

ing increased equalization of income, I see no solution.

Lioba Multer
Florence

ENABLING GENOCIDE

Director Jonathan Glazer, in his acceptance speech as he won an Oscar for *The Zone of Interest* — a film about the family of Auschwitz’s Nazi commandant who live peacefully inside a walled garden, cut off from the horrors just the other side — said that the film’s point is not simply to say, “Look what they did then.” Rather, “Look what we do now.”

For while the Nazis had the good manners to be deeply ashamed of the horrific acts they were perpetrating, and strove mightily to conceal them, the political and military leadership of the apartheid state

of Israel have publicly declared — and are daily conducting for all the world to see — genocide against the Palestinians.

So we in the U.S. are now living in a Zone of Interest. To the degree that as individuals we are aware of, but fail to actively resist the ongoing genocide, we are in fact enabling it.

Trisha Driscoll
Veterans For Peace
Eugene

EXPANDING THE WOKE LEXICON

Democrats continue to expand the woke lexicon.

According to their latest addition, if you’re in the country illegally, been deported and have returned multiple times, have been arrested and released

multiple times and have brutally murdered a young woman or raped a 12 year-old girl, you’re not an “illegal alien” or “illegal immigrant.”

As President Joe Biden discovered, you can no longer use such terms for these monsters, even though they’re accurate, without the left going ballistic.

Now, according to the woke word-book, you’re a “newcomer.”

The Democrats in the Oregon Legislature were quick to adopt the change and incorporated it in Senate Bill 4159, which included their latest attempt to support illegal immigration (oops! “newcomers”). SB 4159 would have provided housing and rent subsidies for “newcomers” regardless of citizenship status. Thankfully the bill didn’t make it through the 2024 session, but given its

high priority among Democrats, it will almost certainly be back in 2025.

“Newcomers” is right up there with “birthing people” (formerly “mothers”), “bropropriate,” “cultural appropriation,” “microaggression,” “non-binary” and a host of other terms to know if you want to remain in good graces among the woke. Pretty soon we’ll need to rewrite the dictionary!

Jerry Ritter
Springfield

Editor’s note: Merriam-Webster says, “microaggression, noun, mi-cro-ag-gres-sion: a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority).” Seems like a pretty good word to know!

Local and Vocal

VIEWPOINT BY BILLIE BEST

Housing is a Rigged Competition

GETTING A PLACE TO LIVE SEEMS LIMITED TO THE WELL-RESOURCED AND THE DIGITALLY LITERATE

Right before Christmas, my partner and I received a termination notice from our landlord. I lurched in shock, and then I got online to look for a new place. After a couple days of intense scrolling we found a modest dog-friendly rental in town that seemed perfect, so we hustled.

On Christmas Day, I sent a letter by email to the property management agency describing us as “two adults near 70 with a three-year-old medium size poodle, prepared to sign a 12 month lease, including pet rent and security deposit.”

I expected ageism to play in our favor, thought we would be treated like the ideal tenant, but I was wrong.

The response we got from the property manager was a link to an app where adults over 18 must pay \$45 each to register for individual credit and criminal investigations. That’s a nonrefundable \$90 just to be considered. This we discovered is quite common. I guess it filters out the riff raff. Elitist, but effective.

I’m good with apps and we were willing to lose the money, so we jumped on their merry-go-round. But I wondered what a more economically challenged household would do if they had to pay \$45 per adult just to apply to be considered for a new place?

My partner has been the resident caretaker of an estate where he lived for 19 years and where I lived for three. He has worked at the same business in town since 1995. But that meant nothing to our prospective landlord. We were treated like potential criminals until we signed the lease.

The tenant portal required digital literacy. We had to have credit cards, smart phones, email accounts, personal computers, internet access and navigation skills, dexterity with password management, double authentication, downloading and uploading, taking photographs and sending attachments. This is also an economic filter as the underlying infrastructure for these skills costs thousands of dollars a year.

Now I should say that I was a landlord in Boston from 1987 to 2000, and I appreciate the myriad ways tenants can grift a landlord. We lived in a three-family house with two tenants, and it was a lot of work to keep the place occupied and in good repair. It’s reasonable for landlords to want to protect themselves.

But during all that time, I interviewed prospective tenants face-to-face, took them at their word, and trusted my instincts, never asking for proof of anything. We had many tenants, and I was only wrong once — if you don’t count the college students

who painted their bedrooms black. Anyway, I appreciate the intention of the digital application process to protect the landlord and the neighbors.

After we paid the \$90, and before we met a human, each of us had 48 hours to produce digital records for government issued photo IDs, Social Security numbers, three months of bank statements showing deposits and withdrawals, and paycheck stubs showing salary, taxes, sick days and vacation days. Then we were finally allowed to inspect the place.

Afterward, we were required to set up accounts for utilities at the new address, even though we had not signed a lease. For our new electric, water/sewer, trash removal and renter insurance we had to produce confirmation emails showing our new account number and address. Finally, we had to produce medical records for our dog with the contact information for his veterinarian, and his breed, weight, neuter certificate and rabies tag. Gathering all these documents and submitting them electronically took me six hours. Fortunately, I’m self-employed.

As expected, we had to provide landlord references for the previous three years. When my Portland landlord from 2018-2020 did not respond to the property agent’s queries about me, the property agent asked to inspect our current home, which we agreed to. She came to our house and looked in every room to confirm that what we said about ourselves was true. Good for her. But you see how difficult it might be to deal with this for somebody who works far from home or is struggling with their life.

Once all that paperwork was accepted, we were sent a link to the digital lease document, which included a detailed fixed-term 52-week lease, a smoke detector addendum, a mold addendum, a landscaping addendum, a pet addendum, a portable cooling device addendum, a relocation addendum, a move-in checklist addendum, a new tenant handout, a tenant education form, a satellite dish policy addendum, and a summary document, all to be digitally initialed before we gave them our electronic signatures and they gave us little brass keys. This was as complicated as getting a mortgage.

Our new lease started Dec. 30, a week after we got the termination notice. Now we’re in, we’re settled, and things are good. Yet, the process of re-homing ourselves raises some important issues as we ponder the problem of affordable housing, homelessness and upward mobility. Housing is a digital competition. We played the game and won. Those without the skills and resources need not apply. We are the lucky ones.

Billie Best is a writer living in Eugene. A longer version is at BillieBest.com.