

VIEWPOINT BY JUAN CARLOS VALLE

Taking Our Vote for Granted Ends Now

A LATINO COMMUNITY LEADER REFLECTS ON THE ELECTION

Remember when performance mattered during political debates? Remember when it came down to whose ideas and proposals were best? It has been many years since we have heard visionaries discuss and debate on the best plan to move us beyond poverty and into a more efficient, responsible and collaborative civic life. Instead, during our latest political cycle, insults, smears and sharp rhetoric took center stage again.

Needless to say, I am happy that nasty, mean-spirited, racist and polarizing political ads are ending. At least for now. Candidates are no longer interested in engaging in a dialogue on how to serve voters to address basic needs and to ensure broad participation regardless of political affiliation. Black, Indigenous and People of Color are groups politicians routinely ignore. Politicians are overdue in engaging people of color in meaningful dialogue — dialogue that goes beyond the usual, patronizing talking points. They only remember us when their re-election is on the line. Time and time again they take our vote for granted.

The political tide and solid blue base we enjoy in Oregon is now challenged as the people whom politicians pretend to represent are weary and motivated to make changes. It is no coincidence that the supremely popular Bernie Sanders, senator from Vermont, and President Joe Biden visited Oregon to stump for like-minded Oregonians and to ensure the state stays blue.

When career politicians like Sanders and Biden are so concerned about losing a traditionally Democrat state like ours, it is not only a sign of the tide turning, but also it signals the strong discontent we people of color have with the political system. Is it any wonder people of color seek other political options? It is obvious that underrepresented communities must tear down the ivory tower so we can be candidates for mayor, county commissioner, senator, congressional representative or governor.

For this to happen, the arrogant posturing and faux allyship of

progressive leaders must be exposed. While at a meeting between several community leaders and Lane County Democratic Party leaders several years ago, its vice chair matter-of-factly declared he only saw us — people of color — as “precinct people.”

A precinct person is a very important and crucial position, but that is all he saw as potential for us. In addition, he expected us to kiss his ring. Rather than a proactive and well-meaning outreach approach and recruitment of talented, educated and experienced people of color, he and the others have staunchly defended the status quo.

For decades, our votes have been taken for granted. For several political cycles, the new president of the League of United Latin American Citizens of Lane County (LULAC) has requested that city leaders reach out to it post-election and craft a plan of meaningful inclusion. Unfortunately, it has fallen on deaf ears. However, new city leaders seem to be more open-minded and a lot more in touch with their community, thus it would appear they don't take us for granted.

Only time will tell if they will have a real interest in ensuring community representation for all and at all levels. Voting is our real voice and our right to choose who will serve us in political office without fear of intimidation and/or violence. As *60 Minutes* host, Scott Pelley said on Oct. 30, “It's the vote that holds America together. A belief that with a ballot, voices are heard, disputes are addressed and there's always another chance. Countries without this belief tend to be in bondage or at war.”

As the dust settles on who got elected and what ballot measures got the green light, many questions, no doubt, will remain on how to continue to voice our grievances and diverging views.

Sadly, the deep political wounds likely will never heal. We must demand those wishing to represent us truly represent us, not merely their own interests. Civic life and being civil should go hand in hand.

Juan Carlos Valle is a longtime community leader and founding president of the League of United Latin American Citizens of Lane County.

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF A NEWSPAPER THAT NO LONGER PRINTS LETTERS

Dear *Register-Guard* Editor Michelle Maxwell,

I'm so sorry to hear of your decision to no longer publish an opinion page. I do recognize the difficulties you cite. However, often what's important is difficult.

Even though some surveys show less interest in these articles, that shouldn't be a persuasive criterion. The role of a newspaper requires it to educate the readership, not the reverse. What's good for you may not always entertain you.

Your role as a public voice should be to help turn opposition to ideas into excitement about them. Disinformation should not cause newspapers to fold. It should, instead, embolden them to publish more. Professional, talented writers on your opinion staff, need to be supported, not canned.

Keep *RG* opinions about local culture vibrant. If it appears to be going stale, introduce new features to revive it. Don't let the marketplace and uneducated opinion determine this decision. Those factors must be considered but ONLY in relation to other frequently more crucial ones.

Please reconsider your decision. Thank you.

Lou Caton
Eugene

Editor's note: Michelle Maxwell has announced that she has taken a voluntary severance from Gannett Co., and her last day as editor of The Register-Guard is Nov. 11.

A RICH CONVERSATION

Before retiring I was a daily and weekly newspaper editor in Oregon for 30-plus years. My favorite section was letters to the editor and guest commentaries. It's difficult for me to imagine a relevant newspaper without such content.

20% Off - Lights • Fenders • Helmets • Locks • Rain Gear!

Defeat the Darkness!

Big Savings!
Through Nov. 30th

20% Off
In stock top brand lights, locks, fenders, helmets and rain gear. Our selection is large and deep!

Save up to 20%
off a bike for urban, adventure or touring trips — select models!

arriving by bike™
Urban Cycling Outfitters

2705 Willamette St • 541.484.5410
Mon. • Tues. • Fri. • Sat. 10-6, Sun. 12-5,
Closed Wed. • Thu.

Here Comes the YUMM!



CAFÉ YUMM!

Serving nourishing food to fuel active lifestyles and satisfy delicious pursuits since 1997. Now open daily for dine-in and takeout prepared fresh and FAST. And personalized orders and dietary requests are always welcome!

Simply delicious. Simply nourishing.™

Each Café Yumm! independently owned and operated by members of the community.

Eugene
5th Street Market (near Nike)
East 13th (near The Duck Store)
18th & Willamette
Oakway Center (by Hyatt Place)
North Delta Center

Springfield
On Gateway
RiverBend Hospital

Order ahead to skip the line at cafeyumm.com/order

Twitter Instagram Facebook