

these lights are long, and many bikers like myself often avoid these lights because of the length of the waits.

If Eugene wants to truly be a green, bike-friendly city, it needs to start giving bicyclists priority over cars.

*Steve Goldman
Eugene*

DELUDED TAX BACKERS

I don't believe there is a snowball's chance in Hell that the voters will pass the education income tax being shoved down the throats of 4-J School District residents. The budget for running schools should come from the county's property tax, and that tax should be made adequate for the purpose of running local school districts and other county services — period. There are also additional funds that come in from the lottery and other sources. If the property tax needs to be raised then so be it to insure a functional education system. As a property owner in Oregon I pay that tax as well as a tax on my income.

I am gay, and there's the rub. I am legally denied due process by the Oregon Constitution because of a recent amendment added by popular vote and support of, among others, people with children in public schools. My working-class mom

IT'S A DILDO!

I am a nudist, but not one of those in-your-face types. Nudity is nothing to be proud of and nothing to be ashamed of. The "problem" with that titty cover from last month (2/10) was *not* about nudity. There wasn't even an areola in sight!

Here's what it was and is: a photograph of a woman's cleavage with a blue-liquid filled test tube that was made to look like a *dildo* at first glance. It could not be more obvious.

I took that stack of papers in the window of the store I work at and I turned them over, and then put some old recreation guides on top of them. Why? It was embarrassing, that's why. That crap belongs in a Castle store or behind a stained curtain at the nearest quickie mart, not a health food store. We don't sell dildos or porn at the store I work at.

*Kate Hawn
Cottage Grove*

and dad sent me to private school without vouchers or any credit to their property taxes. They taught me the meaning of "The Social Contract" — each giving without complaint for the better good of all.

This proposed additional tax is not an opportunity for giving, rather it is a taking. It appears from what I've read in both this paper and the *R-G* that many of the very people who will gain the most from this tax

are seeking exemptions from it, in addition to whatever exemption they already enjoy by claiming dependents on their state and federal income tax statements. They want me to pay more for them! I'm sure for Hilary Johnson and her ilk this is a simple case of doing "what's right for the children." I respectfully point out that they are deluded.

*Tim Hilton
Springfield*

BAD GOVERNANCE

It's time to condemn the sin and redeem the sinner. Fleenor, Handy, Sorenson and their appointed budget committee members willfully engaged in a conspiracy to defraud the public when they participated in BIG. We all need to recognize bad governance and reject it. Doing so does not require the condemnation of the individuals in perpetuity, but just because the statute of limitations has run is no reason to encourage them or any other elected officials to continue bad behavior.

Their actions were willful — sanctions are appropriate. The sanctions should not last beyond the next election cycle, but they should be meaningful. I would support excluding the commissioners and their appointees from any committee/commission not specifically required by the charter. This would send a strong message to any group of elected officials that willfully conspire to defraud the public of due process.

*Mike Tayloe
Springfield*

DESTROYING OPPOSITION

It's not only aboard the HMS Pinafore that things are seldom as they seem. In Lane County, the skim milk of private timber company control over public for-

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BY JORGE NAVARRO

Stand Alone, Stand Together

Immigrants make America a better place

Living in the U.S. today is a paradox and a contradiction. It makes even the simplest of decisions an amazingly complex exercise. For instance, the Feds (and almost everyone else we know) recommend that we exercise and eat healthily by consuming less fat and eating more fruits and vegetables. Sane, reasonable advice. But wait! This is America. You can't tell us what to do! If a business or a corporation wants to sell us one of those double-decker, bacon-wrapped, blue cheese-stuffed, 1,400-calorie monsters made with food products shipped in from everywhere but here — all for \$4.99 — who are we to complain? They're not in business to keep us healthy! They're in business to make money! Welcome to the land of the rugged individualist. You're on your own.

All of this reminded me of a conversation I had with a Latina friend. I asked her, "What's the difference between Latinos and Norte Americanos?" Without skipping a beat, she said: "Americans are individualistic, materialistic and democratic. Mexicans are family-oriented, community-centered and autocratic." As a general brush stroke, I thought her response was in the ballpark. "Family-oriented, community-centered and autocratic"? Hmm ... How does that translate into this American life? I decided to ask two immigrant friends of mine about how they see themselves and the work they do in this community.

Basilio Sandoval is 44 years young, with a wife and two sons. He came to Oregon when he was 16. His family history is steeped in agriculture. He sees himself as being hardworking, responsible and skilled. The High School Equivalency Program (HEP) based at UO was a turning point for him. It was there he met his wife, got his GED, and met others, like himself, who were dedicated and committed to the greater

good of the community. He went to work at Centro Latino Americano, where he honed more skills. Currently he is their certified alcohol and drug counselor and a certified suicide prevention specialist; he mentors Latino youth for St. Vincent de Paul, and he and his family work as members of an organic farm cooperative. Basilio reports that dreaming is what he brings to the table.

Raul de la O is around 50 years old, in relationship, with two children. He arrived in Eugene in 1975. In the early 1980s he discovered the HEP program, got his GED, and learned to give back. It was there that he recognized himself in the faces of the others around him, learned the importance of education, and got connected.

He has worked at Chicano Affairs with Ruben Cota. He has worked at LCC in Community Services. He has immersed himself in Latin American Studies at the UO. He has taught community members how to build computers. He has taught English as a second language and is currently a certified gambling addictions counselor at Emergence, and is in the process of earning his certification as and drug and alcohol counselor. I asked him, "Why are you so interested in addictions counseling?" His response was clear and concise: "I understand how substance abuse has negatively impacted my life. I see how addictions continue to negatively impact my community. I want to give back to my community and make it a better place." Raul sees himself as a man of faith, doing his best to model what he preaches. He believes that he can be an agent of positive change.

These two men tell amazing stories of faith in



themselves and in the importance and power of community and family. Their contributions are more than rhetorical. They have made this a better place for all of us.

It is not easy being an immigrant. Overcoming prejudice and discrimination is difficult. Social scientists refer to certain cultural characteristics as "protective factors," and in the case of Latino immigrants, such factors are the importance of family and community. These allow Latino immigrants to overcome what otherwise would be devastating circumstances. America's obsession with the individual and materialism undermines these protective factors. Here's the proof: Research indicates that the longer an immigrant lives in the U.S., the more his or her health and mental health conditions deteriorate. It appears that living in America these days isn't easy for anyone — other than the very wealthy. Infant mortality, suicide, obesity, poverty, and depression and anxiety rates are all accelerating.

How about this? We need each other! Latin America's cultural and social history of being dominated by despots, tyrants and the dogmas of the absolute is well documented. The democratic ideals of justice and fairness are the promised gifts of America. The optimism and faith in hard work and family voiced by Basilio and Raul are the gifts of the immigrant. The protective factors of being beholden to family and community, of the individual being accountable to the whole, of the good of all being more important than the greed of a few are the solutions for what ails us all. A new American Dream based on equality, justice, fairness, and human rights. What an idea. I'm ready!

Jorge Navarro, raised in Los Angeles, is a first-generation Mexican American. He has worked with the Latino community for more than 40 years, and has served on the boards of many local community organizations. He is currently working as co-director of programs and development for Community Alliance of Lane County.