

Dear Editor,

If The Oregonian values its reputation as a credible, unbiased news source, then it must stop using the term “illegal” immigrants. People are not “illegals” and the term is not legally accurate. “Illegal alien” and “illegal immigrant” are incoherent terms from the standpoint of immigration law. Immigration judges and ICE attorneys don’t use the terms because they are meaningless in the context of immigration proceedings. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA), the highest administrative body for interpreting and applying immigration laws, does not use the terms either.

Surely, the papers editors do not intend to dehumanize and criminalize whole communities of people. But that is what you are contributing to. The Oregonians use of these words supports the acceptance of stereotypes that often lead to ineffective laws that mostly punish people of color —laws that, as a nation, we come to regret later.

With every reference to humans as “illegal” the Oregonian puts its journalistic integrity in jeopardy. These are clearly political and biased terms that have no place in legitimate reporting. The Oregonian would be doing itself and this community a service by discontinuing this practice.

Sincerely,

Concerned Reader

Dear Editor,

If Oregon Public Broadcasting embraces the values of fairness and human dignity, then it must stop using the term “illegal immigrants” and its derivatives. Ethical journalism includes respect for due process. It’s accepted practice to use the words “accused,” “purported,” or “alleged” before a case is resolved legally. Though journalists are careful to show respect for due process and a persons constitutional rights, this term does not.

Using these words plays into the hands of hate groups who seek to divide our communities into “us” versus “them.” And we know where that leads us-- the latest federal data on hate crimes reports that 35 percent of the cases involved bias based on ethnicity or national origin. Using language that paints whole groups of people as criminals feeds into a national frenzy

that scapegoats innocent people for the faults of failed public policy.

There is clearly a small segment of our community that insists on using these words in order to further their agenda. OPB can choose to rise above this. Spreading the news should not include spreading hate and fear.

Sincerely,

Concerned Listener

Document your efforts and tell Color Lines about them at droptheiwor@colorlines.com and Immigrant Law Group at ilgrp.com.