



A Japanese woman bows before an orca whale, showing respect for the caged animal. Likewise, the whale gives a knowing nod and a lisp "thank you" for the chum soon to be tossed its way.

PAUL SYNNOTT FROM OSAKA, JAPAN

Politeness from Japan not expected to reach West Coast

BY TAR BALLS
STAFF WRITER

Fears that Japanese politeness and respect will reach U.S. are unfounded, officials say.

Last month, when a devastating 9.0 earthquake and towering tsunami struck the coast of Japan, many Americans immediately wondered how the tragedy would affect them at home. Some worried that damage to Japanese factories would threaten the U.S. supply of computer and iPad parts. Others, fearful that radiation leaking from the malfunctioning Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant would cross the Pacific Ocean to U.S. shores, rushed to buy protective potassium iodide tablets, despite officials' warnings that the pills were unnecessary and even potentially harmful.

Now, a new fear has emerged: some Americans are concerned that after being shaken loose by the quake, recognized Japanese societal traits like politeness, civility and respect for elders may form a large cloud and blow across the water to the U.S., increasing unsuspecting Americans' risk of behaving considerately to each other. Though scientists insist that Japan's high levels of basic social etiquette will not pose a significant threat to anyone in this country, many citizens still fear that excess courtesies will reach their homes and interfere with

more western traits and the American way of life.

"The amount of politeness that will reach U.S. shores is negligible," said Kurt Mann, a quantum sociologist at Oregon State University. "Most of it will evaporate over the ocean, and whatever does make it here will be far below the normal background levels of decency that people are exposed to every day — like when strangers hold doors for them, for example. This is not something to worry about. Most Americans aren't likely to change."

Still, some concerned U.S. residents have been stocking up on Bluetooths, annoying ringtones, and DVDs of competitive reality television shows — anything they think will help fill them with insolence and disdain for others and keep trace amounts of respect or civility out of their systems.

"Customers are buying lots of Glenn Beck books," said Martina Amato, a worker at the Lloyd Center Barnes and Noble. "Michael Moore movies, too. They think those will help them stay edgy and obnoxious, I guess. We're restocking as quickly as we can, but we can barely keep them on the shelves."

Officials warn, however, that such precautionary measures may actually do more harm than good. A statement issued by the National Institutes of Health urged U.S. citizens not to panic or begin randomly

cursing out infants and puppies at this time. Most Americans have more than enough abrasiveness in their systems already, the agency said, adding that any more when it isn't necessary could overload the brain's repugnaceous gland, leading to a serious

also said the planet was warming, but it's been pretty cold here all winter, so they obviously lie."

According to Mann, American scientists have detected some incoming particles of Japanese-style politeness and respect on the

Most Americans have more than enough abrasiveness in their systems already, the agency said, adding that any more when it isn't necessary could overload the brain's repugnaceous gland, leading to a serious chronic condition called O'Reilly's Insufferability Syndrome.

chronic condition called O'Reilly's Insufferability Syndrome.

Not everyone is convinced. Steven Inglewood, a 21-year-old Southeast Portland resident, was at Fred Meyer on Thursday shopping for airhorns and drums of patchouli oil. He said he has also been practicing ignoring his mother's phone calls and cutting in line at the post office.

"I'm doing everything I can to keep up my protective levels of abject resentment and ire," he said, pausing to kick this reporter in the shins. "I know the scientists are saying not to worry, but I can't trust that," Inglewood added. "I mean, scientists

West Coast, but they are present at far below the levels that might actually impact human behavior. "We're only picking up about 0.5–0.7 microGandhis," Mann said, referring to the standard scientific units for measuring airborne courteousness. "That's nothing. You get higher readings at a Girl Scout conference."

Mann added that Americans also shouldn't worry about dangerous levels of exposure to Japan's excellent math and science education, functional national rail service, or armies of tiny, efficient robots. "I'm fairly confident that none of that is ever going to make it over here," he said.



Everyone loves a roast!

We do, anyway.

Thank you all for buying Street Root's third annual April Fools edition of the newspaper. We hope you enjoyed a few chuckles at everyone else's expense. Having said that, we extend a special thank you to the people and companies we have skewered in these pages for agreeing in advance, without so many words per se, to hold us harmless for any insinuation deemed unsavory, unprofessional or unwelcome. It's nice that in a town with so many lawyers, we can come to an unspoken understanding to take one on the chin for a good cause. It was all in good fun! We promise to get back to our usual serious selves come April 15. We'll all be a little more serious by then.

We realize that you have a choice of reading material in this town, so on behalf of all of us here at Street Roots, thank you for your support!

No pigs (yummy!) were harmed in the construction of this advertisement

street
roots