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**CONNECTIONS:** YOUR LINK TO THE  
State Library of Oregon



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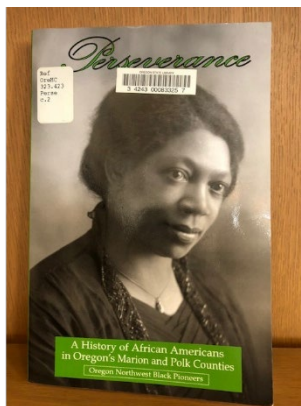
## Remembering Black History in Oregon with Items from Our Collection

*By Natalie Brant, Reference Coordinator, Government Information and Library Services*

The history of African Americans in Oregon is not one to be proud of. It's important to learn it as Oregonians and ensure this history remains transparent.

Archivists in Oregon have created a well-researched [online exhibit](#) highlighting the experiences of Black pioneers and the obstacles they faced when coming west. The exhibit also shows their strength and resilience while creating new lives in an unknown frontier.

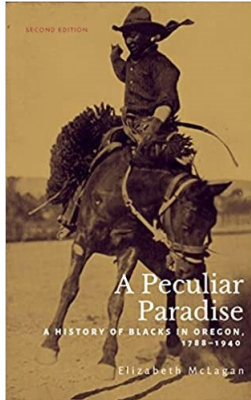
Below are just a few of the books in our current collection that document this history.



### [Perseverance: A History of African Americans in Oregon's Marion and Polk Counties](#)

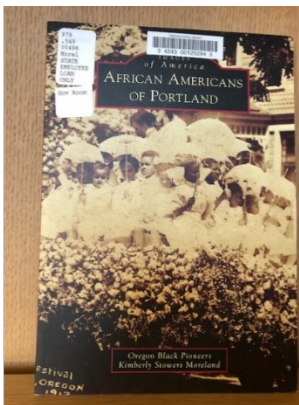
"From the beginning, even before the wagon trains, African Americans have played an essential part in building Oregon. In Marion and Polk counties, they overcame the obstacles of wilderness, prejudice, and isolation, helping to

create a vibrant community. They have often been left out of the paintings and statues, but *Perseverance* brings you many of their names and describes the ways they have made history, taking their rightful place among pioneers past and present in the Willamette Valley."



### *A Peculiar Paradise: A History of Blacks in Oregon, 1778-1940*

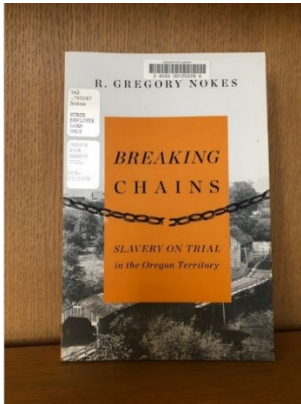
This work "remains the most comprehensive chronology of Black life in Oregon more than forty years after its original publication in 1980. Elizabeth McLagan's work reveals how in spite of those barriers, Black individuals and families made Oregon their home and helped create the state's modern Black communities."



### *African Americans of Portland: Oregon Black Pioneers*

"The prolific journey of African Americans in Portland is rooted in the courageous determination of [B]lack pioneers to begin anew in an unfamiliar and often hostile territory. Amazingly, a small population of African

Americans settled in Portland against a backdrop of exclusion laws that banned free [Black people] from settling in Oregon..."



**[Breaking Chains: Slavery on Trial in the Oregon Territory](#)**

"Tells the story of the only slavery case ever adjudicated in Oregon courts - Holmes v. Ford. Drawing on the court record of this landmark case, Nokes offers an intimate account of the relationship between a slave and his master from the slave's point of view. He also explores the experiences of other slaves in early Oregon, examining attitudes toward race and revealing contradictions in the state's history..."

Check these out at your local public library! For more resources on the history of Black pioneers in Oregon, check out the historical society [Oregon Black Pioneers](#).

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## **Objections to Diverse Books: Questions That Get to the “Why”**



*By Jen Maurer, School Library Consultant, Library Support and Development Services*

February is Black History Month, “an opportunity for people to engage with Black histories, go beyond discussions of racism and slavery, and highlight Black leaders and accomplishments” ([World Economic Forum](#)). “The intention has never been to dictate or limit the exploration of the Black experience, but to bring to the public’s attention important developments that merit emphasis” ([Assn. for the Study of African American Life and History](#)). Those same goals apply to other celebratory days and months meant to bring attention to the heritage, culture, and/or achievements of the diverse groups that make up our American society.

Similarly, library staff strive to design programs and to select books and other materials that represent or highlight the diversity in their communities and beyond. In children’s literature, there’s a concept by Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop known as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors which emphasizes that it is important for readers to see others and themselves in books ([Bishop’s 90-second video overview](#), Reading Rockets). “Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books”

([Bishop, Reading Rockets](#)). If you connect that with a “growing body of research [that] has found that people who read fiction tend to better understand and share in the feelings of others [empathy] — even those who are different from themselves” ([Schmidt, Discover](#)), the importance of libraries offering a diverse collection becomes even more apparent.

Unfortunately, a rise in diverse offerings has correlated with a rise in individuals and groups who object to those new additions being available in libraries ([American Library Association \[ALA\] press release](#)). Book challenges are not new, but in the last several years, books by or about underrepresented or marginalized groups have been at the top of [ALA’s list of most challenged books](#). What drives those objections and challenges? Complainants are usually required to list their reasons on a “reconsideration of materials” form, and a common reason given is that the material is inappropriate for or may cause harm to a certain age group. However, there is usually no evidence to support such claims.

What truly sparks the complainant’s objection, and could it stem from fear or bias? Why does the complainant feel that the book should be pulled from or restricted within the library instead of simply not being read by themselves or their children? Did the complainant consider the passages they find objectionable in context of the value of the book as a whole? And importantly, who *needs* this book? Does the “objectionable content” outweigh the book’s benefit as a window, mirror, or sliding glass door? Reconsideration forms are not that direct, but those are questions worth pondering by complainants and all.

After self-reflection, some people may still object to passages within books, but perhaps fewer would feel the need to demand that those books be removed from the library. And, they may better understand that the library is there to serve everyone in the community.



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## Weston Public Library and Harney County Library Join Northwest Digital Heritage



*Weston, Oregon, Main Street from 1891. Photo from Weston Heritage.*

*By Ross Fuqua, Data & Digital Projects Consultant, Library Support and Development Services*

This February will see two new Oregon collections added to [Northwest Digital Heritage](#): Weston Public Library and Harney County Library.

Weston Public Library had built a digital collection by hand 15 years ago in honor of Margaret Sutherland, former Weston City Librarian and avid local historian. Now these records will be available through the Digital Public Library

of America (DPLA) and via Northwest Digital Heritage as [Weston Heritage](#), making the collection more easily discoverable.

Weston Heritage consists of photos and documents surrounding the early settlement of the city itself. Visitors to the site will see the evolution of Weston's main street (above) from the 1860s through the 1950s as well as a wide range of historic images that includes decades worth of people, buildings, schools, agriculture, and more.



*"Burns Paiute Social Group," 1940s. Photo from Harney County Library.*

In addition to Weston Heritage, visitors to Northwest Digital Heritage will soon be able to search the Digital Historic Archives Collections of Harney County Library. Harney County has a [diverse collection of records](#) that includes images and documents from the Basque community as well as the Burns Paiute Tribe. Adding these archives to Northwest Digital Heritage will improve overall accessibility, allowing more people a chance to discover, access, and view the records.



Northwest Digital Heritage seeks to enhance access to collections at Oregon's smaller libraries and museums through digitization, collection hosting and migration services, metadata harvesting, and building local skills and capacity. In [a previous issue](#), we highlighted [Athena Heritage](#), the first of Oregon's newly digitized collections to come online via Northwest Digital Heritage.

Northwest Digital Heritage is a partnership between the State Library of Oregon, Oregon Heritage, and the Washington State Library. To date, Northwest Digital Heritage has added over 200,000 unique items related to Northwest history and culture, and has recently worked with the Orbis Cascade Alliance, Oregon Digital, and University of Washington Libraries to create a distinctly Northwest portal of over a half million unique items available at [nwdh.dp.la](http://nwdh.dp.la).

For questions and inquiries about Northwest Digital Heritage, please contact Ross Fuqua, Data & Digital Projects Consultant, State Library of Oregon, at [ross.fuqua@slo.oregon.gov](mailto:ross.fuqua@slo.oregon.gov).

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## Get the Most Out of Passive Marketing Materials

*By Joel Henderson, Volunteer & Donor Relations Coordinator, Operations Division*

Everyone knows the Talking Book and Braille Library delivers its users a personalized connection to the world, right? Wrong! There are plenty of people who would benefit from the library who don't even know the library exists. But when the library's service area is the whole state of Oregon and there are only six staff to do everything, direct outreach isn't really an option. That's why the

library relies heavily on passive outreach materials. Interested in how this works? Read on for some of our tips and tricks to make passive outreach as effective and efficient as possible.

Passive outreach materials are things like brochures, posters, promotional materials, postcards, newsletters, etc. They are basically any kind of static document or item that informs people about your organization, program, or service. The key to an effective passive outreach material is not just visual interest, though that certainly helps. The keys are an understanding of your audience, what they need, what questions or problems keep them up at night, and a clearly articulated message that positions your organization as the best solution to their needs.



Say, for example, the Talking Book and Braille Library is designing a sticker to give away at events. The average user demographic for the library is retirement age and up. After many discussions, the library narrows down the main concerns of potential users: being on a fixed income, hesitation to learn new and/or complicated things, and having strong reading preferences. Stickers are small items, so the language will need to be succinct. From these considerations, a sticker with a retro color block design that features the words “FREE, EASY, CUSTOMIZED” in brand-coordinated colors is created. The same process can be applied to any passive outreach material. The best materials are ones where language and design work together to express a direct and targeted message.

It is also important to remember that passive outreach materials exist on their own. No one is there with them to explain anything, and they may live somewhere for a while. Therefore, it is best to avoid including language or graphics that may be confusing or become dated. People may pass on an organization if there is outdated equipment on a poster or may be misinformed

if a brochure mentions an ultra-specific process that was changed years ago. The Talking Book and Braille Library intentionally decided not to put pictures of the players users receive in the library's latest brochure, and consistently uses the generic word "audio" instead of "cassette" or "cartridge" when describing players and books to avoid confusion about what media types are currently available.

People are inundated with so much noise these days. The temptation is to be loud to get noticed, but loudness puts people off even more. Organizations should instead be targeted, unique, and intentional so people hear them amidst the noise. Here are some other tips and tricks to help refine your passive outreach materials:

- Focus on one to three core messages per material. If an organization tries to cram everything about itself into every passive outreach material, potential users will just ignore it.
- Avoid acronyms, jargon, and insider language. Make sure anyone reading your passive outreach materials can understand the message.
- Make it easy for people to encounter the core message(s) first. Then if they're hooked, keep more information no further than one flip, one click, one QR code, or one page away. Don't get into the habit of thinking people will jump through hoops to follow your information trail.

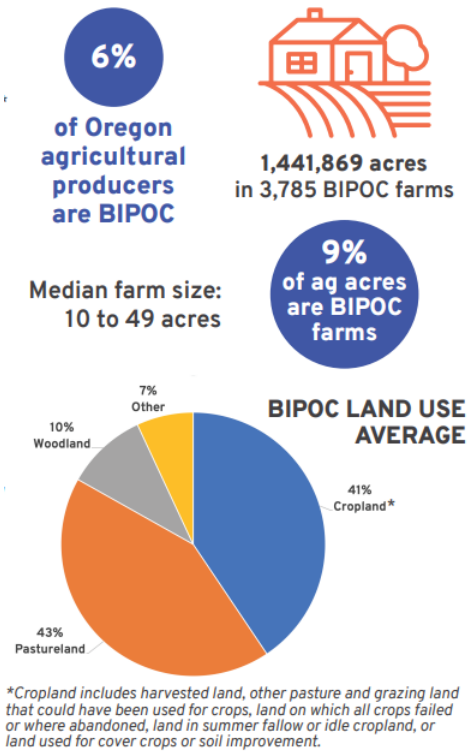
If you'd like some Talking Book and Braille Library passive outreach materials for your very own, feel free to email the library at

[talkingbooks.info@slo.oregon.gov](mailto:talkingbooks.info@slo.oregon.gov).

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# OrDoc of the Month: BIPOC Agriculture Producers

By Jey Wann, Oregon Documents Coordinator, Government Information and Library Services



In 2020, the Oregon Department of Agriculture published [this infographic](#), which shows the underrepresentation of our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) population in this important part of Oregon's economy.

As we celebrate Black History Month, it's important to note occupations in which Black workers are represented at low levels. For information about how Oregon's racist history has affected Black farmers in particular and how some Black farmers are working to reverse this trend, check out this 2021

[episode](#) of OPB's Oregon Field Guide.

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## Talking Book and Braille Library TRIVIA TIME!

We're back with another Talking Book and Braille Library Trivia Time! But before we get to this month's question, here is last month's answer:

*Which position on the KLAS Users Group was Crystal Grimes recently appointed to? **President***

Thank you to everyone who submitted their answers, and feel free to keep participating each month. [Here is this month's question:](#)

*Q: Castel Sant'Elmo, a popular tourist attraction in Italy, is home to an art installation by Paolo Puddu titled...?*

- Touching Masterpieces
- Journey by Dots
- The Braille Rail
- Follow the Shape



**Hint:** you can find the answer in a [previous issue of \*Connections\*](#).

Click the button above to submit your answer to the trivia question. If you provide your name and contact information and answer the question correctly, **you may win a fun prize!**

Check back next month to see the answer, and we'll be back with more trivia in future *Connections* issues.

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## Mission



The State Library of Oregon cultivates, preserves, and delivers library and information services to foster lifelong learning and community engagement.

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