

providing much-needed childcare for many families in the area.

The Boys and Girls Club was able to provide after-school care for up to 259 children in the Eugene/Cottage Grove area, for the small membership fee of \$20 a year. This allowed a number of families who could not otherwise afford childcare a safe and nurturing environment for their children to spend time. I worry about the families that cannot place their children in other after-school programs, and how this affects their employment, as well as daily family dynamics. Without these programs, many of the older children will have to stay in their homes alone, resulting in isolation and boredom that can lead to troublesome and sometimes destructive behaviors.

The Boys and Girls Club is hoping to reopen on Jan. 3. In the interim, it is their goal to raise \$150,000 in order to get things back up and running. This program relies heavily on donations and fundraising, so as a community I encourage all of us to do our best to support this program and others like it. They are vital to our community. It is our responsibility to work together to make these programs available to the children that need them.

*Kathleen Jolly
Eugene*

TRYING TO RECONNECT

While I was waiting in line to grab some lunch at LCC, I overheard a conversation going on and a few key words popped out. A big one being the word "Mexicans." Me being a big ole Mexican, I brace myself. I wait, and boom there it is: "Why do we have to learn their language? This is America, we speak English!" Blood rushes to my cheeks as the two women in front of me laugh to themselves. This is a conversation I have heard many times over; it still affects me.

My grandmother and grandfather moved to California from Mexico in the late 1950s. They both worked and raised a family, all the while trying to assimilate into a culture that would never really accept them. When I was a little kid, I remember my grandpa trying to teach my brothers and me Spanish, so we could in turn better communicate with our grandmother. In our English-speaking world, we didn't want to learn this weird language, none of our friends spoke it, so why should we learn it right? We were disconnected to our culture at an early age and it wasn't until I moved to Oregon from California, a little over 10 years ago, did I really feel that disconnect.

So now I'm in my 30s trying to reconnect. Luckily through time I've gather enough Spanish words that I can carry on a conversation with my grandmother and throughout the years she has learned enough English to talk to me. She still has shame around her accent and is reluctant to speak English to anyone she doesn't know. It is sad that this beautiful 84-year-old grandmother has this shame surrounding her Spanish drenched English speaking voice. It is because of intolerant folks with entitlement issues that this kind of shame exist.

Yes, we speak English in the U.S., but we also speak so many different languages. You aren't the only ones here. Get over it.

*Marlena Zaragoza
Eugene*

OCCUPY THE HEART

We may be the 99 percent of the U.S. population, but as American citizens, we are still the wealthy elite of the global population. We are among the 1 percent with access to a college education, highly quality health care and clean drinking water. As broken as our political system is, we still posses a great deal more political freedom than our brothers and sisters of the less "developed" nations of the world, the people whom we directly oppress through our daily support of the very same corporations we decry.

We buy shoes manufactured by abused children working in sweatshops in Asia. We use cell phones and computers containing rare and toxic elements controlled by guerrilla forces in central Africa, killing innocent civilians and endangered species in the crossfire. We eat bananas, sugar and chocolate grown on slave plantations throughout Latin America. We further desecrate and pollute our own land through resource extraction and the dumping of toxic waste.

We are collectively responsible for the resource wars being fought across the globe. We maintain our consumer lifestyle at the expense of all others. We are all conditioned by our parents, school teachers, government "representatives," corporate media, etc. to accept this short-sighted and self-centered version of the American dream.

We could all use a bit more love and compassion from our friends and neighbors. However, if we are going to survive as a species (or evolve beyond our present circumstances), we are all going to need to make some very drastic changes in the way that we relate to one another and the more-than-human world.

The one thing I have discovered which has never failed is the willingness to listen to the heart. Through meditation and/or contemplative practices we are able to deepen our connection to a source of strength and clarity which is needed now more than ever.

*Nathaniel Nordin-Tuininga
Eugene*

JUVENILE NAME-CALLING

Responding to violence with violence ensures the escalation, not the eradication of violence. We want to avoid becoming that which we abhor. So perhaps its time we actually live by our ideals and become the change we want to see in the world.

It can start simply with our use of language. Stop this juvenile name calling, and actually acknowledge the people that we don't agree with as we would want to be acknowledged by them.

Every time you print the terms "gun nuts" or "wing nuts" you are stooping to their level, and you are becoming the very ignorance you criticize. Additionally, you are fanning the flames of conflict instead of rising to the challenge of reconciliation. Grow up. Evolve. Expand your compassion to all living creatures. Don't be so lazy as to resort to insults to categorize entire populations of complex human beings.

Or not — the future is yours to live in.
*Robert Gans
Dexter*

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