

Legacy of Ideas

Our unavoidable influence on the future

Last night I watched the documentary *Jesus Camp*. It's about an evangelical Christian children's camp at Devil's Lake, N.D. The children, ages 6 to about 10, are being taught to "Take back America for Christ." They hammer ceramic cups representing government that has banned school prayer. They place red strips printed with "LIFE" over their mouths to oppose abortion. They are urged to join the Army of God, opposing, among other forces, Muslim militarists and the warlock Harry Potter. They cry a lot during the camp gatherings, caught up in rock music moments and loud voices reminding them of their fuzzy little sins that will grow larger over time if they aren't vigilant; and about God wanting them to be his prophets.



Three children in particular are featured. Tory loves to dance to Christian heavy metal because, as she explains, it is for God, not flesh, though, she admits, she sometimes does make the fleshly mistake. Pony-tailed Levi is quite proud of his oratory skills, though, he hastens to add, it is only God speaking through him. He visits Ted Haggard, then pastor of the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., to receive advice and encouragement for his skills. Rachel boldly approaches adult strangers with a tract and her simultaneously enthusiastic and

foreboding message about the availability of salvation through Christ.



Jesus Camp was lent me by my son, Josh, while he, his wife, her mother, and 2-year old Linus were visiting for five days. While Linus was pretending he was a lizard on a rock; tracking grey fox tracks in the snow ("Oh no!" he says breathlessly, "Duck and goose!" as he suddenly remembers the song "The Fox Went out

on a Chilly Night"); and listening to a book about Clarence, the beaver who is temporarily lost from his family; the children in *Jesus Camp* are being told they are not animals. Instead, they are informed, each one of us is a potential prophet for whom God has a plan, even when we're a one-week embryo inside our mother.

One thing adults unavoidably do is influence children. I remember 20 years ago, walking with my husband O'B, and 12- and 14-year-old sons outside an isolated, largely Shiite town, Kargil, in the Himalayas of northern India. The town's streets were, at the time, devoid of women, and posters around town warned that Americans are up to their elbows in the blood of Muslims. O'B's T-shirt had AUSTRALIA attractively blazoned across the front.

We were returning to Kargil near dusk, when we met a group of five friendly boys, aged perhaps 7 and 8. They asked for pencils, and eagerly practiced their English with us. Eventually one asked us where we were from. O'B said we were from America, at which point their eyes grew wide, they gravely told us they do not like Americans, and scattered.

After three more days of traveling farther east on foot and by local buses, we reached the isolated, largely Buddhist town, Leh, in the Himalayas. There, women, men, and children walked together freely, calling out to us their ringing "Jule!" (meaning hello, good-bye, thank you, and/or please). At a moment's quizzical look on our part, any would stop to see if they could answer a question we might have.

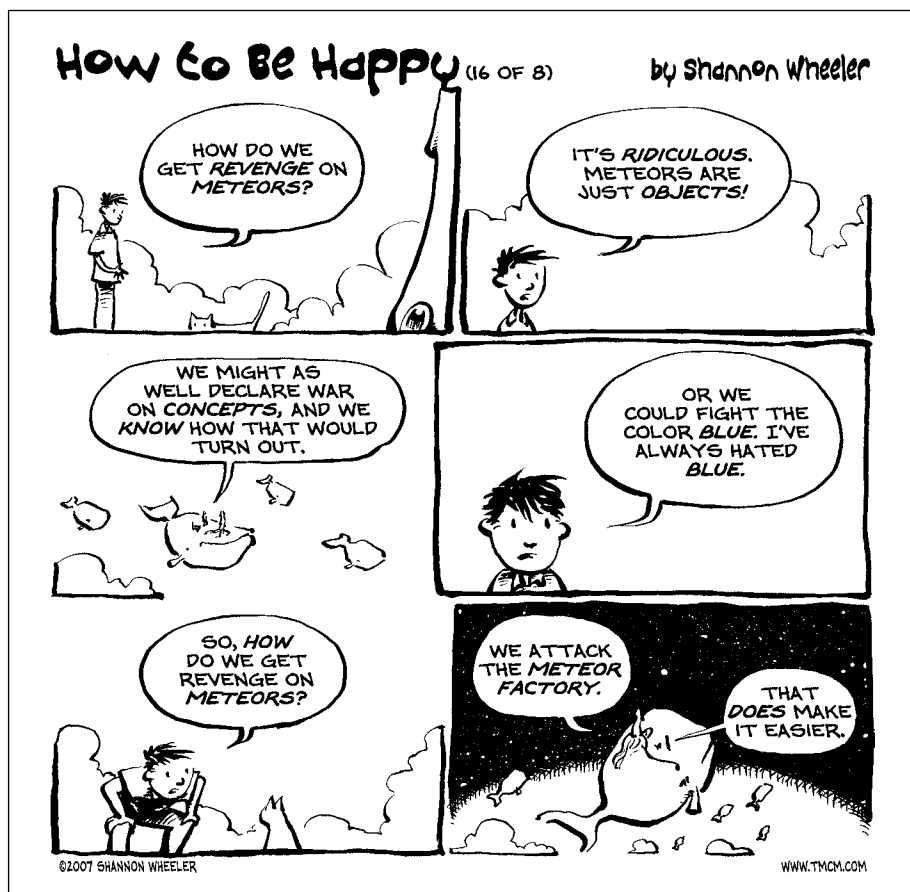
Jesus Camp Pastor Becky Fischer is right that what children learn before age 7 will stick with them the rest of their lives. At *Jesus Camp*; outdoors among our animal relatives; in Shiite Kargil; in Buddhist Leh, our children are watching, imitating, thinking, and feeling. Consciously or not, we pass on our views of the world, life, and responsibility.

Perhaps most crucially, we pass on a sense of how much our children are free to make decisions different from ours. Linus happens to have a particular fondness for tractors. That's not a burning interest of his parents or grandparents. On Christmas Day, however, Linus was given the adult, coffee-table book, *John Deere: A History of the Tractor*.

The message? You don't have to be the evolutionary biologist your father is; the science educator your mother is. Maybe you'll drive tractors around, just out of your love of machinery. Maybe you'll be a Christian. Or a Buddhist. Or a Muslim.

But hopefully, you will be kind to the world. And happy.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE JOB FACTOR

So the Eugene City Council is proposing yet another property tax — this time to provide emergency shelter and affordable housing for the homeless. While I firmly believe that no one should live without decent shelter, and for 18 years have actively participated in and financially contributed to a food for the homeless program, I take issue with the notion that property owners should bear the brunt of solving the homelessness problem.

I am dismayed that the City Council seems to view property owners as their ready reserve. Here's a hypothetical: If, as a property owner, I am taxed for a new City Hall, repairing infrastructure, downtown redevelopment and financing a homeless project, I may become one of the homeless on whom property tax money is spent. In that case, if I score affordable housing, I will once again be eligible to pay property taxes for — guess what?

Has it occurred to any of the "Eugeniuses" charged with solving the problem that a major cause of homelessness is unemployment? I would gladly support a program of job training or re-training and a task force to help those in need find employment. Better to teach a person to fish than to give them a fish — over and over.

So it goes.

Judy Dellar
Eugene

DISGUISED HATRED

Well, wouldn't you know it, Gustavo Arellano has shown his true colors in loud fashion. I've known his true colors for some time, now with his latest response to his conjured up question, it should be obvious to all what this guy's all about. He's pro-Mexican, anti-non-Mexican Latino, anti-caucasian, anti-Native American, anti-gringo (white, black and Hispanic). If you're not a Mexican, you're a gringo. This includes Puerto Ricans, which I am one.

Why are you jealous of us, Gustavo? Are you jealous that we already are American citizens and can come and go as we please? Are you jealous of the Cubans, with their special immigration — get to solid land and they can stay in the U.S. status? Why do you hate us so?

A better question would be: Why do Puerto Rican and Cuban rights groups support illegals getting citizenship?

As a former racist myself, the answer is: All of us Latinos hate the white Americans more than anyone else for the past 200 years of manipulation and oppression. So we stick together, and stick it to them whenever we can. I on the other hand don't hate anyone, I just expose hatred no matter how it's disguised. Mr. Arellano has masterfully disguised his hatred, well, disguised it to the liberal, progressive, hoedad, burned-out old hippie community of Eugene.

You guys swallowed his seven course meal of dog shit with a boner in your pants and wanted even more. Maybe now the owners of *EW* will read his columns with objectivity and see that this guy's a fraud, an egomaniac and a racist. Read the last week's column for yourself. Don't let his name calling and pathetic humor fool you! The caricature, well if that's stopping you from reading his columns, don't bother complaining, your brain's full of hot air anyway.

Mr. Arellano should save his energy writing his bullshit column and really use his wit and energy in Mexico where people need him more. How about organizing and fomenting revolution in Mexico? I used my wit down there and let the locals in Chiapas pick my brains for about four months on how to organize and how to deal with the corrupt government officials. My radical days during the early 1970s in the South Bronx where I grew up gave me some insight on how to deal with corrupt politicians. I don't know what good all my advice did, hopefully some.

My street "cred" would make Arellano's street "cred" look like he spent his life selling Girl Scout cookies. He would have been eaten alive by the gangs in my old neighborhood. Arellano, you just see me as a gringo, no matter if I'm Puerto Rican, or Costa Rican. I think you're a fraud and it's time for you Eugeneans to see it too. How about you hoedads move to the big city for a couple of years so you can obtain street "cred"? Then maybe it'll be worth listening to you.

Jorge Arroyo
Eugene