

Cancel the Flock

Since May, a massive surveillance system has been implemented in Eugene, the largest in the city's history. Since May, you have been watched everywhere you go, and your data shared with a myriad of law enforcement agencies and anyone that Flock wishes to share it with.

Do you remember when the public had a chance to comment on these cameras before their installation? Probably not, because that never happened. The unelected city manager, Sarah Medary, signed the contract in March. Hardly anyone on the city council or Eugene police commission knew about the Flock cameras before their installation. Your tax dollars (grant money from the state is tax dollars, at least partially) are now funding a dystopian surveillance network in Eugene that will need to be maintained and leased.

Mainstream media in Eugene have been firing off one Flock-aganda story after another, talking about how many crimes are being solved with these cameras. Questions are then to be asked: Does mass surveillance actually reduce or prevent crime? What could these crimes be? Are they all scary serial killers, gangs and retail

theft rings, or could they be protesters, homeless people and poor families stealing food to survive? Does the 4th Amendment mean anything if we are constantly being spied upon?

Where does it stop? When the president is seizing police departments and the country is seeing the largest rightward shift since 2001, we don't need more surveillance. Cancel the Flock contract now!

Kamryn Stringfield
Eugene

Yearning for Humanity

It occurs to me to send a postcard to my local ICE office, expressing my thoughts. I'm not really sure what I want to say, so I put pen to paper to see what happens. Here's what arrives:

Dear Eugene ICE Agents,

Please know that my heart goes out to you as you carry out the difficult work of immigration enforcement in our community.

Not because resistance to your mission is so great, but because you are required to push so hard against the sacredness of your own humanity.

I yearn for you the freedom to show your faces, the natural goodness in the smile,

in the eyes, in the relaxed and welcoming stance.

I yearn for the day, the moment, when you make the consequential choice to strip away the armor, the mask, reclaim your true humanity, and do useful things in this world with your one precious life.

Respectfully,

I can't predict what will happen when I put pen to paper. I trust that it is always for the good.

Mary Sharon Moore
Springfield

The Power of Telepathy

I had a strange and mysterious event happen to me a few years ago. While riding a recumbent bike I became dizzy, it was the onset of vertigo. I decided that I needed to find an upright three wheeler — an adult trike.

For years I looked in bike stores and on-line for such a contraption. I would need an electrical assist to ride up the hill to my home. I never mentioned this to my older brother.

Two years ago while visiting my niece and her husband, I mentioned my dilemma. "We have a bike like that stored in our

garage," my niece said. "My dad bought it online a few years ago, now he's nearly 90 and not able to ride it, you can have it."

When my niece showed me the trike I couldn't believe my eyes. It was precisely the type of bike I'd been looking for.

I believe it was a form of telepathy. Does this phenomenon only exist between siblings? I don't think so. Spouses seem to have telepathy, too.

In old-growth forests there is an interconnectedness between the above ground trees and the century's old underground plant life and root systems. A symbiotic beneficial relationship.

Is it possible that human telepathy is a form of root system that also helps sustain and enrich human existence akin to the interconnectedness of our forests?

If we could only stop cutting down our old growth forests, would it help sustain them? If we could stop wars, would it help sustain the existence of the human race?

Joe Blakely
Eugene



Local & Vocal

A MESSAGE FROM A FATHER

Let's change how we treat people with mental illness

I am the father of Daniel Kahn, who was shot and killed by the police on July 30 in Springfield.

First, as a baseline, people with mental illnesses were once babies, loving children, energetic and eager-to-grow-up teenagers, and young adults with their whole lives ahead of them. They did not wake up one random morning and make a decision that they wanted to have one or more mental illnesses. With that in mind, we should look to change how we see these tormented souls.

The real story is how we as a nation look upon the mentally ill, the homeless and how we treat them because they don't act like us and they don't talk like us and they don't think like us, so we are fearful of them; however, we do absolutely nothing to help them long-term, like we do for heart or cancer patients.

Anything written or said about people with mental illness or, in my son's case, multiple mental illnesses, should drive the feeling of sympathy to the reader or the listener. In doing this, we are far less likely to get a bad outcome.

We should also attempt to drive a sympathetic feeling toward the mentally ill into our police forces so that they don't mistake what truly is mental illness for defiance.

So at a high level, why did this happen to my son Daniel? Everywhere my son went to get help was voluntary on his part and

through the direction of every member of our greater family. This assistance helped him to thrive for short periods of time of between one and three months. Then, either Daniel removed himself from the mental health assistance and medication, thinking that it was OK for him to start up with life again, or the program that he had enrolled in cut off his support for various reasons. In both cases, Daniel would quickly become homeless and without medication and without any psychological support or direction.

Each and every time this occurred, Daniel would end up losing everything that he had either purchased on his own or that his family provided for him. Clothing, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, shoes, important identification cards; anything that a typical person would need to sustain a healthy life would be either stolen or lost by simply moving from place to place or park bench to park bench or street.

Why did Daniel attack two Springfield Police Department officers?

Eight or so years ago, when my son was in the Harris County, Texas, jail system, he told us he had been raped on more than one occasion.

It was difficult to determine whether these events were actually taking place or part of Daniel's mental illnesses. At some point these events must've been taken seriously by Harris County because many months after my son was early-released from jail by the court, two police officers came to my home looking for Daniel to see if he wanted to follow through on his documented complaints.

By the time these two officers arrived, Daniel was long gone from Houston. It was

always Daniel's position that the police only cared about what people said about him and what he did, but not what other people did to him. It is presumed that Daniel developed a great distrust of police officers.

When the two Springfield police officers approached Daniel for what was likely a breakdown, he likely assumed that they were going to arrest him for something and take him to a jail where he would be, as Daniel would say, raped and raped and raped again.

Daniel most likely took the position that he would not allow anybody to put him back in jail, so he decided to fight. The two Springfield police officers would've had no concept of Daniel's great fear.

Daniel grew up in an upper-middleclass house. He had his own bedroom and a shared game room with his other siblings. He had his own bike, ate balanced meals other than snacks, and he went to private school during grade school. He did have the occasional altercation, but we wrote that off to Daniel's desire to be Superman and defend people he knew from bullying. Daniel was the defender of those who could not defend themselves, and that caused him some grief in life.

After high school I got him his own apartment next to Houston Community College — in walking distance, in hopes that he would get his first two years of college under his belt. Everything was paid for, his apartment, electricity, furniture, food, you name it. Unfortunately, this is when my son began showing signs of some mental illness and found his way into the drug culture. He wasted the entire first year doing drugs and not much else.

In several of his text messages a month before he died, Daniel would reflect back on that time and say that he made some huge mistakes in that part of his life, and that he had everything going for him and

completely wasted it.

Daniel was not a product of an unstructured life or one without discipline and/or consequences or one of poverty. Daniel simply developed, over time, multiple mental illnesses that he did not decide to have. They just occurred.

I make all of these remarks in an attempt to remove the stigma of how most of us think about mentally ill individuals as we walk by them.

Mentally ill people don't act like us, they don't talk like us and they don't think like us, and because of this we are fearful of them and walk at a quick pace to ensure there's a distance between us and them. Then, as we walk away, we stigmatize them and suggest that all of this is their own damn fault.

Daniel had a bright life ahead of him, and where some people develop heart conditions and others develop cancer and others have a birth deformity, Daniel developed multiple mental illnesses of no fault of his own.

Why do I share all of this information with you? It's to begin the process of helping people to develop a sympathetic position towards the mentally ill.

Consider the potential cost of providing care for the mentally ill, and in some cases involuntarily, against the cost of the injuries they can cause to innocent people, the cost in our court systems, the cost in our jail systems, and, most importantly the cost to society who no longer feel safe anymore, anywhere.

If you truly want to be part of the change; do what I have done along with every other member of our family and friends. Write your senators and your representative and continue to badger them to make a change.

We are the solution.

Mort Kahn is the father of Daniel Kahn, who was shot and killed by the police on July 30 in Springfield, Oregon.