

**ENERGY SUCKERS**

Hundreds of new apartment units have recently been constructed all over the UO campus neighborhood but neither solar water heating nor thermal heat pumps are being incorporated. This is not to mention the huge energy sucking coliseum and new athlete worshipping palaces of Nike University. St. Vincent de Paul seems to be the only entity in Eugene or Springfield that is actually incorporating real green solutions like solar water heating and heat pump technology in their new retail/housing complexes.

It is ironic that an entity that helps more poor people than any other and has the least resources to spend on infrastructure is setting the standard for building green in "green Eugene." Does the university, EWEB, city, county and state need to be shamed into actually living up to their green rhetoric? It regretfully appears so. Perhaps a little shaming will convince them to implement real green building practices before it is too late.

*Shannon Wilson  
Eugene*

**LEFTIST BLAME GAME**

Kudos to Joseph Lieberman (News Briefs, 1/13) for the best analysis of the tragic Arizona shootings I've seen.

The far left got its butt kicked in November, and its agenda is being rejected in America. Like spoiled children, the leftists are using this tragedy to lash out and vent their frustrations in a blame game targeting just about anyone who doesn't agree with them. Lieberman instead

provides a credible and well-reasoned evaluation of the shooter's motives.

Had it been a conservative legislator taking the bullet we'd probably have never heard boo from these folks.

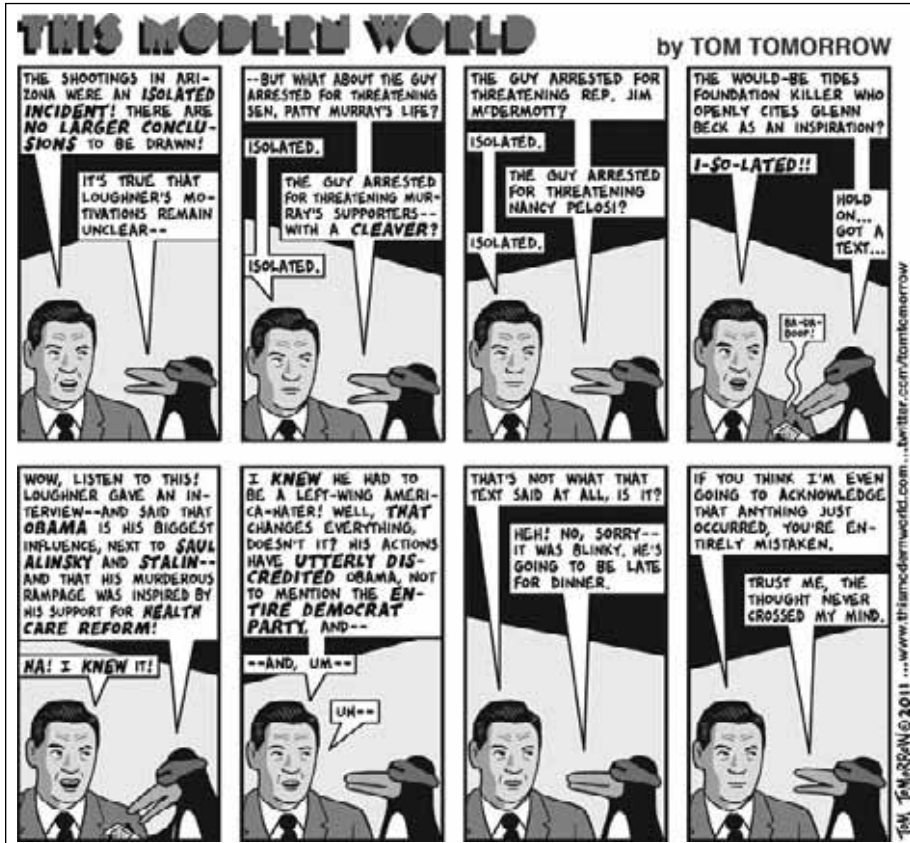
*Jerry Ritter  
Springfield*

**STIGMATIZED GROUP**

I just wanted to thank you for the wonderful and positive coverage (1/6) of pit bulls and their owners and rescuers. Pit bull owners are a highly stigmatized group. Even though informal surveys show that middle-class white females or married couples are the most common owners and rescuers of pit bulls, many people still associate pit bulls with crime, poverty and drugs, and often speak in xenophobic or racist terms about pit bull owners.

I can identify with all of the women profiled in your article. Some of the portions of their interviews could have come straight out of my own mouth. It almost felt like I was the one being interviewed! I started out hating pit bulls like everyone else. Then I had an abused pit bull dumped on me. I soon fell in love with pit bulls. Now I am deeply involved in education, training and rescue.

I greatly appreciate this article because it encourages people to rescue and adopt pit bulls, and it "normalizes" the pit bull by showing the dogs with normal, respectable owners. Normalization and humanization of the pit bull is essential if we are to put a stop to the rampant abuse and neglect that this type of dog experiences. When the



pit bull is reframed as a normal, friendly, family dog, it will no longer be desirable to the thugs and druggies who seek out and create vicious dogs — which also has the effect of creating a safer community where pit bulls are raised with the love and care that any dog needs and deserves.

It really made my day to read such a responsible, educational article. Thanks again, from a Texan who happened to be in Eugene this week.

*Jennifer Thomas  
www.happypitbull.com  
www.stopbsl.com*

**IRRATIONAL FEARS**

I loved Camilla Mortensen's piece (1/6) that profiled pit bull owners. Through personal accounts, she defended and acquitted a much-maligned breed of wonderful dogs.

For me, Mortensen was preaching to the choir. My grandchildren have raised, loved and been companioned by pit bulls for nearly 20 years. They are intelligent, affectionate pets that do not deserve the irrational fear and bad press that has been created around them. These wonderful animals were raised and bred

**viewpoint** BY KATIE MEEHAN

**Raising Arizona**

Believing in a better world

As news of the recent tragic shooting in Arizona ricocheted across the nation, I recalled the first time I met Rep. Gabrielle Giffords — in a different Tucson parking lot, during her run for office in 2006. Carne asada crackled on the grill; people laughed and traded gossip; my friend's band howled country tunes from a makeshift stage. Gabby shook hands, thanked volunteers, listened intently to people who tugged at her sleeve. When a cover of "El Guero Canelo" — a local anthem — was played, she dragged her staffers onto the dance floor. Her feet had no rhythm, but she was fearless.

Since then — and particularly since that Saturday — "Arizona" has become synonymous with political division and violence. After seven years and a doctorate from the University of Arizona, I left Tucson last summer for greener pastures in Oregon — my home state. At the new faculty orientation, people raised their eyebrows when I listed my schooling. "Oh, Arizona," one person sighed, "Why are they so backward?"

While I can't blame them — Arizona is ground zero for border conflict, anti-gay and anti-immigrant legislation, foreclosures and dire fiscal circumstances — I find this conceptual distance even more troubling. Following this tragedy, our Oregon congressional delegate chose to draw lines between "us" and "them." Rep. Kurt Schrader described Arizona as "a little more whacked out than other states." Rep. Peter DeFazio offered a

similar explanation. "I would hope that nothing like this would happen in Oregon," he said. "This kind of behavior isn't part of Oregon's culture."

Really? I was an undergraduate at the UO when the shootings at Thurston High School rocked our community to its core. I remember the hateful anti-gay rhetoric that backed Measure 9. We all witnessed the racist and anti-government testimonies of the Woodburn bank bombers. Just last month, someone started a fire at a mosque in Corvallis, in apparent retaliation to the Pioneer Courthouse Square bomb threat. The Beaver State is not immune to divisive politics, planned acts of violence, or refusal to accept social difference.

The polarization of political discourse, in my opinion, pivots on questions of social difference: how we codify it, where we allow it, how we police it. These issues reach beyond the saguaro-studded deserts of the Southwest. "It is not only about the difference of opinion," remarked Rep. Raul Grijalva, a congressman from Arizona's 7th District, "but how we handle difference. There needs to be an acceptance of divergent views and how we act like a community. The state of Arizona is the bellwether state as the creator of much of the division across the nation."

Arizona's Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik put it even more bluntly. "We have become the Mecca for prejudice and bigotry," he told a evening press conference. "Because I think it's the vitriolic rhetoric that we hear, day in and day out, from people in the radio business and some people in the TV business ... this has not become the nice United States of America that most of us have grown up in. And I think it's time that we do a little soul-searching." Some, like Sen. John Kyl, think "the sheriff's words have no place at a

press conference." But I think it's time to speak truth to power.



What meaning could ever emerge from such violence and loss? On one level, this was a story of a deeply disturbed individual, motivated by anti-government feelings, punishing citizens who happened to be, as Sheriff Dupnik said, "in the wrong place at the wrong time."

But on another level, this story reveals the profound refusal to peacefully accept difference. Consider this political map: Arizona is not "out there." It's right here. From health care to immigration, from the ideal role of government to the institution of marriage, political fault-lines run deep within our national bedrock. We suffer from the same lack of jobs, the same deteriorating education system, the same uncertain futures.

Now, more than ever, we need an American culture that respects difference — and that starts here, in Eugene. For 2011, try finding points of unexpected convergence and agreement between divisive issues. Attend a public lecture or event on a controversial topic. Learn to think critically and argue peacefully. Volunteer with a local organization that promotes peaceful understandings of social difference. Do a little soul-searching.

To the victims of this tragedy, their loved ones, and the people of the Old Pueblo, our Oregon hearts are with you. In these dark days, I reach back to another Saturday, to a different parking lot in Tucson — where under a starlit night Gabby Giffords danced in cowboy boots, asking us to believe in a world where hate gives way to hope. I'll see you there.

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