

Rising Up

Wading through whatever foul mess comes along.

At \$11.99 a pound, the brand-new organic pistachios should not have landed in our kitchen compost tub. Yet there they went, down into the black lettuce slime and shriveled apple cores rotting in our sink-side container.

It was my fault. The pistachios had been sitting on the counter next to a pile of cucumber peelings destined for the compost. I'd meant to put the golden gems into the lovely serving bowl Wifey and I got for a wedding present. I took the bowl off the shelf and set it on the counter, then reached for the pistachios. Not until the last nut plopped into the goopy compost did I notice that I'd tossed the cuke peels into the serving bowl. Oops, my bad.

I've been absent-minded a lot lately. I'm doing a million things at once, my mind always elsewhere. I'm preoccupied with strategy meetings, letter-writing campaigns, and lobbying days trying to persuade our state legislators to pass Senate Bill 1000, Oregon's new civil rights bill. SB 1000 would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity (no-brainer) and would also create the civil union option (better than nothing).

I stared down at the pistachios and wondered if I should give up. Retrieving them seemed hopeless – the way I feel sometimes about having to slog through the latest skanky, homophobic right-wing barrage. It's exhausting and disheartening and once in a while even we die-hard activists get sick and tired of battling stupid rotten politics.

Deep down in the compost goo, a perfect pistachio glinted in the kitchen light. I thought saving the nuts was a lost cause, but there it was, a beacon of hope, a nugget of promise, a glistening pearl amidst the rot. Then it hit me. We couldn't salvage the 3,000 Multnomah County marriages, but, dammit, I could save the pistachios.

I upended the plastic container into the sink. The nuts spilled out in a sluice of moldy tea bags, limp melon rinds, and gelatinous banana peels.

I ran some water over the slop. Bad idea. Wilted onion skins sank to the bottom and clogged the strainer. The sink filled with soupy brown slime. Fortunately, I discovered that \$11.99 a pound pistachios float.

Just like lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer people! When the low-life right-wing scum pass slimy constitutional amendments to push us down, we rise again. We do this after every nasty political battle, every distasteful campaign, every heinous onslaught of myths and stereotypes and dumb-ass elections.

We'll climb out from whatever pigswill is hurled at us until justice is ours. Equality for everyone, including LGBTQ people, is worth fighting for, no matter what kind of repulsive gunk stands in our way. Despite the rank smell and yucky glop, I had to rescue those pistachio nuts come hell or a sink full of bilge water.

In a sheer act of kitchen butch derring-do, I ran my bare fingers through the sludge and fished out every little pistachio. I meticulously rinsed clean each nut and laid them all out on fresh dishtowels to dry.

I'd made a dumb mistake. In one distracted, harried moment I inadvertently used the compost tub instead of the serving bowl. Crazy, but it happened. Now the premium-priced pistachios sat on the kitchen towels in shock, airing out from their mucky ordeal. I hoped they'd recuperate.

Luck was with me. In a few hours, the rinsed, air-dried pistachios crisped right up, none the worse for the stress they'd been through – maybe even a little better. In fact, they tasted great.

No matter what kind of garbage comes along, valiant queers – and our trusty allies – will wade through it to claim our inalienable rights. The 'phobes can dump us into their foul mess and still we rise up again. We're amazing. Whenever it seems like we're sunk, we pick each other out of the mire, flick off the residue, and rise again for the next push forward.

To support Senate Bill 1000 see: www.basicrights.org
 Writer Sally Sheklow has no intentions of becoming a caterer. She welcomes comments at sally@wymprov.com



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Neighborhood Association, I've expressed concerns directly to the IWL and been rebuffed. After viewing the range, we requested Lane County review the existing permit: no action was taken. The IWL should be encouraged to stop its risky behavior and move its range.

Mike Speiser
 Eugene

REMEMBERING RAY

On April 27th, his life ended. He touched hundreds of thousands of musically talented middle schoolers and high schoolers. I had the privilege of being one of his students. His name is Ray Beccerra, an educator, musician and friend. He was a Latino American who loved music and children.

While all of us are running around with our heads cut off complaining about equality and this, that and the other, think of Ray Beccerra and what he lived for: the children. He changed many lives — he still does. Are you reading this, President Bush?

Brian M. Peterson
 Eugene

IT'S BAD CHOICES

Your Slant column May 12, in a discussion about lack of funding for schools, states that "we can blame the economy for part of it."

It is not the economy that is the problem; it is our choices that create the problem. These are excellent economic times. Indeed, the U.S. right now is the richest country in the history of the planet. People are living in bigger homes (new homes are almost double in size now compared to 20 years ago), with more and bigger toys than ever before. The lack of school funding is because the people choose to buy things for their own use with the money instead of giving some of it to the schools.

Want proof? Look around at all the new expensive cars, with luxuries in them that we never dreamed of 20 years ago. Many of these super-expensive cars are owned by the same people who continually try to cut taxes. To them, it is more important to have a optional \$1,200 navigational system in their new cars than it is to fund the schools properly.

While we spend more and more on ourselves, our schools are forced to sell soda pop to kids in order to afford to run the schools. That's not a bad economy, that's bad choices.

Steve Brown
 Eugene

TINY ANSWERS

I've been struggling with the "new" and "improved" puzzle for a couple of years. I agree that it probably appeals to younger people who know their TV shows, movies and music stars, and if that means more readers actually do the puzzle, that's fine. However, I

have to object when the answers to last week's puzzle are so small that I need a magnifying glass to see them. I don't use reading glasses, so no, my eyes aren't that bad. If I can't do the puzzle because it's too modern for me, at least let me see the answers. I think that a lot of your readers are from my generation, you know, the '60s, and we are not too awfully cranky or un-hip. We still get ourselves thrown in jail to protest immoral and illegal logging, etc. Please let us see the answers to the puzzle.

Here's an idea: maybe just for fun, once in a while, Matt would throw in a few '60s things, like, where did all the hippies gather in Colorado when the end of the world was supposed to arrive, 10 different out-of-date words for marijuana, where did the Dead give their first concert? Between groans of perplexity, my eyes would light up.

Anne Hollander
 Eugene

ON THE HOOK

Thanks to Carrie Packwood Freeman's viewpoint ("Sexist Oppression: A Slap in the Face to Motherhood, 5/5), the meat and dairy consumers among us can no longer get off the hook by claiming they didn't know of the horrendous cruelty their dietary choices entail. Though it's hardly breaking news, I do hope it will penetrate the consciousness of some of them.

Alice Pueschner
 Eugene

TIPS FOR KILLING

The top 10 ways for a motorist to kill a bicyclist or pedestrian:

- Pointless conversation: A driver's main concern should be focusing on the road, not attempting to entertain passengers.
- One-hand driving: I know it's less comfortable and uncool to drive with both hands, but one-hand driving undeniably cuts down on reaction time and accuracy of steering.
- Taking wide turns: Those yellow and white lines aren't just suggestions.
- Cell phones: Let's be honest here: are you really that popular?
- Stop signs: They aren't slow signs.
- Crowding/cutting off bicyclists: For bicyclists to get anywhere on time, they need to keep their momentum, so avoid cutting them off when it means only a three-second wait for you.
- Aggressive driving: When you tailgate or unsafely pass other drivers, you increase the chances of running into a bicyclist or pedestrian.
- Speeding: This is such an obvious factor, yet one so regularly ignored. Honestly, where are you going that is so damned important?!
- Casual driving: It's neither drugs nor alcohol that cause the most accidents, but

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