

EAT LOCAL MEAT

In response to Elijah Hennison's letter to the editor (1/20), yes, there are many problems in the factory-farmed world of meat and eggs, but I don't believe that going vegan is the right solution.

In an amazing foodie town such as Eugene, one doesn't have to (and, in fact, shouldn't) support low-quality, factory-raised animal products from other parts of the country. I completely support the FDA asking these concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) to stop routine use of antibiotics; if only they would actually *demand* such changes.

For several years I was a vegetarian/borderline vegan because of the way many animals are treated in our food production. Fortunately, I then realized that there are many amazing local farms producing meat, eggs and cheese of the highest quality, all within a short drive of our city, and all are treating these animals and our local ecosystem with the utmost respect.

Now I patronize Long's Meat Market for my Knee Deep grass-fed beef and Ranger organic chicken, and local stores all over carry amazing eggs that will beat the hell out of any commercial eggs (no pun intended). Eugenelocalfoods.com is also an amazing resource for people who want to eat meat and dairy responsibly.

Veganism is extreme, in my opinion, not to mention the diet regularly leads people to consuming high amounts of soy and "alternative" meat products that are laden with overly processed, often genetically modified foods with long ingredient lists and little nutritional value.

Andrew Harmon
Eugene

DO KIDS RIGHT

In the Devil Makes Three song "Do Wrong Right" there is a line, "Most thing that I know, I didn't learn in class," and since we are doing our schools wrong by

cutting funding and cramming classes, we can still do our kids right. With classroom sizes entering the 50s, kids aren't going to learn. Kids in a class of 50 have iPhones with Facebook; are they learning while so distracted?

We can try to allocate more resources to keeping our schools open, but budget deficits are a symptom of a civilization that is beyond its peak and is on its downward spiral. Our kids deserve education and we all are going to depend on their energy and ingenuity to spearhead our society into a dynamic post-oil future. Our world is changing and we are doing our kids and ourselves wrong by hoarding them in classrooms where they don't receive the attention to learn.

As long as our economy is tied to cheap oil, industrialized food, and consumer imports, it will continue to fail and thus public education will advance on its downward spiral. We need volunteers to stand up and lead victory gardens, bicycle

safety and maintenance, local production of materials and goods, and parents to put an emphasis on recruiting our kids out of limbo and allowing them access to these skills. School days are being cut and kids are standing idle; getting them engaged in enterprises that will lead us in the future might be the best way to do them right.

Micah Olson
Eugene

ANOTHER 'LIGHTEN UP'

Pity poor pundit Rush Limbaugh. The radio talk show host has the hardest job in the U.S. Five days a week he has to find actual differences between the Republicans and the Obama administration.

Scott Fife
Eugene

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Viewpoint BY DEBRA E. MCGEE

Death in the Desert

Humanitarian aid is never a crime

"Here, human footprints," said Steve. "They're leading up to the Guadalupe Ranch." He pulled the old truck to a stop, got out and squatted in the dry red roadbed. It was a welcome break from the violent jarring on the "road." It was only discernable as a "road" because it was cactus and brush free. There were holes 10 inches deep, jolts that threw you into someone's lap, and it was so steep all you saw was sky on many of the up-hill runs. So bad even the Border Patrol didn't drive here.

Steve climbed up on the metal gate, "Hola amigos! (continuing in Spanish) We're here to help. We have water and food. We have medical care. We are Americans who are friends. It's safe. Hola amigos." No response. Steve lost the footprints in the brush, so we headed back to Byrd Camp. When we arrived, the two migrants Antonio and Gilberto were already asleep in the medical tent.

Here in the Sonora desert, volunteering with No More Deaths, we are 16 miles from the Mexican border. Up at 5:30 am and in the pickup trucks by 7 to make "drops." We leave gallon jugs of water on trails known to be currently "active" by migrants heading *norte*. I am not here because I think illegal immigration is a "great idea" but rather because I want to help reduce the reality of hundreds of Mexicans and South Americans dying from dehydration every year.

You need four liters of water a day to survive the heat, perhaps more if you are moving fast in the daytime. Temperatures can exceed 107 degrees. Maybe a little less water if you are moving at night. Night travel is safer under the light of the full moon. It's easier to avoid the myriad of vicious vegetation and cliff drop-offs. Every plant that lives in the harshest part of the desert is covered in spikes and spears that when brushed against, leave cuts and broken tips that bury themselves in skin. Some can actually "shoot" their spikes. The "trails" are cut through red shale,

layers of desert clay that crumble and roll like little ball bearings, especially on a steep descent. It's easy to fall down and impossible to avoid the cruel needles of the cactus, ocotillo and akaysha. Even in the daytime you get covered with small bloody scratches.

It is no "accident" the migrants are hiking the harshest part of the desert. It's a plan designed by U.S. Border Patrol: the idea being, if only the most treacherous terrain is "open," the migrants will give up and stop coming. But it is 400 square miles of desert and mountains, too difficult to fence. They don't stop coming. They are just more likely to die in crossing.

Migrants come because it is too difficult to stay where they are. They come for opportunity – because their children are starving and have no future. They come north to labor hard and help their families survive.

NAFTA and other "sweet" trade deals passed through Congress to increase profits for our wealthy corporations have devastated the already desperate in many Third World countries. Like here, their rich get richer. Poor desperate people, without our social supports, who dare for a better life must "trust" the drug cartel guides/"coyotes" and risk their lives crossing the desert. If the "coyotes" (migrants are the "chickens") don't rape or abandon them and the bandits don't beat and rob them or the drug runners don't murder them, the unrelenting sun may dehydrate them to death.

The other reason they come is for love. Love of family is why 15-year-old Josseline crossed. She and her younger brother had been living with their grandparents in Mexico. Now they were old enough to cross the border and join their parents in California. Instead she died alone in a gully. She was found lying barefoot on the rocks. Had she worn the wrong shoes or not had enough water? Maybe her 90-pound body just couldn't withstand the long and arduous march. Her 13-year-old brother stayed with her as long as he could, but fearing death himself, left to follow the group heading north. What would you or I do? Most people do not easily wish to leave their families and homeland.

Antonio hobbled into the No More Deaths camp with Gilberto. They had seen our Mexican flag volunteers had hung from a tree and before that had received a "sign." It was the Guadalupe Ranch. (The Virgin of Guadalupe being a sacred symbol of hope



in their religion.) First a sign, then a flag "miracle" they declared. The volunteer nurse provided care for Antonio's swollen knee. He had been deported after 14 years working and living in Tennessee. In the months of detainment and deportation proceedings, his child had been born. He was trying to get home to meet his baby and provide for his family. If he gets caught a second time he will be guilty of a felony; it's a recent law. It will mean jail time and little chance of ever getting legal. Gilberto, also recently deported, has lived and worked in the U.S. for 20 years.

We follow certain rules while providing aid. While we can provide food and medical care, we cannot provide maps or directions. If the Border Patrol comes to the gate and asks, we must tell them we have migrants in camp. The three days they slept and ate with us restored them for the journey. That was the only "miracle" we had to offer.

Will they ever reach their families, I asked myself then and continue to ask myself? Did our act of charity address the massive systemic injustice? You might ask yourself the same.

An opportunity to stand with our local Latino community will be at 6 pm Thursday, Feb. 10 at the First Congregational Church, 1050 E. 23rd. We will have an opportunity to talk with local politicians about legislative action. Currently children of migrants who graduate from our public schools must pay out of state tuition for higher education. Local politicians will listen to concerns about the need to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants. This is a chance in our community to speak out against the injustice.

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