

I Went to Africa

Finding wealth in history and culture

When I'm in America, they remind me I'm from Africa; when I'm in Africa, they remind me I'm from America.

Travel is broadening, as they say, and I was granted the opportunity to go to Africa with a group of yoga practitioners. Besides teaching classes about Africa and Africans in America, I had to admire a number of Africans who came to America, ending up in Lane County, where one dubbed his workplace as "a training ground for learning how to deal with institutional racism." Another, whose tribal totem was a mouse, left me with the admonition to "stand tall." I had to wonder at their grace and endurance as they both became American citizens; I speculated that Africa was the source of their strength, and America of course, the test of that strength.



There is a difference between throwing out the British 230 years ago, and 50 years ago. In America, only Natives recall having democracy and civilization before 1492, or the Dark Ages. In Africa, the Dark Ages came with colonization, and the struggle towards the light is all around you in the people. It's embedded and surviving amidst what we consider grinding poverty, but they are not ground down. They are rich in something else besides bling.

After my last column, someone sent a black dead mouse to the UO, using my name and work address as the return address. UO Public Safety asked me if I had any enemies. I was puzzled, not fearful. Instead I was inspired by the thought of my Shona friend Derek, and I prepared to go to Africa. Where had he come from, and gone through, wresting his country back from the racist colonizers, only to lose it to a power-mad despot, who left the people even more impoverished?

Well, in Africa culture and history are forms of wealth, and the land itself is rich and fertile. I met people eking out a living sifting Togo sands, who remember their ancestors living six millennia ago in the biblical cities of present day Iraq. I met Vodun priests with images of the Hindu god Ganesha on the walls of their temples, claiming 600 million fellow practitioners, following a practice 100,000 years old.

They shrugged when I asked, "What's up with all the White Jesus pictures? Ieshua was an African." "Of course he was," they replied, "but the influence of the colonizer is still very much present." While the tombs of W.E.B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah are tourist destinations, some of their lessons have been lost. If millennia-old sacred grounds are littered with trash, if Chinese nationals are allowed to use mercury to extract gold (while the chief or king gets a kickback), what does it matter if you have cell phone reception and your clean drinking water comes out of plastic bags and bottles sold on the street?

Du Bois wrote that America had a lot to teach the world, but warned of not bleaching, or losing touch with your African soul, in the continuing struggle to improve the world.

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

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SHARED TEACHER

McKenzie Elementary School has a similar classroom situation to that described in Lowell in Gordon Lafer's viewpoint Sept. 29. McKenzie's fourth and fifth grades share a teacher but not a classroom — the kids I've talked with are suffering the consequences, and these children are usually a teacher's dream, not whiners. Their mothers just want the administration "to set examples of positive behavior, to be role models for our kids."

Isn't this kind of a perfect microcosm of what's going on with the protests on Wall Street. The executives must have their perks and inflated salaries even at the expense of health care for teachers and reasonable student/teacher ratios.

Lia Gladstone
McKenzie Bridge

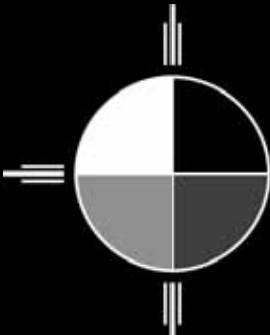
WALL STREET ANARCHY

I love what is happening on Wall Street and elsewhere. It's the coolest thing I've seen in my lifetime after a different kind of wall coming down in Germany. Occupiers might benefit from knowing this isn't the first time Americans have protested the evil practices of the subhuman parasites on Wall Street and their co-opting of the American political process. Whether by design or coincidence, the Occupy Wall

Street movement began on Sept. 17; on Sept. 16, 1920 a bomb went off on Wall Street in front of J.P. Morgan's bank, killing 38 and wounding more than 100. Tragically, Morgan was not one of them. The bombing was one of the last acts of "propaganda through deed" committed by anarchists during the harsh government crackdown that effectively ended organized anarchism in the U.S.

I hope the Occupy Wall Street movement maintains its beautiful, diversified, vibrant anarchist roots and doesn't become just another worthless reform movement. Representative democracy is inherently vulnerable to corruption and needs to be replaced with something better. Like the mutual aid societies people have lived in since Paleolithic times connected together by voluntary mutual aid agreements where everyone has a say in government and we can be responsible for our own administration and public services at the neighborhood level, even in the biggest cities. Where there are work-at-home and cottage industry opportunities for people to not have to be wage slaves. A system that can never be hijacked by any self-appointed superior minority.

Warren Weisman
Eugene



DONALD DEXTER JR DMD LLC DENTISTRY

Our vision is simple – we believe in integrity above all else, and we serve those who are seeking a trusted source for their dental care

Browse our website or call if you have any questions!
We look forward to providing your care.

2233 WILLAMETTE ST, BLDG B • 541-485-6644
www.drDexter.com

★★★ 525 HIGH STREET, EUGENE ★ (541) 683-1999 ★★★



Open 'Til 7pm M-F!

Over 80 Varieties of Original Soups!

New SOUP SUPPER HOURS! Open 'til 7pm Monday — Friday
Gourmet Sandwiches ~ Custom Salads ~ Full Espresso Bar ~ Frozen Soup To-Go
Give the gift of SOUP! Soup Nation Gift Cards Now Available!

★★★ See Our Daily Soup Menu on Facebook Like ★★★