

# International Women's Day

¡Qué vivan las mujeres!

This year marked the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. Around the world hundreds of events were held in celebration of this day. Although March 8 was International Women's Day many activities took place throughout the month of March. Themes each year try to reflect global and local issues affecting women.

This year I participated in one of those many celebrations as part of the Center for the Study of Women in Society symposium "Women's Activism, Women's Rights" at the UO. As one of the panelist I spoke on "Immigrant Women Workers in Oregon."



Well, I don't know nor can I speak for every immigrant woman worker in Oregon, but as I began to think about what I would say and I began to gather information and read about the situations that immigrant women face in the workplace. I was saddened but not surprised to see that many immigrant women workers today are still facing many of the same situations and conditions that my mother faced back in the late 1950s and into the '60s and on.

My mother spent almost 20 years working in a "sweatshop" in California where you would freeze in the winter and cook in the summer. No windows or ventilation. Every day the women would walk out of that shop looking like they had just been snowed on because the lint was flying all over the place while they worked. My mother worked as a "joiner," someone who would put the garment together, and for that she got paid 12 cents for every garment she sewed.

There were no health benefits, no retirement plan, no vacation or sick leave. There was not even a break room. Everyone ate their lunch at their sewing machines or standing outside. She worked long hours and often was told to clock out and get back to work until 7 or 8 in the evening. I recall many times my mother bringing bundles of garments home to take apart because the boss didn't want her or the other women wasting time doing it at the shop. I know she never got paid for that.

I too worked at the shop with my mom and sisters in the summers so we could earn money for school clothes and also to help my parents with a few bills. It wasn't much but every little bit helped. My mom's favorite line during those days was: "Please do well in school, get an education ... I don't want you to end up here too." Of course she said this in Spanish. My mom never learned English. All the women she worked with were Mexicanas and they all spoke Spanish - except the owner and the boss (two white guys).

International Women's Day happens once a year but we need to remember that women around the world continue in big and small ways to contribute to their countries and communities, this includes immigrant women in the U.S. and in Oregon.

They also continue to face the same barriers that women before them have faced: working conditions that are unsafe, exploitation of their labor, low wages and wage theft, no benefits, racism, sexism, classism and situations that should not exist in 2011.

Did you know that farm workers, many who are women, contribute to Oregon's \$4 billion agriculture industry? Immigrant women workers are childcare providers, elder and home health care providers, domestic workers, service industry workers, farm workers, factory and processing plant workers, just to name a few.

Every day, Americans are benefiting from the hard work that these immigrant women are doing but don't give much thought to what is happening to them in those workplaces and what kind of conditions many of them are still working in.

International Women's Day has been celebrating women around the world for 100 years, fighting for the rights of women, shining a light on the struggles and treatment that women still face in their countries and communities, but also sharing stories of great courage and determination. Women are survivors and will continue to be that great force that will create a better and just world for all of us.

*Qué Pasa is a monthly column featuring the opinions of Lane County's Hispanic community. Guadalupe Quinn heads the Immigrant Rights Advocacy Program with Amigos Multicultural Services Center.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

people outside Kelly Middle School a few weeks ago protesting the very modest, temporary and progressive tax that will be put before the voters in May. The tax intends to prevent the loss of a hundred or so teaching jobs, about a week's worth of school closures, and an increased class sizes that would put us on par with schools in Mississippi.

It doesn't make sense to me. How is laying off 100 hardworking, taxpaying people a wise move? How much is a week's worth of childcare going for nowadays? For one child or for two? Ever try controlling five kids? Now make it 35, and try teaching them.

One of the first questions asked by businesses thinking of locating in Eugene or any other city is, "How are the schools?" The old saying "penny wise dollar foolish" comes to mind.

I'm a baby-boomer who characteristically got a good education. My parents wanted my brother and me to do better than they did. For them, supporting schools was a no brainer.

I've heard the "adult" arguments against the tax. The most disingenuous one is, "Let's wait for the state to figure it out." I wouldn't hold my breath on that one. It doesn't matter to me that my daughter is now in college. Let's not punish today's kids for our failure to step up to the plate.

Leslie Weinstein  
Eugene

pushing these days.

In his latest book, *Whole Earth Discipline: An Eco Pragmatist Manifesto*, Brand is whole-heartedly advocating nuclear energy as "green" technology, and as the savior of the long-term future of our planet. He also describes bioengineering as a "green" technology, and while stopping short of assigning a color to "clean coal," also would have us consider that energy source as a viable alternative to the consequences of our reliance on petroleum. While his voice, like all, should be heard, his conclusions are disturbing, to say the least.

Tom Agamenoni  
Eugene

### GREENS IGNORED

While referencing the nuclear catastrophe in Japan, an item in the Slant column (3/17) says that "like peace advocates, those with nuclear concerns in this country have no political party." That statement is as infuriating as it is ignorant.

The Pacific Green Party of Oregon has been active in this state for 20 years. We are the local branch of an international political movement, which, in fact, was founded on its opposition to war and nuclear energy.

Independent political parties face numerous barriers in this country: a centralized and corporate-controlled media; discriminatory election laws; and corrupt campaign finance rules which favor Wall Street over Main Street — to name a few. Another obstacle is the senseless and spineless attitude of publications like *EW* which claim to embrace progressive ideals yet continue to support lamestream politicians who encourage military madness and nuclear lunacy. You folks are part of the problem.

If the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the responses to the disasters in Japan and the Gulf of Mexico suit you just fine then, by all means, stick with the Democrats. However, for those who wish to be part of the solution, I encourage you to check out [www.pacificgreens.org](http://www.pacificgreens.org) and become a Green Party member by registering online at [www.oregonvotes.org](http://www.oregonvotes.org)

Blair Bobier  
Corvallis

EDITOR'S NOTE: We meant to say "no major political party." We like to cover the Greens. We just wrote about the Pacific Green Party's work with Move To Amend in our March 10 issue; and we put Winona LaDuke, a Green Party national candidate, on our cover Sept. 2 for her fight against tar sands mining.

### TEACHABLE MOMENT

Kali Star ("Racist Opera" letter, 3/17) scorns the notion of a "teachable moment," but I will attempt to do some teaching anyway.

The lyric "The n----- serenader/ And others of his race," in the Gilbert & Sullivan play *The Mikado*, refers to a category of entertainer (known as "minstrel show men" in the U.S.) who were white musicians who performed in blackface.

By the time *The Mikado* premiered, the "n-word" was already a vulgar insult when applied to actual Africans or South Asians, but was considered an innocuous term when applied to blackface performers. It was clearly in the latter sense that the word was used in the operetta, and the class of lowbrow musician was clearly the "race" being slated for elimination.

Life goes on.

John M. Burt  
Eugene

### BRAND LIKES NUKES

I found it interesting, in light of what is going on in Japan today, that you chose to announce Stewart Brand's March 10 Corvallis lecture in *EW's* Activist Alert column without qualifying what the author of the *Whole Earth Catalog* is

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