

# **If Everything is to Stay the Same, Everything has to Change:**

Building Local Government Capacity to  
Resist White Nationalism in Eugene, Oregon

## **An abbreviated practitioner guide**

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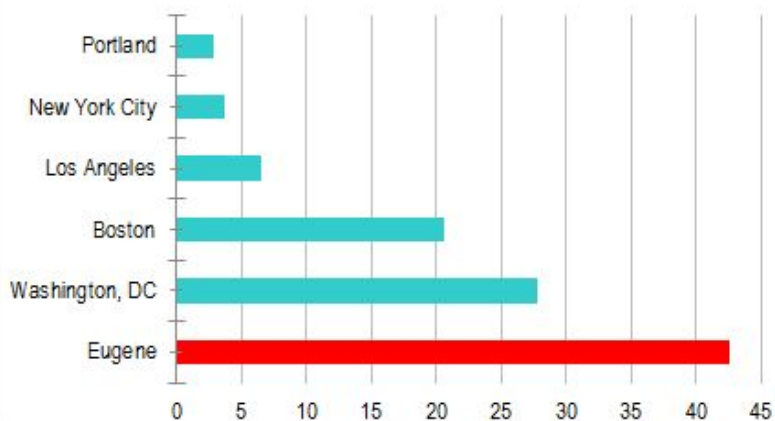
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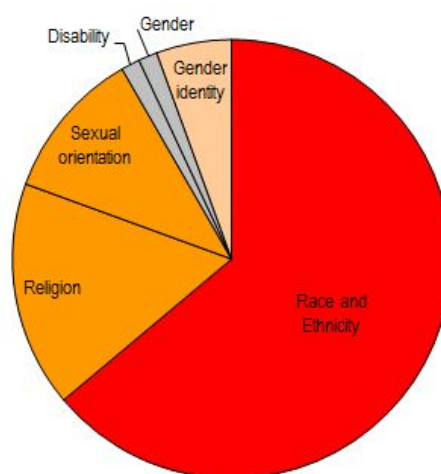
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Despite its reputation as a liberal college town, numerous political extremist individuals and entities call Eugene, Oregon home. This guide seeks to offer solutions to Eugene's current **problems with reported hate crimes** and explore several strategies to reduce capacity of organized extremists within the City. Below, we have illustrated how we see the problem most visibly captured. According to the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), a compilation of official data on crime in the United States published by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Eugene is victimized by 42 hate crimes per 100,000 residents, per year, in a state with the *highest* rates of self-reported hate crimes in the United States. These metrics indicate not only the **presence of organized white nationalists** targeting a small minority community, but **deeper structural issues** necessitating an institution-wide response strategy. Below, we have illustrated the most crucial elements of the problem we chose to study, as well as the ideological underpinnings we examined. Specifically, though the ideologies overlap significantly, we chose to hone in on **white nationalism as a core animating ideology in Eugene**.

Hate Crimes per 100,000 residents  
in selected cities



Motivating Factor in Hate Crime in Eugene



### The Eugene Story

Since 2016, Eugene has been home to **more hate crimes per capita** than any city in America. Hate crimes are **on the rise** in Eugene (and Lane County) and, overwhelmingly, **race and ethnicity** appear to be dominant motivation for these crimes. This is especially troubling, given the ethnic composition of Lane County.

Source: FBI UCR Crime Reporting Statistics.

#### White Nationalism-

A movement that interprets white heritage as a unique race and that this race should advocate for separate, defensible space and a defense of white American culture.

#### White Supremacy-

An ideology that seeks to create institutions within government that privilege and reward whites, due to inherit genetic and cultural superiority.

#### Alt Right-

A newer ideology developed on the Internet in far right hatred that blends modern elements of white nationalism with more misogynist beliefs in gender roles in society.

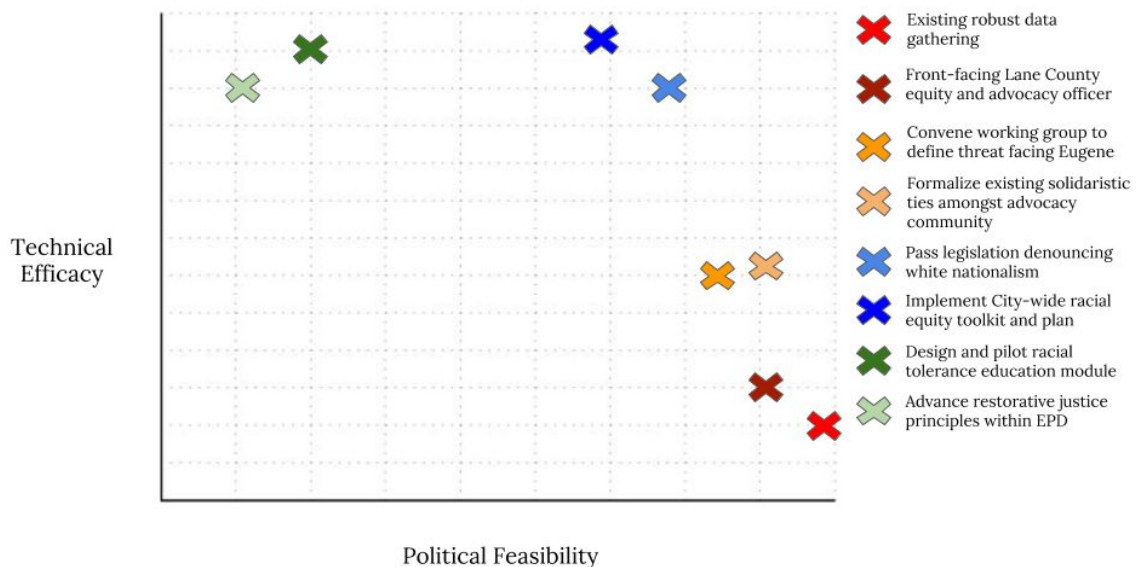
To build capacity against white nationalism at the city level, we **broke down the phenomenon into sub-problem “deconstructions”** and proposed several rapid-cycle interventions meant for quick adaptation, as well as long-term goals and outcomes of our interventions. These problem deconstructions are:

1. The perceived **failure of government** to fully embrace racial, gender, ethnic, and spatial equity as a central mission to healthy democracy.
2. A pronounced **urban-rural divide** that too often segregates and inflames political and ethnic differences.
3. **Historical amnesia and erasure** in Eugene by current residents not in keeping with Eugene’s past and to the detriment of forging a truth-driven historical narrative.
4. An **erosion of white identity** due to a collapsing timber industry and an educational system that validates myths of colonialism, while failing to equip young people with tools to have difficult conversations about race and tolerance.

Our methodology also allowed us to craft broad and thematic solutions for problems, develop an analytic “solutions implementation framework,” and hone specific recommendations according to both their **technical efficacy** and **political feasibility**. Thematic solutions are paired with specific problem deconstructions. As we recommend implementing these solutions, we do so in a manner that looks to current and informal practices in Eugene, and anti-racist actions in cities globally:

- A. **Existing practices**, or things that are working, now, in Eugene and beyond;
- B. **Latent practice**, or asks, solutions, and shortcuts performed in Eugene and by others, but currently lacking a sense of formalization or rigor;
- C. **Positive deviance**, or informal policies that have the potential to “solve the problem” of white nationalism without being the norm city- or nation-wide; and
- D. **External best practices**, or instances of success in *other* geographies as potential “sites of emulation” can help make more concrete ideas of “what success looks like.”

The graphic below illustrates a sample “policy design space” in Eugene and offers just one example of a programmatic vision to achieving racial equity within the City and County. The axes present the authorizing environment on dimensions of possibility and efficacy. Currently, the City finds itself in the lower-right region, with long-term external best practices in the top left.







We then began to craft specific recommendations, and sequence them. We view White Nationalism as a social disease, an ongoing public health problem, and as such we present Western States Center and the City of Eugene with an **implementation framework centered on a public health response**:

- **“Triage” and Rapid response** recommendations focus on immediate community threats;
- **Intensive care** recommendations consider healing processes, dialogues, and task forces across geography and identity groups to bridge the gap between immediate crisis and longer-term solutions; and
- **Inoculation** recommendations seek to change institutions, norms, practices, and systems, getting at the deeper causes of White Supremacy throughout Eugene’s history, and enduring through to the present day.

Undergirding this framework is the idea of **primary care** a renewed commitment to the work of racial equity through constant assessment, analysis, and conversation between institutions.

## Our Solutions Framework: A Public Health Response

<b>Triage</b> Immediate Response 	<b>Intensive Care</b> Aftermath of an Incident 	<b>Inoculation</b> Institutional Rearrangement 
<b>What</b> should Eugene do if they learn of an immediate threat to the community, such as a large White Nationalist gathering?	<b>What</b> healing processes can the City design - task forces, dialogues across race, ethnicity, class, and geography - to overcome immediate and urgent tensions?	<b>How</b> does Eugene iteratively address the root-cause structural dimensions of White Nationalism: history, member, political economy, race?
 <b>Preventative Care</b> -Sustained, Ongoing Practices and Engagements <b>How</b> can Eugene sustain momentum beyond any “crisis” and regularly affirm good work and progress?		



We present Western States Center and the City of Eugene with a menu of options, some of which we further develop and two of which we fully build out. With a problem of the scope and size of contemporary White Nationalism, no one solution will serve as a “silver bullet.” However, a variety of interventions that are asset-based, context-specific, and collaboratively honed have the potential to change the narrative around White Nationalism in Eugene. Our ultimate vision guiding these recommendations is as follows: **Eugene can serve as a regional and nationwide leader in anti-racist reporting, activism, and broad-based democratic engagement.**







**Demonstrating immediate impact** is a critical task for any public agency. Given that the recommendations of this guide range from the **immediately implementable** in the current political environment, to the **far-ranging and structural**, as well as **correspond to distinct temporal ‘buckets’** of city response, demonstrating efficacy will be challenging. To this end, we illustrate several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) we feel are most **imminently likely to change**, and can show a rapid **‘proof of concept’** to interested citizens and reticent city officials.

Many of these initial KPIs hinge on **building inclusive representation and participation** within Eugene around conversations of equity and democracy, as well as ensuring the county and City **grasp the true extent of the issue** of white nationalism in the area. While our recommendations are associated with more quantitative KPIs, other policies in the long-term correspond to more cultural and qualitative change.

Above all, KPIs represent a conceptual tool that Eugene, Lane County, and other stakeholders can and use to track progress toward building capacity against white nationalism. They should be decided by and with local stakeholders, include indicators that are concrete, tangible, and expository of the city’s agenda, and updated as needed. **We provide in the figure above a suite of sample indicators.**

We ultimately develop a sequence of six recommendations bearing in mind both our Triage Solutions Framework and Implementation Constraints. We propose a six-step sequence of recommendations for racial equity and anti-hate in Eugene and Lane County. The recommendations are:

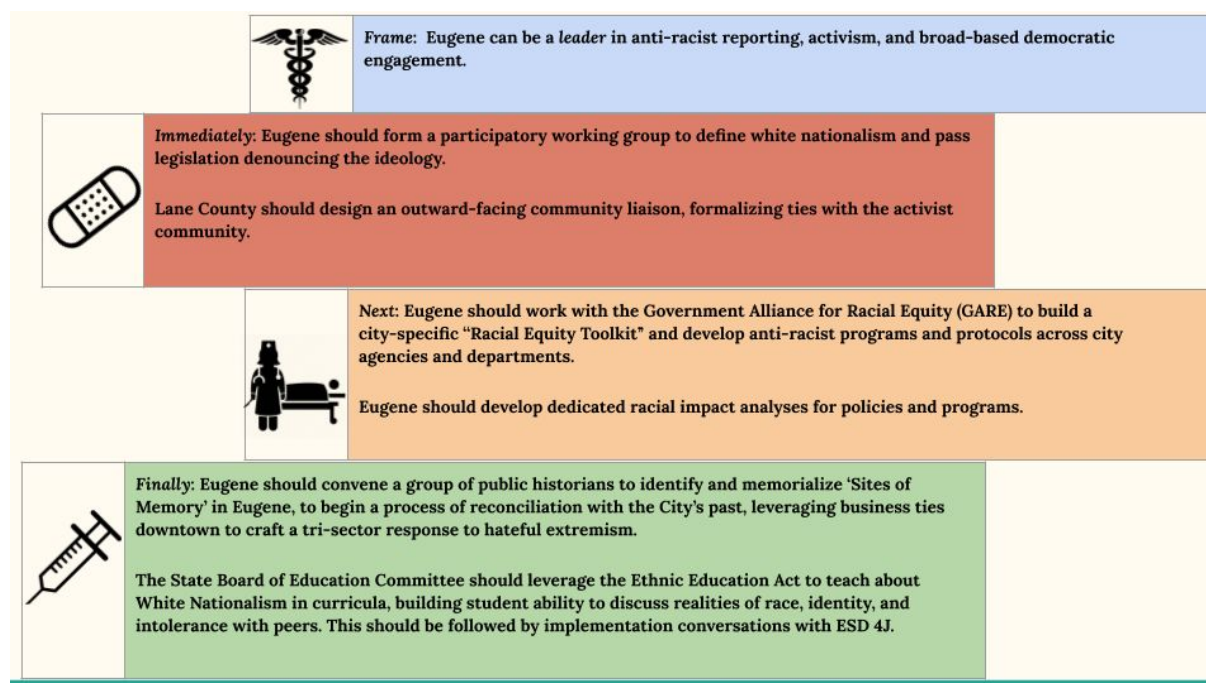
1. Convene a participatory working group to **define White Nationalism and codify the chosen approach through an ordinance or resolution;**

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	
Community Engagement 	Number of meetings the City has with a public agenda that relates to racial equity
Hate Crime Tracking 	Number of reported incidents of racial bias and intimidation
Representative Engagement 	Demographic composition of Eugene audience of public events and meetings
Improved City Relationships 	Number of meetings held between advocacy organizations and City government
Employee Awareness 	Surveyed attitudes of government employees of problem scope
Formalized Policies 	Number of departments with formalized policies regarding equity work



2. Design an **outward-facing Lane County position** committed to Equity and Access, and to support ongoing engagement with and among activist and community groups;
3. Develop a **racial equity action plan** for all levels of city government, including through a central leadership “**Racial Equity Team,**” and with Racial Equity representatives hired across agencies and departments in the city;
4. Couple the racial equity action plan with **concrete racial equity “tools,” developed by GARE, community groups, and the City of Eugene together;**
5. Convene a group of public historians to identify, memorialize, and celebrate “**Sites of Memory**” in Eugene’s public spaces;
6. Work with State Boards of Education and Legislators developing the **Ethnic Education Act** to develop statewide curricular resources about how Oregon teaches its history, and ensure White Nationalism in historic and contemporary forms is explicitly discussed

Below we broadly categorize these recommendations into our aforementioned implementation framework. In thinking through a programmatic vision for Eugene and similar cities, this graphic represents the building commitment to equity and inclusivity a locality can make.



We acknowledge that racial ideologies and histories are deeply rooted in Eugene and elsewhere, and that these ideologies have been complexly interwoven with constructs of race and class over time. We are far from the first to propose anti-racist work, and will surely be followed by countless others. We understand that the complex work of democratic inclusion at the city-level necessitates tradeoffs and is not easy, financially and politically. Our recommendations, *at their absolute best*, will only continue to bolster a much longer term process of recognition, reconciliation, and, hopefully, healing across lines of difference in and around Eugene. We recommend, boldly and courageously, that Eugene, Lane County, and Western States Center bring people together with an aim to do so.