

(N)ICE SUGGESTIONS

Don't miss the opportunity to make use of the ice storm's destruction!

Rather than cutting and hauling away trees, leave trunks standing (if safe) to provide wildlife habitat. Otherwise, leave logs on the ground to slowly decompose.

Cut limbs for firewood but save lengths of cedar and locust for rot-resistant fence posts and construction materials. Other wood can be salvaged for making furniture or art.

Logs and stumps can be used to grow shiitake and other types of edible mushrooms. Get directions and purchase plugs inoculated with spores online at Fungi Perfecti.

Collect evergreen boughs for wreathes, gather moss from fallen maples to use as mulch around houseplants, search for mistletoe on oak branches and transplant licorice ferns from downed trees to a shady parts of your garden.

Wood chips make excellent mulch and path material. Arborists will often dump a pile of wood chips in your yard for free if you ask them while they're working in your neighborhood.

Go outside with children and talk about the weather and the forest ecosystem.

And, finally, since the city of Eugene no longer plants trees, volunteer or make a donation to Friends of Trees to help sustain our urban forest.

Allen Hancock
Eugene

SUPPORT NEEDED FOR KEPW

Eugene PeaceWorks is celebrating 35 years working for peace, justice and fairness and accuracy in media. Years ago we decided to focus on media activism and education to counter the corporate media spin. That's why we're sponsoring KEPW, the new non-commercial community radio station. It's helping unify the community by providing a public forum for diverse voices including non-profits and marginalized minorities who otherwise would be unheard.

KEPW is streaming online at kepw.org where listeners can hear music, national shows like Amy Goodman's "Democracy Now" and David Barsamian's "Alternative Radio" and over 40 interviews with local nonprofits. Streaming is just the beginning. In January, KEPW will also broadcast at 97.3 FM. To help this transition, it's important for the community to know about an urgent KEPW fundraising drive.

The good news is that community donations so far are well over halfway toward the \$10,000 needed for the required major equipment and installation costs. However, the remaining funds needed must be raised asap so KEPW can be on the air by early February to meet FCC requirements.

To meet this deadline, tax-deductible donations to Eugene PeaceWorks this month will be doubled by an anonymous donor! At kepw.org, use your credit card or donate to the gofundme campaign there. Or mail your check made out to EPW to PO Box 11182, Eugene 97440. To volunteer, call and leave a message with Jana Thrift at 541-606-2025.

David Zupan
Eugene

NO EXCUSE FOR RACISM

We (speaking to fellow white folks here) are comfortable with our relationship to the overt forms of racism we often associate with white hoods, swastikas, segregation and hate crimes. It is easy to spot, and we have developed our own familiar communal reflex: a swift declaration without nuance or exception that the moral virtues of hate-driven racism are not open for debate — that racism is fundamentally

evil and entirely antithetical to our values and way of life.

The far more commonplace racism that emerges in the cracks of our ignorance and laziness is no less visible for people of color, nor for us white folks, too, if we simply bother to pay attention and consider their perspectives.

We need to be brutally honest with ourselves about what kind of a culture we are perpetuating if we truly want to help. That means we all need to get comfortable with the discomfort of acknowledging and owning up to our prejudices and the actions driven by those prejudices that we try to dismiss or ignore.

I am guilty of racism. We are all guilty of racism. If we can't accept that simple fact then it's time for us to stop pretending that we are helping and get out of the way.

No amount of good work, community service or activism can excuse a racist misstep. Ignorance is understandable, but understanding a racist action is far different from excusing or overlooking it. When we excuse a racist action, we are justifying it. When we excuse racism, we are sending a clear unspoken message that this is okay with us.

We owe it to ourselves and, most importantly, to people of color to encounter

VIEWPOINT BY DOYLE SRADER

Two New Year's Resolutions

ON HUMOR AND INTELLIGENCE

I've taught interpersonal communication to college students for 20 years and I thought Gayle Landt's viewpoint, "Difficult Conversations" [EW 12/8] gave excellent advice. But part of me thinks we're in danger of re-fighting the last war.

I agree we need to listen and de-escalate conflict, and that's blue-chip advice for successful communication. But 2016 also points us toward radical steps to reinvent our habits.

I have two New Year's resolutions I want to invite others to join.

I want to stop using humor to get things done. Humor is enjoyable, but it has this weird camouflage that makes it appear powerful when it isn't. Too many of us thought the way to go with Donald Trump was to mock him relentlessly until all of us roared with laughter and rubbed our hands for the guaranteed electoral landslide.

Can you possibly imagine a way we could've made more fun of him? Did we hold anything back? We took mockery as far as it could go and it failed us.

There's something I tell my public-speaking students: Funny is easy, but powerful is hard. Too often they settle for funny because funny feels safe and achievable but powerful feels too earnest and soul-baring. They prefer the detachment and noncommittal pseudo-power of humor. But you almost never change the world with humor.

Honestly, it has a lot in common with masturbation: There's a burst of pleasure, but it doesn't bring anything to life. Instead, it just dissipates and is soon followed by a hunger for more. People who channel their power toward making the world better construct a satisfying

legacy. Have you ever known a stand-up comic who could ever, ever silence the craving for the next laugh?

In 2017 I want to use jokes the way I use bowling nights, as a way to flavor my time with friends and family so we enjoy ourselves and make happy memories. But I want to stop deluding myself any longer that greed, injustice or any other threat to our social connective tissue is funny. They're not.

We need the courage to speak earnestly, to have more McCarthy-confronting Joseph Welch moments and fewer John Oliver moments. Oliver can produce a rant a week for HBO, but virtually none of his critiques have any lasting force. He's funny, biting so, but the messages are clever and disposable.

In the 21st century, there's always someone just a few feet or a few minutes away with the next funny joke, and the thing about each joke is that it instantly makes us forget the one that came before. We need calls to action that stick in people's minds and throats and *won't go away*. My first resolution might stir up some disagreement, but my second will probably spark anger. I think we need to recast stupidity.

Look, I'm an educator. For my entire adult life I've repeated things like "I don't think there is such a thing as a stupid person. Stupid decisions, stupid mistakes, sure. No stupid people." But I really am losing any loyalty to that idea.

There is no *Lake Woebegon* effect for thinking and reasoning skills. We cannot all be above-average, and some of us, honestly, are below average. The problem is, in the information age, people who are below-average are on the receiving end of contempt. It becomes a truly

awful thing to say that someone, anyone, is stupid.

But there are stupid people. Not a few, either. A bunch.

Go back in human history, and you'll find a time when it was equally bad to call someone weak. In your typical prison, it still is. But I'm fine with admitting publicly that I'm not exactly muscle-bound; at some point we made peace with the idea that some people are stronger and some are weaker.

What it took to be taken seriously by other people shifted from muscle to thought, and stupid took the place of weak.

But that also gets it catastrophically wrong. I have a Ph.D., and awards for my teaching and research, but I've known hordes of people who outdo me in wisdom, sensibility, kindness and problem-solving. David H. Freedman wrote a wonderful essay about this in *The Atlantic* last summer, "The War on Stupid People," which I highly recommend you take a few minutes to read.

Intelligence is useful, but lack of intelligence is not lack of worth.

My other New Year's resolution for 2017 is to work hard at breaking my habit of being dismissive and contemptuous of those who reason poorly or struggle to understand complex matters. When I'm not strong enough to do something myself, I ask for or hire help, with no shame involved.

It's time we understood relative intelligence as one trait among many, not the raw material of simple respect.

Local college professor Doyle Srader earned his Ph.D. in Speech Communication from the University of Georgia in 2003, and has been teaching communication to college students for 25 years.