

## SELECTIVE OUTRAGE

Police all over the country are planning a big show of support at upcoming funerals for their Dallas comrades. Where's the show of support for those they murdered and their families? Where's the outrage by the police community that their own murdered innocent people?

This apparent lack of concern, understanding and human decency for anyone other than their own is at the root of why so many Americans have come to distrust and dislike the police. This attitude of "we're right, you're wrong" creates a lack of respect for the police, which in turn makes it easier to strike against them.

Whatever outreach Oregon police departments plan to make to their fellow officers in Dallas ought to be met with an equal show of respect and outreach for the victims at the hands of police. That would be one small step towards soothing the public mood.

Alex Kaye  
Eugene

## VIOLENT CYCLE

The news is full of police killing black men, and being killed in return. We

need to understand that poverty breeds violence. Then the police become fearful, overreact and become violent, which leads to violence in response.

It's a dangerous positive social feedback cycle. "Positive" in the sense of a feedback cycle that moves a complex system further from stabilization. Another example is the melting of the Arctic ice and global warming. A negative feedback cycle, like a thermostat, stabilizes a system.

Most of the poor and near-poor — the working class — are white, and I think they are becoming more likely to explode also. There are other ways to kill people than using a weapon. A documentary on health care I watched said that the main determinant of health in the U.S. is income. The main reason is stress, caused by financial pressure. Stress sets people off. For example, when unemployment rises, so does child and wife abuse.

We need to do something about our economy, either create more government jobs or set up a guaranteed minimum income, paid by the government to everyone below a certain income level and financed through higher corporate taxes. This would help all of us to benefit from

automation instead of just the rich people who own the machines.

Lynn Porter  
Eugene

## DON'T GIVE MORE POWER

The Lane County Board of Commissioners is overreaching itself by trying to have veto power over the ballot initiative process! It is a ridiculous idea and just shows the level to which these elected officials are influenced by corporate money interests.

The initiative process is tedious and difficult, but it exists to give citizens some direct say in government policies. One of the current proposed initiative petitions is for local control over protecting "health, safety and welfare" by banning aerial spraying of forest herbicides and pesticides. The other seeks to assure that citizen rights won't be abridged by the kind of move the commissioners are proposing.

Both are opposed by the corporate sponsors of four-fifths of the county commissioners. The dissenting commissioner, Pete Sorenson, has called this plan to give the Board of Commissioners power to stop initiative

proposals before they get to the voters "a really bad" idea. He is correct.

*The Register-Guard* and *Eugene Weekly* have also come out against giving commissioners this added power, and they are correct.

Don't let county commissioners usurp power over the voter's initiative petition process.

Robert Jacobs  
Eugene

## HATE CRIMES

Amidst the hypnosis of Oregon Country Fair and Olympic Trials, Eugene tries to sweep this under the rug: At least nine Asian businesses have had doors or windows broken since October, with increasing frequency.

This appears to be an epidemic — not just a mental health issue but an apparent series of hate crimes. A healthy administration and vigilant media could help to find perpetrators and assure the community, but instead we have nothing but silence.

Fortunately, community members have stepped up to support the victims, but this epidemic is spreading, and the more we

# VIEWPOINT

BY MICHAEL ROOKE-LEY

# Liberals Out of Touch

IT'S TIME TO RECONNECT WITH REALITY

**W**ith the British electorate's dramatic and unexpected decision to pull out of the European Union, *The New York Times* reports that "the same yawning gap between the elite and mass opinion is fueling a populist backlash" all across Europe and the United States.

Here at home, election season is upon us and widespread frustration with conventional party politics has been the motivating force behind both the Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders campaigns. The Trump appeal, as with the "Brexit" revolt, has much to do with resentment toward migrants and refugees.

Meanwhile, across the aisle, we must recognize that the Democratic Party, in particular, has lost touch with its traditional working-class base, and we of the "liberal elite" must take some responsibility for having compromised our values and, in the months ahead, for putting us back on course.

Liberals, some would say, simply feel guilty for being dealt a privileged hand. No, liberals today don't operate out of guilt for lifestyle choices and professed political views that may seem inconsistent ... but we are falling out of touch.

I live in a beautiful home in a virtually all-white upscale neighborhood of like-minded (liberal) academics and professionals. We comprise a community of legal aid lawyers, social workers, professors, public school teachers, homeless advocates, reproductive rights counselors, health care policy reformers, reentry (from prison or jail) supporters, public defenders, psychologists helping a financially-strapped and emotionally-stressed

clientele, doctors serving those on the street without insurance and resources, socially conscious judges and a host of dedicated public servants.

We support all the right causes, e.g. a \$15 minimum wage, Black Lives Matter and a clean environment. And yet, with the end of each workday, we return to our comfortable zip code; the working class and the poor do not live in our neighborhood.

Although our political leanings have been all about bringing moderation and justice to a capitalist system, we've been co-opted into lifestyles that perpetuate and aggravate a class-based society. Our young children, so much of whose time is spent at home or in the neighborhood, are being raised largely in a segregated world.

Two Americas. Out of sight, out of mind. All across our nation, gated communities serve as Trumpian walls. Sadly, we have rendered ourselves ineffectual in addressing these obscene class divisions — the "income inequality" mantra that has become so popular in political speeches and so absent in political action. Yes, we need to walk the walk.

As embarrassing, offensive and dangerous as he may be, Don "Make-America-White/Male-Again" Trump is not solely to blame. He simply says out loud what Republicans have believed for at least a generation; meanwhile, Bill Clinton and the Democrats ignored their traditional middle-class base and chose shareholders over jobholders, Wall Street over Main Street. With the fraternity of investment bankers running through a revolving door with the Obama administration, it's no surprise that we've traded labor unions for corporate profits and replaced organized

labor with temps and independent contractors.

The success or failure of our public schools — and the hopes and dreams of our students — is largely pre-determined by the socio-economic class of the parent body in the surrounding neighborhood. And now we have charters and privatization undermining our teachers' unions and a public education system that was once envied around the globe. Rather than embarking on a single-payer health system, we've saved seats at the table for insurers and Big Pharma.

Libertarians, including so many of the white male entrepreneurs of Silicon Valley, see little need for the kind of social safety net so common in most every other industrialized nation. And the "shared economy" to which we once aspired has come to mean Airbnb and Uber.

In short, we're living in a segregated society. The American Dream of upward mobility into a large and welcoming middle class is fading fast for those who struggle so desperately. To update James Carville's advice to Bill Clinton's campaign in 1992, now "it's the [class-based] economy, stupid."

Many of us whose political lives blasted off in the 1960s have lost the pathway toward the kind of world we set out to create. With a gimlet eye, we see our expectations diminished and, in moments of harsher self-assessment, a legacy betrayed.

As we encourage one another in our retirement years with renewed energy around the issues that have inspired our lives, let's acknowledge that we've fallen out of touch — not out of breath, not out of guilt, just out of touch — and commit ourselves to reconnecting across class lines (and with the politically-aroused Millennials) as we move our generation's agenda forward. For starters, how about some low-income, subsidized housing in our finest neighborhoods? Let's talk: union2757@comcast.net.

*Michael Rooke-Ley is a long-time resident of the South Eugene neighborhood.*