

Suzanne Bonamici's role in the conspiracy of silence to protect David Wu

*A three-part series for the special election to replace disgraced Democratic Congressman David Wu
by Dan Lucas (for OregonCatalyst.com)*

Part 1 - The troubled history of David Wu

Wednesday, January 4, 2012

David Wu was elected to congress with very little prior experience, and despite few accomplishments, an unremarkable career in Congress and a very troubled tenure, he was elected by the voters of Oregon's first congressional district seven times.

Here is a chronology of David Wu's troubled history:

Born - David Wu was born in Taiwan on April 8, 1955.

Moved to the U.S. - David Wu's family moved to the U.S. in 1961 when he was about age 6.

Attempted rape in college (Summer 1976) - The Oregonian reported in 2004 allegations of David Wu's 1976 attempted rape of his ex-girlfriend while at college in California. A part of their report noted "An assistant dean who counseled the woman for two months said that the woman called it attempted rape and that Wu used a pillow to muffle her screams." "She was screaming. He tried to rape her," Kaplan [the assistant dean who counseled the victim] said, recalling the woman's account." Wu was questioned by campus police, who found that he had scratches on his face and neck, and his T-shirt was stretched out of shape. He was also fingerprinted and photographed. Wu's ex-girlfriend declined criminal prosecution - she wanted the matter handled by the university.

Stanford - Wu graduated with bachelor's degree from Stanford in 1977.

Law degree - Wu graduated with a law degree from Yale in 1982.

Off to a bad start in Oregon (1984) - two years after getting his law degree from Yale, Wu came to Oregon claiming to be the Oregon campaign manager for Gary Hart's presidential bid. The chair of Hart's Oregon steering committee, one of Oregon's biggest Democratic donors, believes Wu "came into the state under false pretenses and tried to hoodwink us." Hart's headquarters later named a young woman as the state's campaign manager.

Portland Planning Commission - Wu was appointed to the Portland Planning Commission in 1986 and served for three years.

Campaign manager in first campaign resigns - Wu's campaign manager resigned unexpectedly in August 1998, in part due to hearing about Wu's attempted rape in college.

Elected to Congress - in November 1998 Wu was first elected to Congress at age 43 - succeeding Democrat Elizabeth Furse. He narrowly defeated Republican Molly Bordonaro 50% to 47% - winning by a little over 7,100 votes.

Catatonic before crucial Medicare vote - in November 2003 the Washington Post reported that "Meantime, a drama was unfolding on the Democratic side. Rep. David Wu, a third-termer and Portland, Ore., lawyer, was refusing to vote. A changing circle of Democrats surrounded the 48-year-old Taiwan-born Stanford and Yale Law School graduate, who remained stubbornly silent with a gaze one legislator described as "almost catatonic." Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-Calif.), a friend, put her hands to his face, but he did not respond."

Attempted rape in college resurfaces (October 2004) - Wu's attempted rape from college resurfaced during his re-election campaign against serious contender Republican Goli Ameri. The Oregonian ran the story 3 weeks before the election (3 days before ballots arrived in mailboxes), but Wu easily won re-election 58% to 38%. Prior to publication of the story, Wu hired a lawyer to intimidate the Oregonian and the dying 83-year-old former assistant dean - to threaten them with lawsuits, but both attempts failed. The morning the story ran, Wu apologized for his "inexcusable

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behavior" and went on to get re-elected. Rumors of the attempted rape had been known by Oregon Democratic insiders since 1998.

Klingon speech – on the House floor in Congress in 2007, Wu gave a brief anti-war speech where he said "There are faux Klingons in the White House."

Problems with medications – David Wu was hospitalized in 2008 for an allergic reaction to the sedative Ambien and Valium.

Separation – David Wu filed for separation from his wife in 2009.

2010-2011 Complete Meltdown and Resignation

Suspicious car wreck – Wu totaled a rental car on February 19, 2010, after smashing into a parked Ford Focus near Portland. The Focus' owner told the 911 operator, "I'm assuming that there's some kind of disability, if he was driving on the wrong side of the street... He says he fell asleep. I don't believe him."

Workers' comp fine – the state began its workers' compensation investigation on October 11, 2010. The state found that Wu had operated his campaign without the required workers' compensation coverage for over 3 years – from April 2007 to October 2010. Wu's campaign employed eight to 10 people during campaign season. The state fined Wu's campaign \$500, and noted that for an employer to not have coverage was fairly unusual – adding that "a three-year lapse is quite rare."

Staff demands he get psychiatric help – In October 2010, Wu's staffers demanded he enter a hospital for psychiatric treatment and they shut down his campaign when he refused.

Hits on a 23-year old – In October 2010, 55-year-old Wu attended a football watching party where a 23-year-old woman says he invited her to give him a neck massage and flirtatiously suggested that she join him on a trip to Buenos Aires. This is consistent with a report in the Oregonian: "Capitol Hill regulars often spotted Wu with young women at popular bars a few blocks from his Washington, D.C., rowhouse."

Illegal drug transfer – Wu illegally accepted prescription Oxycodone (an opioid like heroin) from a campaign donor on October 26, 2010.

Bitter & angry speech to Dems – On October 27, 2010, David Wu delivered a rambling, angry speech at a meeting of the Washington County Democrats, causing a Democratic Precinct Committee Person to complain formally, telling Wu "... You sounded bitter and angry, blaming in loud, fearsome tones your possible defeat on your opponent and the media."

Violated airport security rules to campaign – Using his position as a Congressman, Wu pressured TSA agents at PDX airport to "bend the rules" for him and grant him access to a secured gate so he could meet his children, in violation of security rules. But once there, Wu instead campaigned with passengers, telling them to 'Vote for me.' One of the passengers filed a complaint with airport police, and the TSA duty manager who assisted Wu was later "retrained". (October 29, 2010)

Infamous tiger suit photo – an email from Wu's Congressional BlackBerry was sent at 1:00 AM on October 30, 2010, to a female staffer with no words, just the now-infamous photo of David Wu in the tiger suit.

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(photo from Willamette Week)

Four additional disturbing emails were sent to his staff from his Congressional Blackberry between 1-2 AM, claiming to be from his children. One contained a photo of Wu in the tiger suit, face down on the bed passed out or asleep. His 13-year-old son is in the picture with his hands on Wu's shoulders, possibly trying to wake his dad. One of the emails made excuses for his drinking, which Wu said he had stopped.



(photo from Willamette Week)

Re-elected – Wu was re-elected to his 7th term in Congress on November 2, 2010.

Sexual assault of a recent high school graduate – the 18-year-old daughter of a longtime friend and campaign donor accused the 55-year-old Congressman Wu of sexual assault in California over the Thanksgiving weekend 2010 – the accusations didn't surface for several months.

Boorish behavior – A 30-year-old woman employed by a public agency in Oregon said she attended a work event in December 2010, where Wu steered the conversation to his "loveless marriage" and showed her he'd entered her office number in his Blackberry under "hot".

Exodus of staff – In January 2011 the Oregonian reported that Wu had lost at least six staffers and the leadership of his veteran campaign team "amid complaints about his public behavior." The departures included his longtime chief of staff and his communications director. The communications director left not having another job lined up, and the chief of staff took a position with far less seniority. Losses to his veteran campaign team of more than 10 years included his chief fundraiser and his chief pollster – who told the Oregonian she wouldn't work for him again. The departures were

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all the more noteworthy because following the 2010 Republican wave that retook control of the House, jobs with Democratic representatives and their campaigns were scarce.

Thanksgiving sexual assault accusation reaches Wu's office – a young woman left a distraught message on the phone line of Wu's office in Portland in May 2011. She accused Wu of aggressive and unwanted sexual behavior.

Thanksgiving sexual assault goes public – The story of the sexual assault accusation by the 18-year-old recent high school graduate hit the media in July 2011. The 18-year-old believed there was not enough evidence to press charges. She felt as there were no witnesses, it would be her word against a seven-term member of the U.S. Congress. The 55-year-old Wu admitted a "sexual encounter" to his senior aides but insisted it was "consensual".

Call for ethics investigation – In July 2011 House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi asked the ethics committee to investigate allegations against Wu.

Wu announces he will resign – Rep. David Wu announced on July 26, 2011, that he would resign after the debt-ceiling vote.

Rep. David Wu resigned on August 3, 2011.

In addition to Wu's behavior, there are some very troubling aspects of David Wu's tenure in Congress. One is how voters were willing to overlook the revelations in 2004 of Wu's attempted rape of his ex-girlfriend in college. In fact, Wu actually went up in the polls after the revelations. Another troubling aspect is, as the Oregonian reported in 2004, "Versions of the [Stanford 1976 attempted rape] story have circulated behind the scenes among Democratic insiders since Wu's first run for Congress in 1998". Democratic insiders have known of Wu's troubles since 1998.

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Part 2 - Oregon Democrats' conspiracy of silence culture that protected Wu

Monday, January 9, 2012

Oregon has a history of powerful politicians who are sexual predators, and a culture that enables and protects these sexual predators with a conspiracy of silence. A culture articulated poignantly by Steve Duin about the silence for David Wu, and by Nigel Jaquiss, Fred Leonhardt and Margie Boulé on the repugnant conspiracy of silence around Neil Goldschmidt's serial molesting of a 13-year-old girl.

When David Wu resigned from Congress, the Oregonian's Steve Duin expressed his frustration with yet another teen victim of sexually aggressive Oregon Democrats; his frustration with Wu and fellow Democrats Sam Adams and Neil Goldschmidt. Duin expressed his concern that the next teenage victim would face the same surreal journey through "shame, outrage and the smug, selective morality of the state's Democratic Party."

"While mayor of Portland, Goldschmidt raped his 14-year-old baby sitter, beginning an extended and twisted relationship that destroyed her life. In 2005, current Mayor Sam Adams had — at the very least — sex with an 18-year-old legislative intern, then lied repeatedly when rumors of the relationship threatened his political career.

Wu? Oregon's seven-term space cadet sexually attacked an ex-girlfriend at Stanford in 1976, even using a pillow to muffle her screams, then resigned last week when the 18-year-old daughter of a political supporter accused him of a similarly coercive sexual encounter in 2010."

Duin wrote that the thing that connected these travesties, these sexual victimizations of teens, was "the willingness of Democratic Party stalwarts to minimize or ignore them in order to maintain their near-monopoly on political power in this state."

Oregon Democrats were often aided in maintaining their conspiracy of silence culture by the Oregon media, and especially by the state's largest newspaper, the Oregonian — where someone with a conscience like Steve Duin was the exception.

Limited bandwidth for politics

The average Oregon voter is busy with life. They have a job, family members to care for, school, groceries, car repairs, homes and yards to maintain, illness and injury, kid's soccer practice, pets to care for, etc.

Even the small amount of bandwidth voters are able to dedicate to politics is stretched thin by the sheer number of elected officials that the average Oregonian has to track: for school board, water board, fire district, the city councilors, mayor, county commissioners, county auditor, judges, Metro councilors, state representatives and state senators, state treasurer, secretary of state, state attorney general, state labor commissioner, governor, U.S. representatives (like David Wu), U.S. senators, and the U.S. President.

Out of necessity, most voters rely on the media to vet and monitor elected officials, and they rely on their political party to self-police its members.

Unfortunately for voters, Oregon has a decades old history of failing. A tragic history of the fourth estate failing in its role to vet and monitor elected officials, and an equally tragic history of political parties failing to self-police their members.

Conspiracy of silence for Neil Goldschmidt

Eugene-born Neil Goldschmidt became an Oregon Democratic wunderkind. He was elected to the Portland City Council when he was 30, Portland Mayor when he was 32, appointed U.S. Transportation

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Secretary by President Carter when he was 39, and he was elected Governor of Oregon at the age of 46. Even after leaving public office, he continued to be a powerful force in Oregon politics as a lobbyist, dealmaker and kingmaker.

But Goldschmidt had a dark secret. While he was Portland Mayor, 34-year-old Goldschmidt began molesting a 13-year-old neighbor girl, the daughter of someone who worked for Goldschmidt. The girl sometimes babysat for Goldschmidt. The molesting went on for years. As she got older, the once bright and intelligent girl turned to drugs and alcohol and led a very short, troubled life. She died last year at the age of 49.

Before she died, she lamented to Margie Boulé that Goldschmidt and his enablers minimized the abuse and tried to blame the victim, and they tried to make her sound like a throwaway person. But she was not – she was a talented photographer, with an extensive vocabulary, and she was generous to her friends and loved animals. She was a real person who was broken by a monster and his vast network of self-serving enablers.

And that vast network included some of the most powerful people in Oregon. As Nigel Jaquiss reported in December 2004, "WW [Willamette Week] has established that dozens of Oregonians—many of whom today work at the highest levels of business, government and the media—knew something about Goldschmidt's secret."

Oregonian Silence & Enabling

The Oregonian botched several opportunities over the years to break the story of Goldschmidt's abuse. Going back at least to 1984, there was talk in the Oregonian's newsroom of "Neil Goldschmidt, a girl..a rape." Then in 1986 the Oregonian's nationally syndicated cartoonist got solid information from a credible source about Neil Goldschmidt's dark secret. The information was relayed to an editor at the Oregonian, but the story didn't come out for another 18 years, when it broke in Willamette Week in May 2004 – and that was five months after the Oregonian had AGAIN failed to follow-up on a November 2003 extensive revelation to them about Goldschmidt's molesting. Like the child of alcoholic parents, the alternative weekly, Willamette Week, had to become the adult when the story required taking on entrenched power Neil Goldschmidt. Breaking Oregon Democrats' conspiracy of silence culture and taking on entrenched power has definitely not been the Oregonian's forte – and it's something they struggle with to this day.

It's not clear why those who knew at the Oregonian dropped the ball from 1986-2004. Did they lack the journalistic instincts to know a true story when it hit them? Did they lack the journalistic skills to pursue a story of this nature? Did they lack the courage to pursue a story of this nature? In the end, the exact reasons or excuses don't matter. They were the perfect dance partners for the conspiracy of silence.

Things Got Worse For The Oregonian

When they realized they'd again been caught flat-footed, the Oregonian did what they always did; enabled Neil and threw the victim under the bus. They ran Goldschmidt's version of things in an attempt to hide the fact that they'd been majorly scooped by Willamette Week. They called the molesting of a 13-year-old "an affair" and a "relationship". It was sleazy, enabling and a complete betrayal of journalistic integrity that the Oregonian ran Neil Goldschmidt's "confession". "They essentially wrote his [Goldschmidt's] press release as their story," said Frederick Taylor, a former executive editor of the Wall Street Journal. The Oregonian should have told Neil to do his "confession" to Willamette Week, where all the work had actually been done, and where they weren't sugar-coating his abuse.

A few days later, the Oregonian went on to run two editorials supporting Goldschmidt and criticizing those exposing his dark secret. One of those editorials blew up in the Oregonian's face when it was revealed that the author was someone who had received political favors from Goldschmidt for being one of the "handlers" in trying to keep the victim quiet. Oops. The other editorial is a testament to the

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Oregonian's disgraceful enabling of Goldschmidt: Oregonian Associate Editor David Reinhard wrote: "[T]he news of Goldschmidt's relationship with a high-school girl wasn't what was so sickening... What's truly sickening is that some sewer dwellers would dredge up and publish this 'news.'" So to David Reinhard, the serial molesting of a 13-year-old girl by Democratic wunderkind Goldschmidt wasn't sickening, but REPORTING about it WAS sickening?

Democrats' Silence & Enabling of Goldschmidt

There was a despicable, decades-long culture of silence around Goldschmidt's dark secret by Oregon Democrats. It's what the Oregonian's Steve Duin was referring to when he wrote about "the willingness of Democratic Party stalwarts to minimize or ignore them [these sexual victimizations of teens] in order to maintain their near-monopoly on political power in this state." The list of people who reportedly knew prior to the May 2004 Willamette Week exposé reads like a Who's Who of Oregon Democrats, including other former Oregon governors and a U.S. Representative.

Beyond maintaining political power, Goldschmidt's former speech writer, Fred Leonhardt, expanded on why people were willing to be part of that culture: "For the privilege of being in on "The Deal;" for the money made from corporate takeovers, condo developments and light rail extensions; for the cushy executive position with all the perks; for the high political office; for the entry to the Arlington Club; for the skids greased and the backs scratched; for nothing more than an occasional pat on the head from the Great Man himself; for a young girl's life — the best and the brightest **looked the other way.**"

Even after Goldschmidt's abuse became public, Oregon Democrats (and even a few Republicans like Dave Frohnmayer) still stood by him, and lamented Oregon's loss of a great leader much more than they lamented the devastation to a 13-year-old girl. As Leonhardt wrote in 2007 "They still attend parties in his honor. To this day, they are lost without him telling them what to do. "People like Neil don't come along very often," former Gov. Ted Kulongoski reminds us."

Beyond those who prospered by keeping silent, Oregon may never fully know how much collateral harm was done by those who in one way or another coerced or blackmailed Neil Goldschmidt with their knowledge of his dark secret.

Little Has Changed

It is somewhat discouraging to see that the culture that protected Goldschmidt still exists. A culture that knew enough to remove Goldschmidt's portrait from the Capitol in March of last year – after the woman who'd been molested as a 13-year-old died – but then let the child molester himself come into the Capitol several months later for Mark Hatfield's memorial service. That happened just four months ago. After decades of covering up for, downplaying and enabling, it showed that **little has changed in that culture in Oregon**. There was no outcry when the molester came to the Capitol, no sense of outrage at the horrific irony of removing the man's portrait but not the man. The man's portrait didn't molest the 13-year-old, the man did. The same man who said "*It's nice to be back*" when [he visited](#) the Capitol four months ago.

Conspiracy of silence for David Wu

The same culture that maintained the conspiracy of silence to protect Goldschmidt also protected David Wu. Sometimes, it was more than the same culture – it was the same people. People like major Democratic donor and major Democratic insider Win McCormack. McCormack, a co-founder of Mother Jones magazine, told Willamette Week he learned of Goldschmidt's dark secret in 1990 – 14 years before it came out. Despite Mother Jones' reputation for investigative journalism, after McCormack learned of Goldschmidt's secret, he did NOTHING – because "I didn't feel like it was my business...I didn't want to destroy him". No thoughts of other possible victims, just concern for the perpetrator. And there were reports of other victims.

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McCormack also knew of problems with David Wu from the start – from when Wu first moved to Oregon. McCormack was the chair of Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart's Oregon steering committee in 1984 when Wu arrived claiming to be the Oregon campaign manager for Gary Hart. McCormack thought "Something about Wu didn't add up." McCormack, who came to believe Wu was trying to pull one over on the team, said "He came into the state under false pretenses and tried to hoodwink us." Despite those early reservations, McCormack went on to donate thousands of dollars to David Wu's campaigns. McCormack's contributions continued long past the Oregonian's 2004 reporting of Wu's attempted rape in college.

And now, the same Win McCormack is a major contributor to Suzanne Bonamici's campaign.

While little changed with Oregon's Democrats in the conspiracy of silence culture, there was some improvement in the Oregonian – but with some notable lapses.

Oregonian Does Better With Wu – But Still Struggles

Stung by major past failures that had made them a national laughingstock when the Washington Post broke the story on Bob Packwood in 1992 and when Willamette Week uncovered Goldschmidt's dark secret in May 2004, the Oregonian made an all-out effort in the fall of 2004 to uncover the truth about David Wu's 1976 attempted rape in college. With their will and resources behind the effort, they found the information to be able to run the story. Despite threats from David Wu's lawyer, the Oregonian showed real courage and ran the story in October 2004. They took real heat from Wu's enablers and from those deeply embedded in the culture of silence or those deeply influenced by that culture. In defending Wu, the then chairman of the Oregon Democratic Party complained "The Oregonian is on a political jihad."

More Wu victims? Shortly after Wu's resignation announcement in July 2011, the former managing editor of the Oregonian wrote about the October 2004 story "Over the next few months, we heard other stories from other women. None was willing to go on the record. It appeared to us that Wu's aggressive conduct with women may have continued deep into his adulthood. But we were unable to prove it."

Oregonian Backslides On Wu Attempted Rape Story

Criticized the story themselves – shortly after the story ran in the Oregonian in 2004, Willamette Week wrote "On Sunday, the paper's [Oregonian] ombudsman, Michael Arrieta-Walden, himself slammed the story. "Too many hurdles loom for me and many readers," wrote Arrieta-Walden."

We wrote it, but don't quote it – Jack Bogdanski blogged about how the Oregonian bizarrely asked Wu's 2004 opponent for Congress, Goli Ameri, to stop quoting the Oregonian's story. Check out the current CD-1 ads to see how often the Oregonian gets quoted in ads on both sides. It was a bizarre request.

Wu puff piece – the Oregonian backslid again into their role as sycophant to entrenched power when they ran a flagrant puff piece for Wu April 2010, and then later denied his Republican opponent access to publish an op-ed because "he was a candidate."

Suzanne Bonamici's Husband's Role

The lawyer who threatened to sue the Oregonian to try to shut down their 2004 exposé of Wu's attempted rape in college was Suzanne Bonamici's husband, Michael Simon. Simon was ferocious in his efforts to silence witnesses and the Oregonian, on behalf of David Wu, who ended up confessing to "inexcusable behavior" once the exposé ran.

Simon went on to serve as Wu's lawyer for seven more years – resigning in 2011 just prior to Simon being confirmed as a federal judge and shortly before his wife announced she would run to replace

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Wu. Simon reported a net worth of nearly \$4.3 million in 2011, which Jeff Mapes noted gave Bonamici the ability to contribute to her own campaign.

One of the witnesses for the exposé on Wu's attempted rape in college was an 83-year-old woman who was dying of cancer – Leah Kaplan – a very credible former assistant dean at Stanford – a prominent Stanford figure who later became known for her work in rape education and for developing Stanford's policies on sexual harassment.

In reflecting on the 2004 exposé, the former managing editor of the Oregonian wrote "Wu hired a lawyer who **ferociously counter-attacked**, threatening to sue the Oregonian if any story were published. Neither Wu nor the lawyer would answer questions about the incident, but they contacted [83-year-old] Kaplan's family and made it clear they were prepared to hold the dying woman legally accountable for her conduct."

In April 2011, the Oregonian's Janie Har wrote about the 2004 exposé "Wu had refused interview requests for months and hired Simon to **aggressively attack** the paper's reporting and seek to stop publication. When the story ran three weeks before the election, Wu quickly apologized for his "inexcusable behavior" and was re-elected."

In writing about someone who was consulting for one of Suzanne Bonamici's opponents in the primary to replace Wu, Steve Duin wrote "[he] is hardly alone in thinking Simon **went over the top** in representing Wu, who confessed to "inexcusable behavior on my part" once the story was published."

Democrats' Silence & Enabling of Wu (viewed him as a useful "tool")

Oregon Democrats knew for years about David Wu's problems, but completely let down the voters in Oregon's first congressional district. They failed miserably at any form of self-policing when it came to David Wu.

The Oregonian reported in 2004 "Versions of the [Wu's Stanford 1976 attempted rape] story have circulated behind the scenes among Democratic insiders since Wu's first run for Congress in 1998". The Oregonian also reported in 2011 that "Among fellow Democrats, Wu's political and personal limitations increasingly became embarrassing. Many looked the other way for years."

On July 26, 2011, in a story announcing his forced resignation, the Oregonian quoted a former Wu campaign manager and vice chair of the state Democratic Party saying many "bear responsibility" for not speaking up sooner about Wu's troubles.

Wu's 1998 campaign manager said "There are far too many of us on this long journey with David over the last 12 years that kept our mouth shut when we should not have. And ultimately, we bear some responsibility in allowing him to be a member of Congress."

Steve Duin at the Oregonian summarized his frustration with Wu's Democratic self-serving enablers:

"Wu saw no reason to evolve, insulated as he was by enablers who knew he was a tool but considered him a useful one.

They ignored his sins, just as they dismissed Goldschmidt's, because they jammed avarice and ambition into the place reserved for a moral compass. They had careers to advance, checks to cash, cover stories to prepare or gubernatorial campaigns to win.

And when they compared the retirement benefits of Fred Leonhardt, the guy who finally called bull on Neil, with those of the opportunists who stifled a yawn, they realized silence is golden.

Remind me, again: The Atlantis space shuttle has how many seats? Because the Democrats who climbed into bed with Wu years ago deserve to go out with their champion in style."

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NOTE: Goldschmidt's victim was 13: *While a number of reports identified the victim of Neil Goldschmidt's molesting as a 14-year-old, the victim herself told Margie Boulé, Willamette Week and others that she was 13 when Neil Goldschmidt first molested her. She was born 5/12/1961 and told Margie Boulé that [34-year-old] Goldschmidt first molested her on her mom's birthday in January 1975. She wouldn't have turned 14 until 4 months later. In his 2011 Willamette Week articles, Nigel Jaquiss has been reporting her age as 13. Additionally, based on the victim's account to Margie Boulé, Goldschmidt's serial molesting of the 13-year-old may have been preceded by several years of grooming, from the time his victim was 7 or 8:*

"In her earliest memory of her abuser, she remembered standing beside him in an elevator. She must have been very young, because she had to reach up to hold his hand.

They were in a hotel, or some other big building. In just a moment he would lead her into a room and a crowd of people would cheer. She couldn't remember why she was by his side on this exciting night — was it an election night?

But she remembered this: As the elevator descended, the man squeezed her hand. She might have been 7 years old, perhaps 8. But she was old enough to understand she was special. Of all the little girls in the world, she believed, Neil Goldschmidt had chosen her."

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Part 3 - Suzanne Bonamici's role in the conspiracy of silence to protect David Wu

Thursday, January 12, 2012

Part 2 of this series began "Oregon has a history of powerful politicians who are sexual predators, and a culture that enables and protects these sexual predators with a conspiracy of silence." David Wu was very much one of those powerful politicians who was a sexual predator, and millionaire "local power couple" Suzanne Bonamici and her lawyer husband were very much a part of the "culture that enables and protects these sexual predators with a conspiracy of silence".

In defending David Wu in 2004, Suzanne Bonamici's lawyer husband used thug tactics ("*ferociously counter-attacked*", "*aggressively attack*", "*went over the top*") to try to silence the Oregonian and an 83-year-old woman who was dying of cancer – a woman who as assistant dean had counseled the college girl David Wu had tried to rape – the college girl David Wu had tried to silence during the attempted rape by putting a pillow over her face.

The paper and the dying former counselor didn't give in to Bonamici's husband's threats of lawsuits and the Oregonian ran the story. The day the story ran, Wu issued a statement admitting "As a 21-year old, I hurt someone I cared very much about. I take full responsibility for my actions and I am sorry.", and he went on to admit "I was disciplined by Stanford University for my behavior".

Just days before Wu admitted the incident, "[Bonamici's husband] disputed the claims and credibility of The Oregonian's sources, in particular [83-year-old] Leah Kaplan, the former Stanford assistant dean who counseled the woman in 1976. [Bonamici's husband] said his own investigators interviewed Kaplan and that the newspaper's information was 'false.'"

Former Oregonian managing editor Stephen Engelberg says that after running the story in 2004, they learned that the college girl may not have been Wu's only victim: "Over the next few months, we heard other stories from other women. None was willing to go on the record. It appeared to us that Wu's aggressive conduct with women may have continued deep into his adulthood."

Bonamici's husband went on to serve as Wu's lawyer for seven more years – resigning in 2011 just prior to his being confirmed as a federal judge and shortly before Bonamici announced she would run to replace Wu. And working at his law firm, doing work like protecting a powerful Congressman and sexual predator like Wu, paid very well: Bonamici's husband made over \$750,000 in 2010. He reported a net worth of nearly \$4.3 million in 2011.

Having that kind of money allowed Bonamici to put \$200,000 of personal money into her primary campaign to replace David Wu.

Suzanne's a champion for women – unless they're sexual assault victims

Emily's List says that Suzanne Bonamici is "A champion for women." The National Organization for Women (NOW) lets supporters know that Suzanne's candidacy is "especially important for women's rights supporters", and the Feminist Majority PAC says Suzanne is a "strong supporter of women's rights."

Unless that woman or girl also happens to be the victim of sexual assault. Then, Suzanne doesn't show "strong support" and she's not much of a "champion". In those cases, for those victims, Suzanne is **silent**. And silence is consent. Suzanne's opponents in the primary, Brad Avakian and Brad Witt, weren't silent. Why was Suzanne Bonamici?

When confronted with her husband's efforts to cover up David Wu's attempted rape, Suzanne likes to say "I'm running for office, not my husband." Okay, but Suzanne, you can't have it both ways. If your husband isn't the one running, then you weren't the one representing David Wu – and you should have spoken up for those sexual assault victims. Why didn't you?

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Knowing the background of David Wu's attempted rape in college, why didn't you speak out when the news of his sexual assault on an 18-year-old came out last July? Why didn't you call for his resignation, like fellow Democrats Sen. Ron Wyden and Sen. Jeff Merkley did? There is no excuse. Why were you silent?

Your strange silence even had some of the staunchest Democrats scratching their heads. On the extremely pro-Democratic BlueOregon blog, Kari Chisholm, BlueOregon co-founder, couldn't understand: "Personally, I'm still astonished that Bonamici never called on Wu to resign after the most recent allegations; and refused to run against him until he resigned."

Despite Wu's escalating problems, Bonamici remained a friend, ardent supporter and donor

For someone who is asking to take on a bigger leadership role, to represent Oregon in Congress, Bonamici certainly didn't show any leadership whatsoever in speaking out about David Wu's ongoing and escalating problems. Instead, she showed more of her **'go along to get along'** approach to dealing with Oregon's Democratic Party.

The same 'go along to get along' approach that she demonstrated in the State Senate, where she voted along party lines 98.3% of the time. It's very possible that Suzanne isn't aware of how much of a follower she is. In a debate last November, when asked to give three specific examples of where she differed from her party, Suzanne said she differed with her party on: business legislation, consumer protection, and free trade agreements. Even the left-leaning PolitiFact had to rate that one FALSE. As the 98.3% illustrates, Suzanne is a follower, not a leader, and so it shouldn't be surprising that she never spoke out on David Wu's escalating problems. No surprise that she just kept doing the same thing she'd always done; **long** past when everyone else saw the problems with David Wu.

Friends With Wu? It's Complicated...

Friendships with Suzanne Bonamici are, as they say, complicated. David Wu was a "close personal friend", a "friend" and a "family friend", but not a "close friend". Or, the "close personal friend" and a "friend" are a lie; the "family friend" is validated by an email, and then somehow Wu was still not a "close friend". As I said, it's complicated.

Sandy Webb, an attorney, was the Democratic candidate for state representative in House District 26 in 2010. She was endorsed by the Oregon League of Conservation Voters, OEA, SEIU, AFSCME, Basic Rights Oregon, Dave Hunt and Brad Avakian. Last October, she wrote on the BlueOregon blog, "When I ran for office in 2010, Suzanne Bonamici worked against my campaign because my husband [David Robinson] was challenging Wu in the primary. She was representing a PAC meant to help elect women candidates and told me one of the criteria for support was getting my husband to bow out of the race **because Wu was her close personal friend** and in her opinion [Wu] shouldn't be challenged in the primary by another D[emocrat]. She certainly held me responsible for helping out **her friend**. I am pretty sure Carla [Axtman] knows of many more instances where Bonamici let her friendship rule her decision making – and to me that does make her an ardent supporter."

The Oregonian's Jeff Mapes reported that "The Bonamici campaign was quick to label Webb's charge as a lie."

Robinson, Webb's husband, forwarded Jeff Mapes **a 2009 email from Bonamici** after Robinson had written asking for a meeting with her to talk about his own candidacy. Bonamici said it would be "awkward" to meet with him because "**[Wu] is a family friend** and (as any Google search will reveal) he has been a client of my husband's."

Given all that's transpired, it's understandable that Suzanne is ambiguous about her friendship / un-friendship with David Wu. If only life had an "Unfriend" button like Facebook...

Bonamici's Ardent Support For Wu

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In Part 2 of this series, there were a number of references pulled from media accounts of Democratic insiders knowing about David Wu's problems for years. A frank discussion that took place on BlueOregon last October gives some additional insider perspective.

Carla Axtman interviewed the 3 most competitive Democrats (Bonamici, Avakian, Witt) vying for the First Congressional District special election primary. After publishing those interviews in BlueOregon, she wrote a piece titled "OR-1: Thoughts on the Democratic primary". She was up front about being a Brad Avakian supporter, and she wrote that she hadn't voted for David Wu since 2004; she'd been leaving that portion of her ballot blank. [Presumably, this was in response to the 2004 revelations that David Wu had attempted to rape his ex-girlfriend in college.]

Carla went on to express her concern "about the lack of scrutiny of this race by the Oregon media. Especially in regard to Bonamici's connections to David Wu's previous campaigns—and ardent support for him, well after much of the rest of Washington County was articulating strong doubts about Wu's behavior and ability to represent the District. Bonamici's family had a livelihood for a number of years that was, to some degree or another, connected to Wu's issues. While I have my doubts that there was any nefarious or untoward activity—I'm alarmed that this story hasn't been fully vetted."

Her concern was during the primary, but it is an equal concern now as the general election draws to a close. I am continually surprised by how many voters there are who don't even know that Suzanne Bonamici's husband was David Wu's lawyer. It's not that it's some sinister secret, but it is something voters should know before they vote and it illustrates that there's still a great deal of room for improvement in Oregon regarding effectively informing voters.

Her additional concern was that "it leaves [Suzanne Bonamici] vulnerable in the General Election for the Republicans to take the story and run—spinning it in whatever direction suits them best." A reasonable concern, given her perspective, and clearly there's a better chance of the story being told more objectively by the media than by a partisan political campaign. All the more reason for Oregon's media to be telling the stories that need to be told – even the difficult ones.

October 2010 Campaign Contribution

Suzanne Bonamici gave a campaign contribution of \$250 to David Wu on 10/25/2010.

Please go to [Part 1](#) of this series and see what was happening in October 2010. Now, there are really two possibilities of what happened with Suzanne Bonamici's October campaign contribution to David Wu:

1. She knew some or all of what was going on and still decided to support Wu **in a way she knew would be public.**
2. She didn't have any idea of what was going on and gave Wu the contribution.

Either possibility is not good – and really, possibility #2 is **worse!** Do we want someone that clueless representing us in Congress? If she was that close to Wu and didn't know any of this was going on – how on earth is she going see what's going on in the shark tank of Washington DC? And if it was possibility #1, what was she thinking?

Conclusion

Voters in Oregon's first congressional district have a choice to make.

Oregon has a history of powerful politicians who are sexual predators, and a culture that enables and protects these sexual predators with a conspiracy of silence.

The choice is between someone who has very much been a part of that culture; an enabler, or someone new. A chance to start breaking up that culture. A chance to set Oregon on a new path.

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Links to the articles in the 3-part series on Oregon Catalyst:

[Part 1 – The troubled history of David Wu](#)

[Part 2 – Oregon Democrats' conspiracy of silence culture that protected Wu](#)

[Part 3 – Suzanne Bonamici's role in the conspiracy of silence to protect Wu](#)