

Know Thyself

And give birth to freedom and equality

On successive days, two people asked me if I was a man of faith. A white Catholic woman, and a black dread, and really my thought was, would they recognize my faith? (Life is suffering, all my relations. You suffer because you love what deceives you. Do your best to acquire peace within you. I am the dream and the hope of the slave, I rise, I rise, I rise.)

Neither asked me which brand of faith, but my most recent confirmation of faith was in the eyes of children born 22 years apart. With one child, I was the first person she saw in this life. Her response to my explanation of why Frederick Douglass was a radical Republican: They believed the only solution to slavery was to completely end any legal basis to White Supremacy. That is: Free the slaves, give them land and the tools to work it, educate them, give them tools of the mind, give them the vote and a voice in democracy, give them reparations to assist in building a free society, and full citizenship equal to that of whites. She said, "Equality with whites is radical?" "It's a thin line between radical and common sense." Indeed.

I watched her birth an Afro-Chata-Taino-Celtic Gemini girl with kyanite eyes. Kyanite is a stone reputed to induce calm and tranquility even in times of great stress. No wonder she named the child for an ancestor, captured / stolen as a young child, surviving the middle passage, sold away from her mother and infant sister at age 4, teaching herself literacy, numeracy, and the self-sufficient way to freedom: Knowledge is a food. Trust not the slaver, or any institution rooted in the enslavement of human beings, to give you the knowledge you need to be free. Be suspicious of those who work for such institutions unawares.

When in Rome, don't become cruel like Romans, indifferent to human suffering. What they have done to the least of those, they'll do to you. Forgive them for they know not what they do. Know thyself, look into the night sky, or the depths in a child's eyes, and know the only thing greater than yourself. Raise others to equal greatness. This baby's spirit punched through a condom as if it weren't there. She hung out for the better part of an hour in the birth canal, without distress. (I survived the middle passage, yo, what's a birth canal. Is this all you got? Whatever.) She came to us, and I was reminded of people's struggle birthing freedom and equality.

There is something about an idea whose time has come that is so ancient, primal and yet totally new, that getting it out is like labor. Labor is a loud, sweaty, teary, bloody mess. Amidst shouts of encouragement, protest, anger, pleading, joy. Do not confuse noisemaking with progress. Beware, conservative Romans crucify common sense radicals. When birthing at home of what is precious within, you have to push. It's in your hands.

Mark Harris is an instructor and substance abuse prevention coordinator at LCC.



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OF WOLVES AND MEN

Erwin Roberts' letter (6/24) is disheartening and infuriating. He labels Josh Laughlin's message that "Oregonians want to hear the howl of a wolf after a 60 year absence, not the sound of gunfire killing these majestic animals" as "majestic crap." His barroom critique of Josh, one of our community's most respected and dedicated individuals and a figurehead in the organization Cascadia Wildlands, is entirely out of line.

But most alarming is Roberts' statement that "more and more Oregonians are seeing that there was a good reason that wolves were hunted out of Oregon 60 years ago." Sixty years (or less) ago, our culture also believed that smoking cigarettes was sexy, DDT crop dusting was not harmful, a woman's place was in the home, African-Americans were inferior to Caucasians, and fossil fuel was the ultimate and unlimited energy source.

Thankfully, we have learned a lot in 60

years, including the interconnectedness of all living creatures, the necessity of biodiversity, the importance of top predators to the ecosystem as a whole, and that we need to be better caretakers of Earth and all of its inhabitants, including flora and fauna.

Permanently removing top predators is an irreversible act which creates dangerous imbalances of entire ecosystems. Wolves, those "majestic animals" as Josh refers to them, were in Oregon long before our ancestors. It is time to let them back in, and for us to learn the skills we need to know to successfully co-exist with them.

Please, read award-winning local author Barry Lopez's *Of Wolves and Men*. It may just change your life.

Kathleen Mercer
Eugene

SCARED OF WOLVES

In response to "Majestic Crap" (6/24): Here's a message to the *un-idealistic*

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