

A year later, memories of eclipse endure

By Mike McInally, Gazette Times

What a difference a year makes: This week, we're looking at the gray, dark skies around the mid-valley and cursing the smoke created by the region's wildfires.

But a year ago this week, we gazed into darkening skies and cheered as a total solar eclipse — for many of us, a once-in-a-lifetime experience — worked its way from west to east across Oregon as it started a remarkable journey across the United States.

Maybe you just watched it from your backyard or stepped outside your office, slapped on your pair of eclipse glasses and witnessed what turned out to be an astonishing cosmic spectacle: The moon passing across the surface of the sun, plunging the world below into two minutes or so of darkness.

But wherever you managed to watch the eclipse, you weren't alone: You were among the millions of Americans who were watching the skies that day. A story this week in *The Oregonian* cited a survey from the University of Michigan concluding that 88 percent of Americans watched the eclipse either in person or electronically.

Despite fears that hundreds of thousands of people would descend on the valley (deemed among the best spots in the nation to view the eclipse), the crowds here were well-behaved. The massive traffic jams that people worried about by and large did not materialize.

And, although it seems odd to say this about a celestial event, the event itself delivered the goods: In fact, it's hard to think of any other event in recent history that generated so much hype beforehand and then managed to live up to the hype.

It helps, of course, to be lucky: Although wildfires were burning in the West last Aug. 21, the skies that morning in the mid-valley were crystal-clear. There was cloud cover on the Oregon coast, where the eclipse first made landfall, but those clouds did not make it to the mid-valley.

In fact, no matter your location at about 10:15 a.m. on that Monday, during the two minutes of totality, our hunch is that you could hear the gasps and cheers from others. Maybe you joined with the cheers, or maybe you were stunned into silence. You and millions of others might have experienced goosebumps, and it wasn't because the air suddenly seemed (and was) cooler.

Our overuse of the word "awesome" has devalued the word's meaning; it is not "awesome" when the person taking your lunch order gets it right. On that Monday morning, a spectacle so much bigger than any of us gave us a refresher course in the true meaning of "awesome." And that's why those of us lucky enough to see it will carry it with us.

Well, that and our eclipse glasses, which we chose not to recycle.

The next total solar eclipse in the continental United States is scheduled for April 8, 2024; it'll start down in Texas and work its way up to Maine. We're not planning to make the trip to see the event, but we know people who already are making plans to do so. A little more than a year ago, we might have scoffed at such an ambition. Today, though, as we recall the memories of Aug. 21, 2017 — the way the eclipse looked, sounded, felt — we completely understand the impulse.



ICE policies hurt our communities beyond the border

In late July, Immigration and Customs Enforcement carried out one of its largest raids in years, arresting more than 140 people in Ohio. But raids and family separation are only part of the total impact ICE has on our communities.

The Trump administration has attempted to justify aggressive immigration enforcement by claiming they help make our cities safer, yet the opposite may be true.

Immigration advocates have raised concerns about public safety based on ICE's track record of abuse, militarized operations and propensity to identify themselves as the police. So far this year, seven immigrants have died while in ICE custody, with reports citing lack of medical care as a main factor.

The cavalier attitude with which ICE conducts operations should be a cause of concern for us all, especially given that ICE has negligently detained or deported more than 20,000 U.S. citizens since 2003.

The terror that ICE raids sow in our communities affects us all. Increased fear in immigrant communities often results in a reluctance to call the police, cooperate with authorities or show up to court, the effects of which have already started to show.

In 2017, sexual assault reports by Latinos in Los Angeles fell by 25 percent, while domestic violence reports declined by 10 percent.

In Denver, following ICE arrests in the local courthouse, prosecutors reported that victims of domestic violence have refused to testify because of fear of being arrested.

The threat to our collective security extends to public health as well.

Widespread fear has led to immigrants forgoing health care for themselves and even their U.S. citizen children, increasing health risks for all. There are also direct and tangible effects of the ICE violence.

A 2017 study by the University of Michigan documented the health

effects following a 2008 ICE raid in Iowa. The study found that Latina women, including those who were citizens, were more likely to have low birth-weight or premature babies following the raid.

While the immediate effects on health and safety have been documented, the long-term effects will take decades to fully understand. This includes not only the significant trauma inflicted on children separated from their parents while in immigration custody, but the devastating disruption ICE raids can have on their education. After raids took place in eastern Tennessee earlier this year, more than 500 children missed school the following day.

The fear and instability that accompanies these raids have thrust school officials into a role that has now become all too common for teachers, health-care professionals and social workers attempting to provide some sense of guidance and reassurance in a time of immense uncertainty.

A survey of 5,400 teachers, principals and counselors conducted by the Civil Rights Project at UCLA found 68 percent of administrators cited absenteeism among immigrant students as a problem, and 70 percent of principals and counselors reported academic decline among immigrant students.

These collateral consequences are rarely cited in conversations on immigration and enforcement, but highlight the human costs that we collectively pay.

The United States detains more immigrants than any other country in the world, and ICE's ballooning budget and expansive detention policies run the risk of reshaping the character of our country.

Evidence documenting the destructive effects of ICE enforcement paints a clear picture as to the devastating toll these policies are taking on our society. We must stand together to

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protect our communities and call for an end to destructive policies that separate our families and destroy the social fabric of our communities.

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THE OBSERVER

An independent newspaper founded in 1896

(USPS 299-260)

The Observer reserves the right to adjust subscription rates by giving prepaid and mail subscribers 30 days notice. Periodicals postage paid at La Grande, Oregon 97850. Published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (except Dec. 25) by Western Communications Inc., 1406 Fifth St., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

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Send address changes to:
The Observer, 1406 Fifth St.,
La Grande, OR 97850
Periodicals postage paid at:
La Grande, Oregon 97850

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