

began to explore my despair with counseling. Instead of dropping out of college as a sophomore, the counselor gave me the best advice of my life, he told me, “Find someone of like mind and get on with your journey in life.”

As I reached my third decade, and with five perfections: patience, giving, morality, meditation and wisdom, I came out to my parents. There were no difficulties encountered when I introduced them to my partner David — he became the love of my life and my parents learned to love David, too.

Being gay naturally occurs in nature and is, above all, a particular expression of an individual’s “Truth.” When one acknowledges that they are gay, their understanding at the beginning of the journey may be difficult, but gone is the austerity of being alone.

Mike E. Walsh
Eugene

Barring of the Down Payment

The Oregon Legislature returns next week to kick off its five-week short session

and lawmakers have a real chance to help first-time homebuyers if they start in the right place.

One clear fix is the mortgage interest deduction. Oregon currently allows this tax break for a primary residence and also for vacation houses. That means millions of public dollars are helping subsidize second houses while thousands of working families cannot clear the biggest barrier to ownership: the down payment. Ending the deduction for vacation houses is not extreme. It keeps the benefits for people living in their homes and stops subsidizing additional property accumulation.

On its own, this change would free up \$10 million each year. Those dollars should be directed toward down payment assistance, one of the few tools proven to help first-time and first-generation buyers actually buy a home. Without help up front, families are locked out before they can even make an offer.

That support becomes even more powerful when paired with Leader Bowman’s proposed “Buyers Before Billionaires” bill, which would require large institutional investors to wait 90 days before bidding

on single-family homes. Giving people a head start with down payments while slowing down Wall Street investors helps Oregonians compete.

These ideas will not solve the housing crisis overnight. But together, they move Oregon toward a system that favors people over speculation, homes over portfolios, and long-term community stability over short-term profit. They are the perfect recipe for a five-week session.

Kevin Cronin
Eugene

Support for the Traffic-Safety Ordinance

The debate over handing money to people in traffic in Eugene is often framed as a test of compassion. But the sidewalk corners at busy intersections, narrow medians and freeway ramps where people ask for help are some of the most dangerous places in the city. These are high-speed areas where drivers are accelerating, merging, or distracted and where a moment of inattention can have devastating consequences.

Our unhoused neighbors stand in these locations because they have few alterna-

tives, but that doesn’t make these environments safe. When a driver hands money out a window, it pulls someone closer to moving traffic at exactly the moment drivers are least focused on pedestrians.

The ordinance currently before City Council does not ban panhandling and it does not target the person asking for help. It simply asks drivers not to create situations where someone has to lean toward traffic to receive a few dollars. That is a basic harm-reduction step, not a judgment on anyone’s humanity.

If we want compassion to mean something, it should include keeping people alive. I urge City Council to adopt this ordinance as a small but necessary step toward reducing preventable harm.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

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Local & Vocal

Viewpoint by Jenny Jonak

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN?

If Renee Good and Alex Pretti were not white, would the outrage be the same?

Many of us have watched videos of the shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. Good’s and Pretti’s deaths stand out, in part, because of the existence of videos that directly contradict the government’s account of the shootings.

But the backlash is also because we are less likely to ignore overreach in the name of national security when it involves someone who looks “American.” Good and Pretti were visually, undeniably American.

Public outrage over state violence is not about government overreach alone — it is about who is perceived as American enough for that overreach to matter.

This is not a new phenomenon. American law has repeatedly defined “American” in racial terms. The Chinese Exclusion Act was the first U.S. law to bar immigration based entirely on race and nationality. Chinese residents were required to prove legal status on demand. “Show me your papers” enforcement is what we are now seeing in Minnesota with a Hmong elder — who has been a U.S. citizen for decades — marched out in the snow in his underwear. Or reports of ICE profiling and detaining Native Americans; even the original inhabitants of our country must prove their right to be here.

Until 1952, U.S. citizenship was legally limited to “free white persons.” Later, persons of African descent were added. Asians were explicitly excluded. Being American was racial, and certain races could not fully belong.

In 1942, the U.S. president issued an executive order for the forcible removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans. Most were U.S. citizens. The

government required no proof that any of them had done anything wrong. Ancestry alone was a “threat” to national security.

Our society has been willing to accept deaths of residents of color based on dubious claims of law enforcement. We have sanctioned targeting people on the basis of race or accent in immigration enforcement. It is only when it happens to ‘Americans’ that we realize we may have stepped over a line.

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld this action, relying on the Roosevelt administration’s claim that Japanese Americans were a security threat during a time of war. Unbeknownst to the Supreme Court, the government possessed intelligence directly contradicting these claims but suppressed it, instead implying the military had secret intelligence justifying exclusion.

We were at war with Germany and Italy, as well as Japan, but citizens of German and Italian descent were never incarcerated on the basis of their ancestry.

Despite the later evidence that came out, including

unanimous findings from a commission in the 1980s, it took until 2018 before the Supreme Court repudiated the decision.

What happened to Asian Americans parallels racial stereotyping of other communities as “dangerous.” This includes the stereotyping of Muslims and persons of Middle Eastern descent as terrorists, the fear of Black people as inherently dangerous, and claims that immigrants from Latin America are “invading” our country.

If Renee Good and Alex Pretti had not been white, would it have been as obvious to the public that they were not “domestic terrorists”?

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You will hear excuses: If only she had stayed home; if only he hadn’t “interfered” with federal agents... This is how unconstitutional conduct is rationalized after the fact. In the Pretti case, the truth is on video, and we can see that this is happening to “Americans.”

I ask you: What is an American?

Will you see it when it happens to someone that doesn’t look American to you?

Will you see that our treatment of the most marginalized in our society is only a testing ground for how far we can strip someone of their rights, and sooner or later, that will come for you?

Jenny Jonak is a Korean American attorney, member of the Eugene 4J School Board, and board member of the Asian American Council of Oregon. This represents only her individual viewpoint and not those of any organization.