

BASE OF EMPATHY

During this fiercely polarized election year, a great movement is under way to motivate young people to exercise their right to vote. As a registered voter and member of the 18-24 age demographic, I would like to pose an open question: Should we encourage people to vote when they otherwise show no interest in the political process and conduct no research about the candidates?

The reality of our voting system is that individual voters can choose a candidate based

Should we encourage people to vote when they otherwise show no interest in the political process and conduct no research about the candidates?

on the flip of a coin, extensive research into the voting records and platforms of the candidates, or any number of reasons in between. No matter the logic, each vote counts the same (except in Florida). While I would never suggest the right to vote should be limited to those who have the means and desire to educate themselves on the issues, I think it is fair to ask whether simply increasing the quantity of voters is the best way to support our democracy.

Perhaps a better way to reach the disenfranchised and the cynical is to encourage them to participate in community service projects at the local level. Local community service provides an education allowing young people to directly realize the positive impacts of their efforts and their interdepend-

ence with others. When someone works to help the hungry and the sick or to clean up the local environment, their service builds a base of empathy and concern that may help motivate them to vote for candidates that best address these vital issues.

Emily Jeffrey
Eugene

NO WAY I'M VOTING!

I see you targeting me — five of you have already asked me. Please do not ask again. See, I find it dangerous to lie to prospective voters by telling them that their vote will lead to representation or empowerment. This *is not* democracy! It never was. If you think voting has any effect on who is elected or what laws are made (possibly with the exception of ballot measures), look up voting machines, voting fraud and ... um ... the last freaking presidential election!

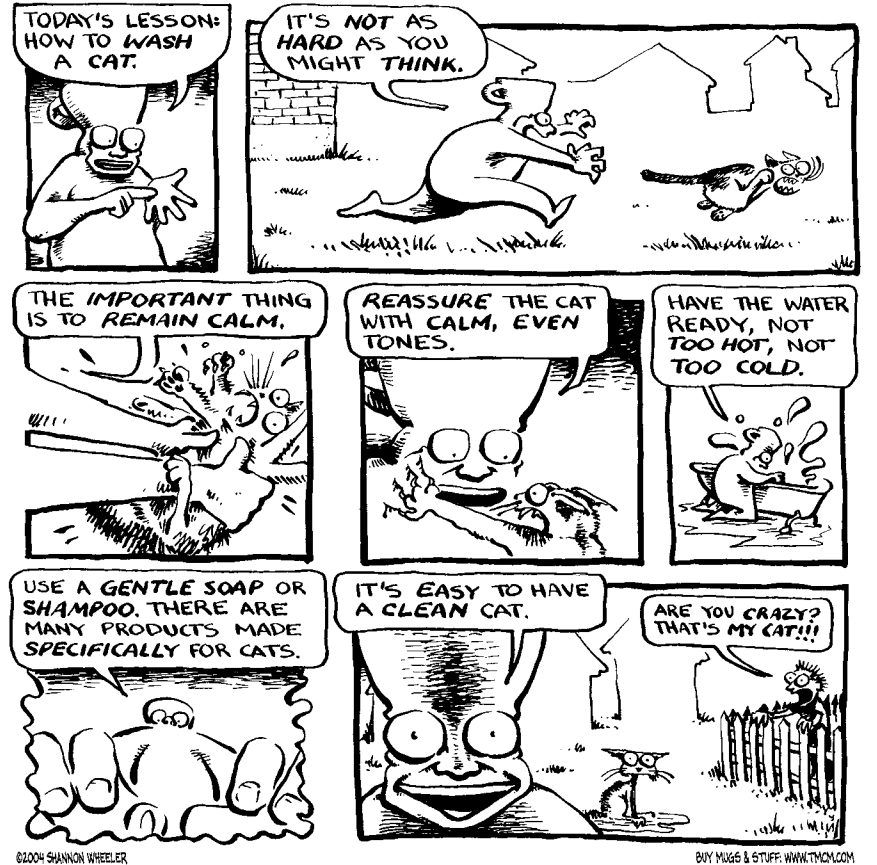
Kudos on mentioning Emma Goldman (and local awesome activist Lydia Bartholow). Why don't we listen to them more? Goldman understood the inherent flaws in this system that have only grown in her absence.

I am so sick of hearing about how Kerry is going to save us. Maybe he'll save us like Clinton with more sweatshops and less welfare. Global imperialism is not party particular. And for a large number of people on the planet, Kerry will be just another straight, white, rich, male puppeteer coordinating their suffering and death.

To conclude, though there is endless more to say, using women voters to further a small percentage's privileged and liberal beliefs is disgusting. We will not be your voting pawns participating in and encouraging a system that will never care about us. My advice: learn your herstories and histories, work on real stuff in your community and DON'T VOTE. It only encourages them!

Oona Beall
age 24, Eugene

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



ENDING OPPRESSION

We have received several requests for Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) to get involved in the conversation about sex industry ads in the back pages of *EW*. Perhaps it would be helpful to explain our approach.

Our organization is devoted to providing services to all survivors of sexual violence. We are committed to ending the oppressive conditions within which this violence happens, and we practice empowerment by respecting survivors' choices. This means that we always serve survivors of sexual violence who work in the sex industry while respecting their choices, including their choice of job.

We know that sex work happens within an oppressive cultural context. The issue of whether the sex industry or its advertisements perpetuate or aggravate sexual violence is a very complex one to which we do not have a simple answer. Some feminists support the existence of the sex industry, claiming women's roles as sex workers are often the result of free choice and can be sources of empowerment. Others condemn the sex industry, claiming women's roles as sex workers are often the result of limited choice and are most frequently sources of victimization. While SASS neither endorses nor opposes the sex industry, we offer our services to those sex workers who are exploited, abused and violated.

SASS provides advocacy services, a 24-hour crisis line (you can call 343-SASS (7277) locally or (800) 788-4727, community education, self-defense classes and support groups to survivors and their supporters in the community. Feel free to call us for more information.

Magali Yaeger for
Sexual Assault Support Services

CORK THE PSYCHOLOGY

If I wanted to read Lance Sparks's incoherent, crazed rants about human psychology, color theory, communism, and pirates, I would visit him at home. We could sit inside his geodesic dome and smoke his enormous golden hookah together.

If, on the other hand, I wanted to read about wine, I guess I'd have to look elsewhere.

Mr. Sparks, a newspaper column called "Wine" ought to be about, well, wine. Readers should not be forced to wade through seven bewildering paragraphs about power ties and neo-Nazis before finding a single mention of the subject on which you purport to be an expert. Once you finally get around to discussing that, your comments are as insipid and forgettable as blush in a box.

The Willamette Valley is brimming with exceptional local food and drink — call it a

OUT in THE COUNTRY BY SCOTT THIEMANN

'Gay' as an Adjective The power of language

"That's so gay." If you ask most teenagers, especially boys, they will tell you that those are the three words they'd least want to hear someone at school say to them. And yet, they are words commonly used today to put someone down.

Accuracy in language is important. There is tremendous power in words. One word means many things to many people, and this is especially true for emotionally-laden terms like "gay."

For a few who lament the old days when the word solely meant happy, it was a real affront to have it gradually indicate a group of socially unacceptable people who have peculiar attractions and behaviors. Over the years, it has indeed become the word of choice when referring to issues or people homosexual.

There was a period of time in my life when the preferred term for my sexual reality was "homosexual." That was because I saw the more "clinical" term plainly describing me.



Homosexual meant an attraction and sexual desire for someone of the same gender. It was clear and to the point.

"Gay" seemed to carry a lot of baggage, and I suspect the word didn't feel right for many others having same-gender attractions. It seemed more aligned with effeminacy than masculinity. It indicated certain cultural inclinations that were not mine. It lumped me together with a group of people exclusively based upon my sexual orientation, not my character, interests, or goals in life — especially when used as a noun.

Over the years, I have accepted being "gay" as equal to "homosexual." On the practical side of things, gay has fewer syllables and is easier to say. It has also become the term commonly used by society at large. However, as words often do have different meanings, I would encourage those of you who used it to describe "happiness" to continue to do so.

There are so many things that every gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or any other-than-heterosexual person is besides their sexual desire, actions, or identification. The term "gay" describes only one aspect of my being. It surprises me how often the gay community and publications still use "gay" as a noun. Today, you have an opportunity to do otherwise: Use it as an adjective.

Scott Thiemann's column ran for several months in the Port Orford News, but was recently canceled due to advertiser pressure. His columns and commentaries have also run in the Brownsville Times and the Brookings Pilot.