

VOTE SEMPLE

For the past several years, as a member of the Eugene Human Rights Commission, as a volunteer at Occupy Medical and as a community activist, I have worked to protect the rights of people who are homeless.

I have also often heard about the work of another advocate for those who are homeless, Emily Semple. I am pleased to endorse her for Eugene City Council, Ward 1.

Some international human rights groups have begun to refer to people who are homeless in the U.S. as internal refugees. The extreme economic inequality in the U.S. is just as much a human disaster as a war or a tsunami. And, like a natural disaster, it has displaced people and created refugees — in this case, economic refugees.

Semple's suggested policy of "Shelter First" is consistent with this human rights viewpoint. When you are confronted with a growing population of displaced persons, the first thing to do is get them out of the elements and into places where they can survive.

This is why Semple has supported the

city's rest-stop program. She has also supported Mayor Piercy's proposal for a public shelter.

Emily Semple is someone who the people of Eugene can trust to protect everyone's rights, including those who are most marginalized and vulnerable.

Ken Neubeck
Eugene

OPEN LETTER TO EPD

The Springfield-Eugene chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice calls upon the Eugene Police Department to acknowledge their responsibility and repudiate the racist views espoused by notorious white supremacist Jimmy Marr.

The EPD's recent statement to the *Weekly* — regarding the widely circulated photograph of a Eugene police officer shaking Marr's hand — failed to adequately denounce this dangerous ideology.

The claim that the officer did not see the back of the truck (painted with the words "Jew Lies Matter") seems disingenuous. If our local law enforcement does not immediately recognize our area's most infamous white supremacist, then they are failing to

adequately protect our community from the violence these views represent.

This is not hyperbole. Larnell Bruce was recently run down in cold blood after being attacked by white supremacists in Gresham outside a convenience store. Hate speech dehumanizes and increases the likelihood that someone, somewhere, is going to act on those views.

The EPD appears to have been set up by Marr. We suggest that a stronger response to this embarrassment — one that better represents the EPD's commitment to protect and serve all members of our community — is to strenuously disavow all association with racist and anti-Semitic hate speech.

Lee Gilmore
On behalf of Springfield-Eugene SURJ

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY

Columbus Day has been a holiday since 1868, but in my personal opinion, we should spend less time recognizing a man who was responsible for the slaughter of thousands and start commemorating Indigenous people.

In *A People's History of the United*

States by Howard Zinn, he states that "... during Columbus's second time traveling to the 'Americas' Christopher and his crew took women and children back with them for slavery and sex. On the trip back from his expedition about 200 died on the ship from disease."

With this knowledge alone, why should Columbus be awarded a whole day named after him?

I think that today we celebrate Columbus Day because people feel the day gives them a sense of who they are and where they come from. Columbus was an explorer who claimed to have discovered land. That's great, but he pillaged and tore apart the homes of thousands.

A lot of people don't know the whole story of Christopher Columbus, and I think that it shouldn't be that way. In order for that change to happen, or maybe just get the ball rolling, we could change how we celebrate Columbus Day by changing the name to Indigenous Peoples' Day.

Haylee E. Gonzales
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: More letters on this topic from students at North Eugene High School can be found online at eugeneweekly.com.

VIEWPOINT BY DEANNA CHAPPELL BELCHER AND ART PEARL

Schools Need a Dose of Democracy

CLASSROOMS LAUNCH GOOD CITIZENS

As we celebrate and reflect upon another year "back to school" and brace ourselves for the upcoming election season, we are reminded of George Washington's words in his 1797 farewell address: "... as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion be enlightened." Ours is a much different world, but Washington's logic is just as sound today as it was then. *The government we have reflects the state of public enlightenment.*

Now we reap what we have sown: a presidential election characterized by ugly name-calling and undisguised appeals to ignorance and bigotry featuring two unpopular candidates. Youth most likely to be most affected by the outcome are also the most turned off. Everywhere there is talk of democracy's demise if the young folks don't vote. But democracy is not just voting. *Democracy is the process by which citizens work together to make the world a better place.*

Schools introduce students to what democracy is and how it works. This is more than knowing the names of presidents and the three branches of government, or memorizing the Bill of Rights. We must create classrooms in which students experience democratic practices, where teachers model democratic authority — fair, transparent, accessible, persuasive and negotiable. We need classrooms to be places where all students are equally celebrated as members of a learning community.

Our children need opportunities to think — to consider the state of the world and understand the processes by which government influences the economy, the environment, social policy, the law and ultimately war or peace, and justice or injustice. Students need to engage in hands-on projects to produce a real public good — to experience the process of working together to benefit their community — and reflect on their efforts. This is how students will become enlightened and active citizens.

This year, as we send our youth off to school, along with pencils, notebooks and glue sticks, let's include some tools for democracy:

- **VISION.** Let's invite young people to imagine a world as good as it can be, to share their visions and discuss the various ideas as to desirability and feasibility.

- **INCLUSION.** Currently, differences of opinion set students into different camps whose only interaction is bullying, which schools struggle to prevent. Students need to learn how to debate differences and to disagree without being disagreeable.

- **SKILLS FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENRY.** School can be a place where we learn to listen carefully to each other, to defend proposals with logic and evidence, to negotiate differences and respect the rights of those whose ideas differ from our own.

Bringing democracy to classrooms is difficult, but not impossible. In our careers, we have witnessed students in all grades working together to produce a public good — making their world better. Right here in Eu-

gene, teachers at River Road and Edison have helped fifth grade students make the Bill of Rights lively and relevant.

Each of us can support those efforts, encourage students, teachers and community members to bring democracy not just to the classroom, but to youth sports and even student government. We can:

- Bring education issues to the attention of neighbors, friends and family.
- Discuss democracy in education on social media.
- Attend a school board meeting and make a public comment about what you think education should be.
- Advocate for democracy by running for office on school boards, city council and county boards, and support others that do.
- Join a grassroots group like CAPE (Community Alliance for Public Education).

Democracy is people. People in action. Let's all remember this as we read up on issues, talk with each other and do our part as informed and enlightened citizens.

Art Pearl is an educator who taught at the University of Oregon during the late 1960s and early '70s. His classes were so popular that they were held in Mac Court. He is a professor emeritus from University of California Santa Cruz. At 94, Art continues his pursuit of democracy through his work with elementary school students, college students and community organizations. Deanna Belcher is a teacher, learner and parent who hopes to be just as awesome as Art someday. They are members of the Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE), a coalition of parents, teachers, professors, students and community members who challenge the many assaults on public education and who believe in a strong public education as the foundation for American democracy. CAPE meets Mondays at 4:30 pm at Perugino in Eugene; more at oregoncape.org.