

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## Take a hike! Trails are vital to our infrastructure

Trails are a variety of infrastructure development with unique longevity and benefits far above their costs. We're lucky to have the Warrenton Trails Association, the Clatsop County Trail Initiative and other groups with an active interest in expanding pedestrian and bicycling activities.

When thinking of how Clatsop County may best succeed in winning the Road to Wellville challenge over the next five years, the proliferation of trails here is bound to play a role. For everyone in the entire county — and for people in general — there are few simpler or better ways to improve health than by using our own legs to get around. Getting up and staying active are key — use it if you don't want to lose it.

Beyond this, walking and bicycling are intrinsically fun. We live in one of the most scenic regions of the nation. On all but the worst and darkest days of midwinter, it is enjoyable and gratifying to get out, see the wildlife, listen to the frogs and feel the fresh air.

Communities tend to overthink economic development, but trails also are a prominent and appealing form of civic improvement that adds to our success in attracting

and keeping talented and creative residents.

WTA Chairwoman Tessa Scheller, summarizing the group's vision, recently said "We will focus on our region. We really see trail routes from Arch Cape all the way to Knappa." This also fits within an even broader regional framework, in which Pacific County, Washington State Parks and others are working to expand the stellar trail system north of the Columbia estuary. A new extension linking North Head Lighthouse into the Discovery Trail network between Long Beach and Ilwaco is a wonderful addition.

In a world that is becoming ever more crowded, the trails built today will ensure links between and within communities for perhaps as long as civilization endures. What an incredible legacy it is to bequeath these connections to our distant descendants.

## Don't shoot the messenger

*The post office should remain a core American institution*

No sooner had retiring Postmaster General Patrick Donohoe completed his farewell speech Tuesday than critics sharpened their knives.

His negative comments about powerful postal unions battling senior managers' attempts to introduce more flexible work rules drew the most headlines. But looking deeper, the 40-year veteran made points worthy of study if we are going to save one of America's key institutions.

There is no question that the Internet and email mean the days of the old-time mail service monopoly are over. Federal Express and United Parcel Service perform a creditable job shipping packages by ground and air, charging what the market will bear. Businesses like Amazon demonstrate flexibility and creative thinking to serve customers.

The post office is one of the few government departments mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. But is a nationwide postal service still needed? We believe the answer is "yes" — but only if the agency is allowed to move with the times.

Donohoe pulled no punches. In addition to more flexibility in work rules and pricing, he said the agency needs to review its pension promises, plus its employee and retiree health care commitments.

Although the post office hasn't received tax revenue for decades — it is self-sustaining — it does have Congressional oversight. We believe that oversight must consider the impact of any proposed cutbacks in jobs, routes and office hours on our nation's 59

million rural residents.

Closing or consolidating 80 regional sorting plants may save money by cutting jobs — Pendleton and Bend facilities are in the crosshairs. But too little emphasis is placed on the true cost for rural customers of delayed mail caused by such actions.

Newspapers like ours, of course, rely on the mail for timely, reliable delivery to readers of many of our publications. The National Newspaper Association's president, John Edgecombe, Jr., of Nebraska, makes a solid case for Congress to better monitor the impact of postal cutbacks on rural areas.

"Unfortunately for many — seniors without Internet, lower income residents, rural folks without good Internet service and people who don't necessarily trust the Internet — the mail is a necessity," he wrote in a recent column.

Edgecombe noted that the USPS Inspector General chastised the service in October for not properly analyzing the impacts of plant closures. The postal service leadership said it would do so — but only *after* its slower service standards went into effect.

"In other words," Edgecombe wrote, "it will consider whether it can reach its goals after it has lowered them."

That's the wrong approach.

Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley have lobbied hard to protect endangered rural mail services. But it is time for a bipartisan Congressional effort to preserve the post office as a core government function.

# I Am Not Charlie Hebdo

By DAVID BROOKS  
*New York Times News Service*

The journalists at Charlie Hebdo are now rightly being celebrated as martyrs on behalf of freedom of expression, but let's face it: If they had tried to publish their satirical newspaper on any American university campus over the last two decades it wouldn't have lasted 30 seconds.

Student and faculty groups would have accused them of hate speech. The administration would have cut financing and shut them down.

Public reaction to the attack in Paris has revealed that there are a lot of people who are quick to lionize those who offend the views of Islamist terrorists in France but who are a lot less tolerant toward those who offend their own views at home.

Just look at all the people who have overreacted to campus micro-aggressions. The University of Illinois fired a professor who taught the Roman Catholic view on homosexuality. The University of Kansas suspended a professor for writing a harsh tweet against the NRA. Vanderbilt University derecognized a Christian group that insisted that it be led by Christians.

Americans may laud Charlie Hebdo for being brave enough to publish cartoons ridiculing the Prophet Muhammad, but, if Ayaan Hirsi Ali is invited to campus, there are often calls to deny her a podium.

So this might be a teachable moment. As we are mortified by the slaughter of those writers and editors in Paris, it's a good time to come up with a less hypocritical approach to our own controversial figures, provocateurs and satirists.

The first thing to say, I suppose, is that whatever you might have put on your Facebook page yesterday, it is inaccurate for most of us to claim, Je Suis Charlie Hebdo, or I Am Charlie Hebdo. Most of us don't actually engage in the sort of deliberately offensive humor that newspaper specializes in.

We might have started out that way. When you are 13, it seems daring and provocative to "épater la bourgeoisie," to stick a finger in the eye of authority, to ridicule other people's religious beliefs.

But after a while that seems puerile.



David Brooks



AP Photo/Abdeljalil Bounhar

A Moroccan girl holds placards that reads "I am Charlie" as they gather outside the building of French press agency, AFP, in Rabat, Morocco, Friday. Masked gunmen stormed the Paris offices of a weekly newspaper that caricatured the Prophet Muhammad Wednesday killing at least 12 people, including the editor, before escaping in a car. It was France's deadliest postwar terrorist attack.

Most of us move toward more complicated views of reality and more forgiving views of others. (Ridicule becomes less fun as you become more aware of your own frequent ridiculousness.) Most of us do try to show a modicum of respect for people of different creeds and faiths. We do try to open conversations with listening rather than insult.

Yet, at the same time, most of us know that provocateurs and other outlandish figures serve useful public roles. Satirists and ridiculers expose our weakness and vanity when we are feeling proud. They puncture the self-puffery of the successful. They level social inequality by bringing the mighty low. When they are effective they help us address our foibles communally, since laughter is one of the ultimate bonding experiences.

Moreover, provocateurs and ridiculers expose the stupidity of the fundamentalists. Fundamentalists are people who take everything literally. They are incapable of multiple viewpoints. They are incapable of seeing that while their religion may be worthy of the deepest reverence, it is also true that most religions are kind of weird. Satirists expose those who are incapable of laughing at themselves and teach the rest of us that we probably should.

In short, in thinking about provocateurs and insulters, we want to maintain standards of civility and respect while at the same time allowing room for those creative and challenging folks who are uninhibited by good manners and taste.

If you try to pull off this delicate balance with law, speech codes and

banned speakers, you'll end up with crude censorship and a strangled conversation. It's almost always wrong to try to suppress speech, erect speech codes and disinvite speakers.

Fortunately, social manners are more malleable and supple than laws and codes. Most societies have successfully maintained standards of civility and respect while keeping open avenues for those who are funny, uncivil and offensive.

In most societies, there's the adults' table and there's the kids' table. The people who read Le Monde or the establishment organs are at the adults' table. The jesters, the holy fools and people like Ann Coulter and Bill Maher are at the kids' table. They're not granted complete respectability, but they are heard because in their unguided missile manner, they sometimes say necessary things that no one else is saying.

Healthy societies, in other words, don't suppress speech, but they do grant different standing to different sorts of people. Wise and considerate scholars are heard with high respect. Satirists are heard with bemused semirespect. Racists and anti-Semites are heard through a filter of opprobrium and disrespect. People who want to be heard attentively have to earn it through their conduct.

The massacre at Charlie Hebdo should be an occasion to end speech codes. And it should remind us to be legally tolerant toward offensive voices, even as we are socially discriminating.

## Satire, terrorism and Islam intolerance

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF  
*New York Times News Service*

The French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo skewers people of all faiths and backgrounds.

One cartoon showed rolls of toilet paper marked "Bible," "Torah" and "Quran," and the explanation: "In the toilet, all religions."

Yet when masked gunmen stormed Charlie Hebdo's offices in Paris on Wednesday with AK-47s, murdering 12 people in the worst terror attack on French soil in decades, many assumed immediately that the perpetrators weren't Christian or Jewish fanatics but more likely Islamic extremists.

Outraged Christians, Jews or atheists might vent frustrations on Facebook or Twitter. Yet, while we don't know exactly who is responsible, the presumption is that Islamic extremists once again have expressed their displeasure with bullets.

Many ask: Is there something about Islam that leads inexorably to violence, terrorism and subjugation of women?

The question arises because fanatical Muslims so often seem to murder in the name of God, from the 2004 Madrid train bombing that killed 191 people to the murder of hostages at a cafe in Sydney, Australia, last month. I wrote last year of a growing strain of intolerance in the Islamic world after a brave Pakistani lawyer friend of mine, Rashid Rehman, was murdered for defending a university professor falsely accused of insulting the Prophet Muhammad.

Some of the most systematic terrorism in the Islamic world has been the daily persecution of Christians and other religious minorities, from the Bahai to the Yazidi to the Ahmadis.

Then there's the oppression of women. Of the bottom 10 countries in the World Economic Forum's gen-

der gap report, I count nine as majority Muslim.

So, sure, there's a strain of Islamic intolerance and extremism that is the backdrop to the attack on Charlie Hebdo. The magazine was firebombed in 2011 after a cover depicted Muhammad saying, "100 lashes if you're not dying of laughter."

Earlier, Charlie Hebdo had published a cartoon showing Muhammad crying and saying, "It's hard to be loved by idiots."

Terror incidents lead many Westerners to perceive Islam as inherently extremist, but I think that is too glib and simple-minded. Small numbers of terrorists make headlines, but they aren't representative of a complex and diverse religion of 1.6 billion adherents. My Twitter feed Wednesday brimmed with Muslims denouncing the attack — and noting that fanatical Muslims damage the image of Muhammad far more than the most vituperative cartoonist.

The vast majority of Muslims of course have nothing to do with the insanity of such attacks — except that they are disproportionately the victims of terrorism. Indeed, the Charlie Hebdo murders weren't even the most lethal terror attack on Wednesday: A car bomb outside a police college in Yemen, possibly planted by al-Qaida, killed at least 37 people.

One of things I've learned in journalism is to beware of perceiving the world through simple narratives, because then new information is mindlessly plugged into those storylines. In my travels from Mauritania to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan to Indonesia, extremist Muslims have shared with me their own deeply held false narratives of America as an oppressive state controlled by Zionists and determined to crush Islam. That's an absurd caricature, and



Nicholas Kristof

we should be wary ourselves of caricaturing a religion as diverse as Islam.

So let's avoid religious profiling. The average Christian had nothing to apologize for when Christian fanatics in the former Yugoslavia engaged in genocide against Muslims. Critics of Islam are not to blame because an anti-Muslim fanatic murdered 77 people in Norway in 2011.

Let's also acknowledge that the most courageous, peace-loving people in the Middle East who are standing up to Muslim fanatics are themselves often devout Muslims. Some read the Quran and blow up girls' schools, but more read the Quran and build girls' schools. The Taliban represents one brand of Islam; the Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai the polar opposite.

There's a humbling story, perhaps apocryphal, that Gandhi was once asked: What do you think of Western civilization? He supposedly responded: I think it would be a good idea.

The great divide is not between faiths. Rather it is between terrorists and moderates, between those who are tolerant and those who "otherize."

In Australia after the hostage crisis, some Muslims feared revenge attacks. Then a wave of non-Muslim Australians rose to the occasion, offering to escort Muslims and ensure their safety, using the hashtag #Ill-RideWithYou on Twitter. More than 250,000 such comments were posted on Twitter — a model of big-hearted compassion after terror attacks.

Bravo! That's the spirit. Let's stand with Charlie Hebdo, for the global outpouring of support has been inspiring. Let's denounce terrorism, oppression and misogyny in the Islamic world — and everywhere else. But let's be careful not to respond to terrorists' intolerance with our own.

*Let's avoid religious profiling.*