have been relayed to us, the Lebanon School District must now demonstrate they will do what it takes to ensure that all students are safe and are given the same opportunities to thrive in school.

We are pleased to know the Principal of the High School is conducting a thorough investigation and is taking this matter seriously. We ask that the Principal of Lebanon High School and school counselors make arrangements to meet with the Black students of the high school to apologize for what has occurred and to allow the students to express their feelings. We see this as a critical first step in order to help initiate the healing process for the students.

Since early 2019, our local branch has facilitated a workshop and engaged in a series of conversations with the staff, teachers, and administrators of the Lebanon School District around racism, microaggressions, privilege, cultural competency, and diversity, **but we cannot and will not fight this battle alone.** We call on their leadership to actively employ a local approach to tackle the situation of racism in their schools. We look forward to continuing the conversation and collaboration with the district to ensure that all students have full advantage of educational opportunities *free of hate, racism, and all forms of cultural insensitivity.*

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