



TODD COOPER

Being Heard

Free speech can be free in Eugene.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The below was written as spoken word and performed in front of the Lane County Board of Commissioners recently as a protest to the electricity being cut off at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza Saturdays. The poetry has been edited for newspaper style.

Free speech is no longer free in America. The ability to get your voice heard is rare and the powers that be say that nothing is free, and we're losing our democracy – not from terrorists across the sea but something worse, apathy.

America is the largest terrorist threat; when we occupy we bring fear and death. Say we fight insurgents over in Iraq, but they didn't show up 'til our preemptive attack. And just for saying what I just said, there's a few people out there who think I'm better off dead – 'cuz free speech is no longer free in America.

The ability to get your voice heard is rare, and the powers that be don't be nothing but scared. Of the positive energy we want to create, they combat our love with discouragement and hate. Still we keep living on, keep singing our songs and righting our wrongs.

When we try to do something good for our community, like an open mic where all speech is free, they shut us down. Politicians think they own this town, but do we see them out on the streets, sharing their wealth and keeping the peace? No, they take our electricity, but not our speech.

But free speech is no longer free in America. The ability to get your voice heard is rare and the powers that be are violent and scared – of the people living on the streets, as if they're the Klan in their sheets. But they're just people on drugs, or in need of a hug, not a hassle from the cops or a conservative judge.

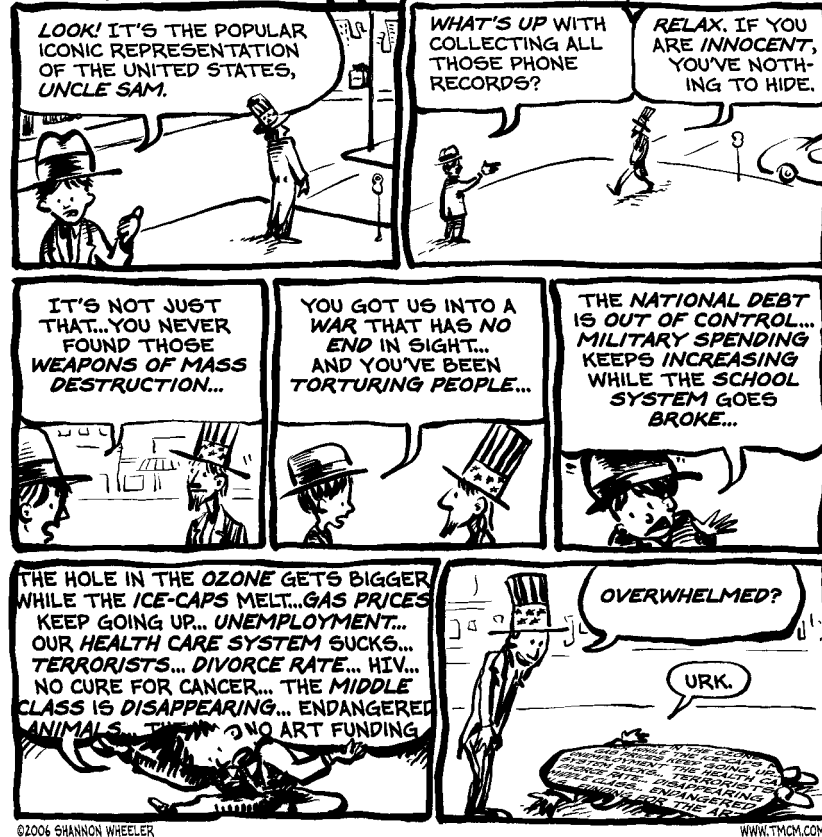
Here, 2,500 youth are without a home. If Eugene is so progressive, then why do they roam through allies and streets to find money to eat? Government won't take care of folks in our town, so it's up to us; we've got to turn things around, and make free speech free in Eugene. Create welcoming places and a positive scene, let us live for the earth and respect all things green, and always make sure that our actions aren't mean.

Yes, free speech can be free in Eugene. We have welcoming places and a positive scene. We live for the earth and respect all things green, and we always make sure that our actions aren't mean.

Iana Matthews-Harris, age 18, is co-manager of the Wayne Morse Youth Program.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PERILOUS CONSTRUCTION

Thank you for running the news brief “River Moves Near House” (5/4). It highlights a growing epidemic of unwise development in the floodways of Lane County. This development is facilitated by the county’s weak riparian ordinances. The house that Michael and Andrea Gramzow built in a vulnerable location on the banks of the McKenzie River is exemplary of poor siting choices seen throughout the county.

It is not safe or wise to build in riparian zones. Rivers naturally migrate and meander. Powerful riverine hydrology will likely undermine the large and expensive Gramzow house just as it caused the demise of the nearby six-year-old Mathews house in 2004.

In Florence last December, houses in Shelter Cove along the Siuslaw River were deemed in peril as well. There, the river is taking land at an average of five feet per year. Clearly, sites so close to a river with vastly fluctuating flows should not be built upon.

Planning departments throughout the county need to tighten regulations that set guidelines for development near our creeks, rivers, lakes and the ocean. With global warming, water levels are expected to rise and flood events to worsen dramatically. I question why the county Land Management Division continues to approve variances and exceptions to setback standards from ordinary high water marks along our waterways. Naïve confidence in floodplain maps, weak county regulations and riprap as protective devices against wild rivers and wayward catastrophic events, will set us up for some very unpleasant and costly surprises. It’s time to smarten up.

*Nena Lovinger
Fall Creek*

SIMPLY MEDIOCRE

While the content of Jason Blair’s review (5/4) of *United 93* reflects the conclusions of reviewers nationwide, the author too often attempts to sound smart by pairing whatever

big words seem vaguely appropriate to his intended meaning.

I didn’t think I’d miss Lois Wadsworth, who never found a point she couldn’t belabor, yet reading the sloppy, imprecise prose of this review, I realize she deserves more credit than I’d previously given her; clearly, she speaks the English language, and if she occasionally overstated and restated, her meaning was always clear.

Your editor has offered Jason Blair too much slack, and he’s taken the review as an opportunity to hang himself.

What do I mean? Well, consider the first paragraph. We get ‘simple austerity’ (austerity implies the simple), “stunningly unprepared” (the emphasis is unnecessary), the “nominal equivalent” of “utter speechlessness,” “terrible ingenuity” (implied by the subject of 9/11), “collective failure” (the use of “our” in the clause before obviates the need for “collective”), and even “painfully obvious” (a dead phrase that’s obviously painful).

Even if the author and the editor refused to consider whether any of these modifications aided the author’s meaning, the repetitive structures should have jangled.

It’s not that Blair doesn’t understand the film, it’s that he doesn’t make his observations comprehensible. The problem — he’s writing a review for people to read — and *EW* printed it without concern for its readability.

I realize *EW* is a free publication I paid not a cent to read, and if I don’t like it I can damn well put it down. No doubt four letters to the next mailbag will suggest I do exactly that, while another three will tell me to take my snobby self back to the library and read “great” literature if I expect something well-written. That’s certainly reasonable. Yet it also strikes me that *EW* aspires to excellence. If so, the paper should avoid avoidable mediocrity.

*Mike Copperman
Eugene*

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