

KeizerOpinion

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An eclipse brings us together

Just like our ancestors over the past thousands of years, we will cast our eyes to the skies on Monday to experience a once-in-a-lifetime event: a total eclipse of the sun.

Keizer and everything in a 60-mile-wide swath of land from Lincoln City to Ontario will come to a halt as the day grows darker due to the moon passing slowly between the sun and the earth. This astronomic event engages scientists and arm-chair Gaillo's alike.

Centuries ago people believed that the eclipsing of the sun was a sign of angered gods. As the moon continued its path out of the sun's direct light, people celebrated: their sacrifices and prayers pleased the gods.

Modern science has proven that a solar eclipse is nothing more than the aligning of heavenly bodies. Some people may imbue the event with spiritual meaning. One thing the eclipse does is bring people together. Most people in Keizer have never experienced a total eclipse before. Tens of thousands of Oregon faces will be turned to the sky and we will all marvel at the rarity.

That will be in such contrast to what is happening in other parts of the country right now.

It is more difficult to maintain anger and hatred at other people

when everyone is awed by nature's grand design. Keizer sits in western Oregon. Though we are relatively conservative, our location in the progressive northwest influences how we we treat each other. It is hard to imagine people in Keizer tolerating the type of protests and rallies as occurred in Charlottesville, Va. last weekend. We think that residents of Keizer would rise up, non-violently, to blunt any rally expousing racism and intolerance.

Keizer is a tolerant place. The city council has been asked to pass an inclusivity resolution that would put the city squarely on the side of equality. As the city grows it will become more diverse which is a great opportunity to show how open and accepting the city and its residents are.

Keizer can show how tolerant it is beginning this weekend with the expected throngs of visitors coming to see the eclipse. Depending on the source, we can see up to half a million people come to Marion County. We will all have to be patient with the extra traffic, longer waits at restaurants and other businesses.

An eclipse may be a rare thing but Keizerites treating others with respect and dignity should not be.

—LAZ

our
opinion

End the denial about Trump

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

It should not have taken the death and injury of innocents to move our nation toward moral clarity. It should not have taken President Trump's disgraceful refusal to condemn white supremacy, bigotry and Nazism to make clear to all who he is and which dark impulses he is willing to exploit to maintain his hold on power.

Those of us who are white regularly insist that the racists and bigots are a minority of us and that the white-power movement is a marginal and demented faction.

This is true, and the mayhem in Charlottesville, Virginia, called forth passionate condemnations of blood-and-soil nationalism across the spectrum of ideology. These forms of witness were a necessary defense of the American idea and underscored the shameful of Trump's embrace of moral equivalence. There are not, as Trump insisted Saturday, "many sides" to questions that were settled long ago: Racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination and white supremacy are unequivocally wrong.

A president who cannot bring himself to say this immediately and unequivocally squanders any claim to moral leadership.

Advisers to the president tried to clean up after this moral failure, putting out a statement Sunday morning—attributed to no one—declaring that "of course" his condemnation of violence "includes white supremacists, KKK, neo-Nazi and all extremist groups." But if that "of course" is sincere, why didn't Trump say these things in the first place? And why hang on to the president's inexcusable moral equivalence by adding that phrase "and all extremist groups"? This was simply a weak philosophical cover-up for a politician who has shown us his real instincts throughout his public life, from his birtherism to his reluctance to turn away 2016 endorsements from Klansmen and other racists.

More Republicans than usual broke with Trump after his anemic response, and Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, was especially poignant in offering historical perspective on this episode: "My brother didn't give his life fighting Hitler for Nazi ideas to go unchallenged here at home."

But that so many others in the party preferred to keep their discomfort on background was itself a scandal. "I can't tell you how sick & tired I am of the 'privately wincing' Republicans,"

Peter Wehner, a veteran of two Republican administrations, tweeted. "It's a self-incriminating silence." Yes, it is.

The proper response is for Democrats and Republicans willing to take a stand to force a vote in Congress condemning the president for his opportunistic obtuseness and making clear where the vast majority of Americans stand on white supremacy. This is important for many reasons, but especially to send a message to America's minorities that whites are willing to do more than offer rote condemnations of racism.

For make no mistake: No matter how accurate it is to say that neo-Nazis and Klansmen represent a repugnant fringe, the fact that our president has consistently and successfully exploited white racial resentment cannot help but be taken by citizens of color as a sign of racism's stubborn durability.

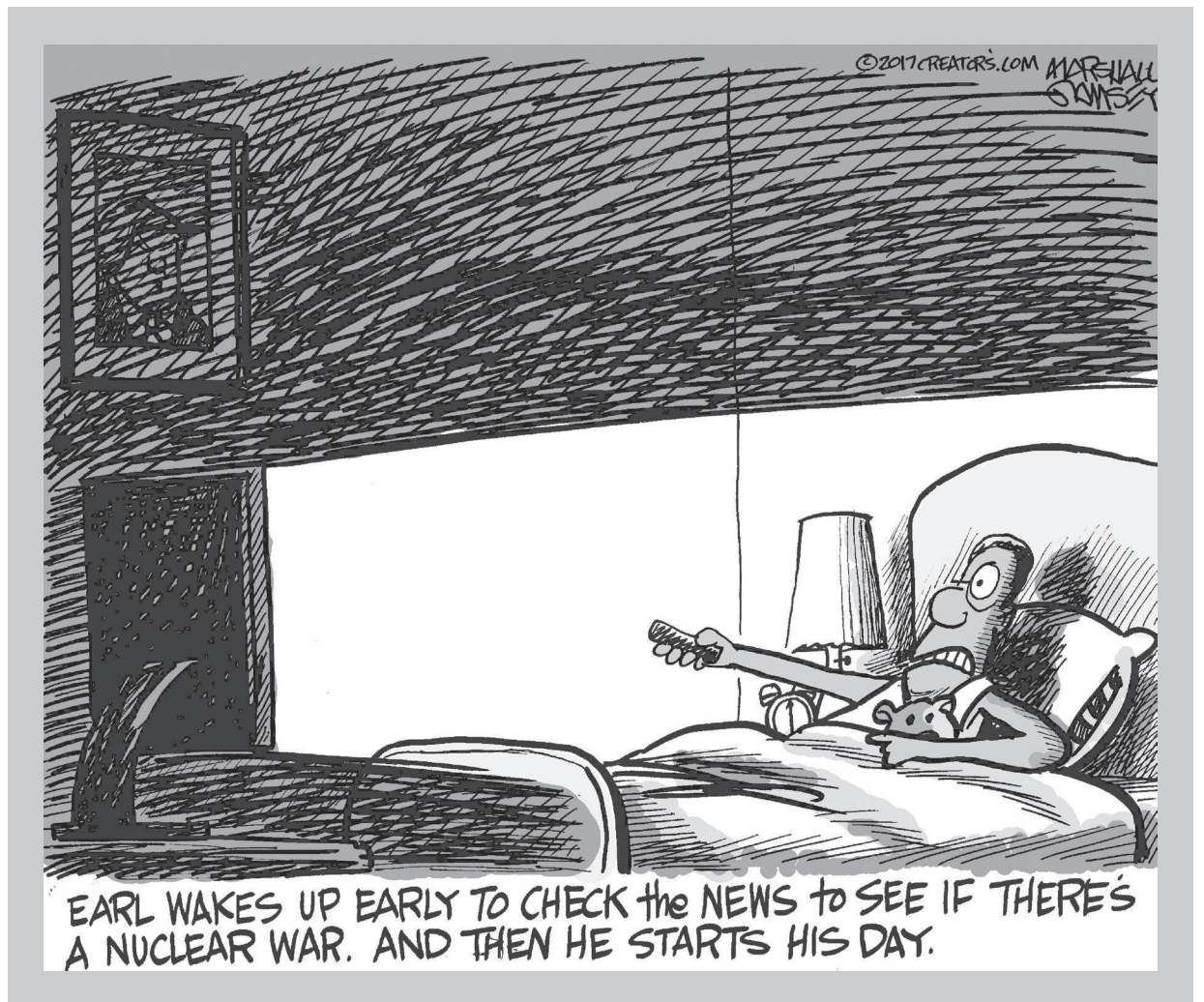
The backlash to racial progress is an old American story, from the end of Reconstruction forward. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s words from 1967 speak to us still: "Loose and easy language about equality, resonant resolutions about brotherhood fall pleasantly on the ear, but for the Negro, there is a credibility gap he cannot overlook. He remembers that with each modest advance the white population promptly raises the argument that the Negro has come far enough. Each step forward accents an ever-present tendency to backlash." This is what we saw this weekend.

The battles over Confederate monuments, in Charlottesville and elsewhere, reflect our difficulty in acknowledging that these memorials are less historical markers than political statements. Many were erected explicitly in support of Jim Crow and implicitly to deny the truth that the Southern cause in the Civil War was built around a defense of slavery. Taking them down is an acknowledgement of what history teaches, not an eradication of the past.

But history is also being made now. As is always true with Trump, self-interest is the most efficient explanation for his actions: Under pressure from the Russia investigation, he is reluctant to alienate backlash voters, who are among his most loyal supporters.

The rest of us, however, have a larger obligation to our country and to racial justice. As the late civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer might suggest, it is time to ask about Trump: When will we become sick and tired of being sick and tired?

(Washington Post Writers Group)

other
views

Cleanse the world away with a tree

By DON VOWELL

Forest Bathing is a thing. I heard about it on National Public Radio. A guide—certified and trained—leads a group into a forest or similar natural environment and instructs them in ways to better immerse themselves in the beauty and peace of nature: touch the bark, sniff the leaves, hear the birds. I was surprised to learn that drinking in nature's serenity requires a sippy cup to start.

In one of those studies that make you scratch your head at the methodology it was estimated that stress alone in 2015 added \$190 billion to American health care costs. Some studies in Japan show that a significant time in a forest environment can lower blood pressure and reduce production of stress hormones. It is believed that compounds released from trees called phytoncides may be responsible for these good effects.

A possible problem is that while a walk in the forest is verifiably better for you than the same walk in the city, the duration of the compared walks was four hours. This is not a shower, it's a long soak. One probable cause of stress is that very few Americans have four hours they can give

up to walking in the forest. Many Americans that can get away for a four-hour walk don't have a forest convenient to them.

The NPR story featured a Forest Bathing class on Theodore Roosevelt Island on the Potomac River. In the heart of Washington DC, this restored natural environment is a quiet retreat for stressed out locals. Except, of course, the quiet is sometimes interrupted by its location in the approach path of the Ronald Reagan National Airport. During the audio portion of this story the forest guide sometimes had to shout instructions for enjoying the pastoral quality over the thunder of passing jetliners.

I might be a pioneer in Refuge Bathing. The reason we need regular bathing is that national discourse about current events in our country is highly toxic and totally dispiriting—stressful. I am able to flush this sludge from my head and my heart by a slow and lonesome visit to any of several local wildlife refuges. I am sometimes asked how I got a picture of this bird or that critter. The single answer is time spent where they live

instead of where I live.

Much could be learned by watching how everybody gets along at a refuge. There is little evidence of bigotry, avarice, pride, or arrogance. No liberal-conservative name-calling. No religious animosity. Herons and deer are not threatening one another with nuclear annihilation. All parties mainly seem concerned with providing for their families, too busy to resent other families or other species. When I stop and watch all this I realize they are smart and I am less so.

So if you are having health problems—high blood pressure and stress related complaints—go stroll around at one of the local refuges. You won't need a guide, just shut up and listen. Watch. Breathe.

I realize this is not a treatment easily available to all so I am developing one of those little green felt trees that hangs from your car mirror. In this case it will be infused with actual phytoncides and will give you the benefits of a forest walk in the comfort of your climate controlled car. The accompanying CD will play forest noises. After years of failure I finally have an idea that can make me rich.

(Don Vowell lives in Keizer. He gets on his soapbox regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)

a box
of
soapguest
column

Take the business out of health care

Among some of us Americans there's the opinion that only those who can hold a job where health insurance is provided through their workplace, and have thereby "earned it," should have health insurance. These folks apparently are unaware of the consequential outrage should the Affordable Care Act (ACA) be ultimately repealed with immediate premium price increases 20 percent and higher expected.

One consideration that brings sadness in addition to the extreme social unsettling that would result from the ACA's demise is the attitude of uncaring that delivers the message, "I've got mine and care not what happens to you." Meanwhile, relative to health insurance in America, some of those who harbor contempt for their fellow citizens most likely don't realize that their own "great" health plan could sour considerably by taking all of us back

to pre-ACA with regular health insurance owners paying for the emergency room care of millions of Americans without health insurance. Look to Medicare as a model that's much more efficient than any for-profit health insurance because it provides a means by which the middleman position of our American health insurance companies is eliminated and thereby does not profit from the fact that virtually all of us need medical attention to one degree or another throughout our lives. We are all Americans, "created equal," and should not by any intervention of our

fellow humans be denied it because we were not fortunate enough to be employed in a place providing health insurance or financially solvent at the American version of the game of life.

A relevant remembrance of my youth of several decades ago was an America where medical science was not nearly as advanced as now and where many American families took care of the sick and elderly in their own homes. America has changed so that that condition no longer prevails. Nevertheless, there are ways we can continue to be sympathetic and benevolent by collectively, through our national wealth, look after the sick and aged by a dramatic reform in health coverage and availability.

I was reminded the other day of Michael Moore's 2007 documentary, *Sicko*. The film was made before the ACA but is a salient reminder of how national health care works for the people of Canada, Cuba, France,

the United Kingdom and others aspiring to embrace a caring-for-others national life culture. Other, even much less wealthy nations than ours, have it and it works very well for them while the only real complainers about it are profit-making health insurance companies here who want only to make profits at the expense of so many Americans who can just barely afford it.

Of course, such a big change as national health care would upset the American Medical Association and the pharmaceutical companies. Had we the members of Congress whose campaigns were supported by the public purse—and thereby could ignore the thousands upon thousands of insurance and medical lobbyists and their bags of money—the change could be made and American lives would be more important than money-making. The bottom line that makes most sense is the line that brings us to a health care system that serves all of us rather than only the lucky ones.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)



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