

HELPING THE POOR

At a time when an excellent *Eugene Weekly* article by Taylor Perse and Morgan Theophil teaches us Eugene's Community Court didn't provide as much help as hoped to some of our most disadvantaged (Jan. 31), it is also useful to recall the words given by Carlos Fuentes in *The Years With Laura Diaz* to Orlando Ximenez to say to Laura when she despaired over having the ability to help the so numerous poor:

"Choose the very poorest. Just one, Laura. Choose one and you'll save them all."

John Biggs
Cottage Grove

COURTING PRAISE

While credence is due to the investigative reporting that uncovered the lack of data collection of Eugene's Community Court program ("Courting a Problem," Jan. 31), along with the need for further refinement prior to touting the program's success, we should also recognize the benefits of the innovative program.

Kudos are due to those city officials who spearheaded the effort to receive \$200,000 in federal dollars for program creation, mitigating the cost for the Eugene tax-payer.

Secondly, recognition that our traditional court system is failing us and taking a step towards something more collaborative shows that our leaders may just be listening to their constituents. Gratitude is owed to the volunteers and staff, includ-

ing the amiable law enforcement officers, who are always present at the event openly building relationships with vulnerable community members.

Lastly, the data shows more than 1,800 persons have used Community Court to access supportive services and community resources, a lifeline for those in need. Creating no-barrier and equitable access to area resources serves as an innovative and invaluable diversion effort for Eugene.

For those who may find themselves in a hard place, all are welcome to access area supports every Friday, from 10 am to 3 pm in the first-floor conference room of the Eugene Library.

Travis Baker
Eugene

EQUAL HUMANITY

In response to the letter "Get Rid of the Poor" (Feb. 7): How might one recognize a "lawbreaker" if they've not witnessed a crime committed? What is "squatting" when there is no legal place to sleep? Does the "vagrant" not dream of a brighter future like you and me?

Someone asking for food outside a grocery store is not a beggar; they are hungry. A person sleeping on concrete is not a "bum"; they are tired. The people selling things on our streets are not panhandlers; they are entrepreneurs.

To title a person "panhandler" is to deny their humanity, and to outlaw their

trade is to outlaw their existence. We must not forget the humanity of our neighbors.

Jason Hunter
Eugene

PLEASE DO BETTER

Since it's misguided at best for a news outlet to publish only one side of a complicated issue, I was glad to see Steve Waleri's more balanced letter (Feb. 7) included among the many unequivocally supporting the Eugene library's handling of their homeless patrons.

It's important to hear the perspectives of someone like Waleri, a first responder with firsthand experience of all the aspects of homelessness — not just the media-acceptable ones. Much of what he said matches my own civilian experiences.

I thought the letter was a good conversation starter about how to be sensible and compassionate towards the homeless whilst also being realistic and reasonable towards everyone else. However, I then began to contemplate the title your paper gave to his letter: "Get Rid of the Poor."

Nowhere in his letter does Waleri state this; instead, he says, "We should *continue* to provide benefits and shelter ... however, vagrants, squatters and lawbreakers should be out." Clearly *not* the poor, many of whom, many seem to willfully forget, aren't homeless.

This is veering dangerously close to the kind of propaganda I work hard every day

to avoid in the mainstream news media, and the *Eugene Weekly* has demonstrated this kind of slant before. (Defending guns in middle schools? Really?)

Please, for all of our sakes, you must do better.

Bobbi Scully
Leaburg

Editor's note: The letters and opinion section of Eugene Weekly and other newspapers is where newspaper editorial boards and community members express opinion, which is slanted.

SHERIFF ON ICE

Recently I learned that Lane County Sheriff's deputies are instructed to inform Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) when undocumented immigrants, residents of our county, will be released from jail as well as allowing ICE special access to the back entrance of the Lane County jail, further facilitating arrests by ICE.

Both of these practices are in violation of Oregon's Sanctuary Statute and Lane County's board order 60.950. Lane County voters made it clear that we are in favor of the Sanctuary Statue, when Measure 105 was defeated by a 36.8 percent margin in November 2018.

Of the many reasons this upsets me, I'll address the issue of public safety. Public safety is, after all, what the sheriff is elected to provide. The sheriff's behavior instills a fear of deportation that has the inevitable effect of making victims (both

PILLOW TALK BY JACKIE VELEZ

Love In The Modern World

THE CELEBRATION VALENTINE'S DAY OUGHT TO BE

St. Valentine's Day is an extremely polarizing holiday.

To some, this is the most romantic day of the year. For them, it's a day that they get to swoon over their sweetie unabashedly, and no one gets to tell them they are being sappy or over the top. But many others hate seeing the pink and red everywhere, the mass-produced heart-shaped gifts, and especially the insinuation that romance is everywhere.

I'm not going to argue that any of those things are actually accurate. I'm not going to refute any of the arguments against the holiday; there's plenty to critique. Valentine's Day has been undeniably framed as a glorification of monogamous romantic love above all other kinds.

But what if we could reframe this holiday into a pure distillate of the sentiment behind it, untarnished by marketing and branding? What if we, as a community, rejected the heart-shaped Hallmark holiday ideas and instead reclaimed St. Valentine's Day as a celebration of love in all of its forms?

We all have love in our hearts, no matter who or what it is directed toward. I love my partner, but I also love my dog, my community and my world. And I bet that if you thought about it for a moment, you would realize that there is a lot in this world that you feel love for, too. Some of us are lucky enough to have external loves in our lives — friends or family that we cherish, or a partner or partners who support us. And perhaps most important, we all have an intrinsic self-relationship that when cultivated correctly can create new love within ourselves.

St. Valentine was honored with a holiday representing love because he performed marriages that were forbidden by the state. Love was an act of rebellion at the time. Still today, as a society, we are not taught to put a high priority on our platonic loves. We are told that romance means that you are "more than" friends, and that being single means we are still searching for our "other half."

We are not encouraged to love ourselves as complete, whole beings independent

of our relationships. We are made to categorize love as a hierarchy, with romantic love valued above all else.

But I disagree. I believe that all love is powerful and transformational, not only romantic love between monogamous partners. And I think that to truly honor the spirit of St. Valentine, we should do so by honoring the love that is discredited by society's idea of Valentine's Day. Whether you are in a romantic relationship or not, you are a vessel of love. Your love for your friends, your world and yourself, is just as important to celebrate as any other form of love.

I'm not telling you to run out and buy a big bag of conversation hearts and organic local roses — unless you want to! Even if Valentine's Day is a difficult day for you, I encourage you to spend a few moments on the 14th reconnecting with the love that you have inside of you.

We all give and receive love in our day-to-day life — indeed, that exchange of love is what makes life worth living. It is very easy to go about life without really paying homage to the love that you circulate. So just for one day, make a conscious effort to be aware of and grateful for the love you receive, and to amplify that love within yourself before turning it back out into the rest of the world. And remember that even on your own, you still have access to the power of love. In a society that prioritizes romantic love, focusing on self-love is a rebellious act. That, more than anything else, is in the spirit of Valentine's Day.

We would love to see more people embracing self-love! If you want some pointers on cultivating your physical and mental self-love on Feb. 14, join us at *As You Like It: The Pleasure Shop* from 6-8 pm for a workshop entitled Radical Self Loving for Beginners. This event is free.

Jackie Velez has been working at As You Like It since 2018 and is a strong believer in sex-positive education, eating ice cream in the winter and self-love.