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Tribal initiative deserves support

It's time to reconsider fish passage around Grand Coulee

In late January Indian tribes from Washington and Idaho took Lan important preliminary step toward restoring salmon to thousands of square miles of habitat north of Grand Coulee Dam.

Fish passage is one of those peculiar Pacific Northwest issues that excites enormous passion here and blank stares in Washington, D.C. Within this esoteric subject, no fish-passage challenge is bigger than Grand Coulee — both literally and politically.

Built during the depths of the Great Depression, Grand Coulee is civil and social engineering on the grandest of scales.

Towering 550 feet, the advent of Grand Coulee marked a regional and national turning point. World War II transformed the Pacific Northwest's largely agrarian economy, and Grand Coulee was a pivotal engine of that transition. Originally conceived as a reclamation project — to increase irrigable agriculture in Central Washington — the dam's construction gained an urgency as a power generator with the approach of World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt began the dam's construction in 1933 as Hitler came to power, two years before Congress would authorize the dam. It generated massive kilowatts for the region's new shipyards that were building vessels for the war, for aluminum plants that fed aircraft manufacturing and for a top-secret, unnamed project at what would become the Hanford Nuclear Reservation.

After all these years, the dam and reservoir continue irrigating a vast acreage of prime agricultural land, while producing electricity in a manner that doesn't harm the atmosphere. However, salmon were never included in the calculus of dam costs and benefits. Asked at the time about fish ladders, the head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said, "I haven't time to play nurse-maid to a bunch of fish," according to the Columbia River Gillnetter magazine. Thankfully, this attitude is a thing of the past.

As the Gillnetter observed with concurrence by tribal fishermen — the cavalier attitude toward fish passage at Grand Coulee "wiped out 40 percent of the entire Columbia River fish spawning grounds. In that massacre, we forever lost the big June 'Hogs' (chinook salmon that sometimes reached 80 pounds) and sockeye runs."

Now, tribes are asking the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to help figure out ways to restore salmon in the 100 river miles between Grand Coulee and the Canadian border. Salmon that make it to the border would obviously continue on — necessitating a rethink of U.S.-Canada treaties and Canadian fish restoration strategies. It's also uncertain right now whether salmon would still find habitat to their liking above the

The ongoing restoration of the Elwha watershed on the Olympic Peninsula following dam removal provides room for optimism that salmon — once provided a way around Grand Coulee — would find ways to succeed.

It is time we righted the injustice and arrogance of salmon-run destruction. It's good the tribes are leading this initiative. We should all get on board.

Leaders often play to two audiences

Playing foreign policy, Speaker Boehner wastes his domestic opportunity

areed Zakaria scored a big interview on his Sunday show - GPS on CNN. Zakaria's guest was President Obama. One of the topics was Vladimir Putin's attempt to annex the Ukraine to Russia.

Obama noted that the era in which counties gain influence by annexing territory is long gone. But he noted that Putin is also playing to a domestic audience. Among Russians, Putin's saber rattling gained him popularity at a time when his polling numbers had dipped.

All world leaders play to at least two audiences. That sometimes is true of American politicians.

That duality is on display with House Speaker John Boehner's ill-considered invitation to Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of Congress. Netanyahu is playing to his home audience, with an Israeli election months away. He is happy to abet Boehner's attempt to stick it to President Obama on his negotiations with Iran over nuclear

Boehner is acting like a world leader, which he is not. He is the presiding officer of one branch of the legislative branch of government. And he is elected only by one party of that branch.

On the face of it, inviting a foreign leader to speak to a joint session of Congress without notifying the White House is a very bad idea. But the Republican majority of the House is good at coming up with bad ideas — like shutting down the federal government.

By making such a destructive gaffe, Speaker Boehner has mortgaged the credibility of the new House majority at a time when the big question is whether it can govern or merely throw rocks at the White House. And the Netanyahu invitation calls into question Mr. Boehner's strategic intelligence.

Heroes among the bystanders

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF New York Times News Service

ne of the great heroes of the 20th century was Auschwitz prisoner No. 4859,

who volunteered to be there. Witold Pilecki, an officer in the Polish resistance to the Nazi regime, deliberately let himself be captured by the Germans in 1940 so that he could gather information about Hitler's

concentration camps. Inside Auschwitz, he set up resistance cells — even as he almost died of starvation, torture and disease.

Then Pilecki helped build a radio transmitter, and, in 1942, he broadcast to the outside world accounts of atrocities inside Auschwitz — as the Nazis frantically searched the camp look-

ing for the transmitter. He worked to expose the Nazi gas chambers, brutal sexual experiments and savage camp punishments, in hopes that the world would

Finally, in April 1943, he escaped from Auschwitz, bullets flying after him, and wrote an eyewitness report laying out the horror of the extermination camps. He then campaigned unsuccessfully for an attack on Auschwitz.

Eventually, he was brutally tortured and executed — not by the Nazis, but after the war, in 1947. by the Communists. They

then suppressed the story of Pilecki's heroism for decades (a book about his work, The Auschwitz Volunteer, was published in 2012).

today.

I was thinking of Pilecki last week on the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps. I had relatives killed in Auschwitz (they were Poles spying on the Nazis for the resistance), and these camps are emblems of the Holocaust and symbols of the human capacity for evil.

In the coming months, the world will also commemorate the 100th anniversary of the start of the Armenian genocide — which, despite the outrage of Turkish officials at the term, was, of course, a genocide. There, too, I feel a connection because my ancestors were Armenian.

Then, in the summer, we'll observe the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II — an occasion for recalling Japanese atrocities in China, Korea, the Philippines and elsewhere. All this is likely to fuel more debates focused on the past. Should we honor Armenian genocide victims with a special day? Should Japan apologize for enslaving "comfort women"? But, to me, the lesson

of history is that the best The best way to honor past victims of atrocities is to stand up way to to slaughter today. The most respectful way to honor honor Jewish, Armenian or Rwandan victims of genopast cide is not with a ceremony victims of or a day, but with efforts to reduce mass atrocities curatrocities rently underway. The U.S. Holocaust is to stand Memorial Museum in Washington is a shining up to example of that approach, slaughter channeling outrage at past

> general, the world is typically less galvanized by mass atrocities than paralyzed by them.

horrors to mitigate today's

— from Syria to Central

African Republic. But, in

Even during the Holocaust, despite the heroism of Pilecki and others like Jan Karski, who tried desperately to shake sense into world leaders, no one was very interested in industrial slaughter. Over and over since then, world leaders have excelled at giving eloquent "never again" speeches but rarely offered much beyond lip service.



Nicholas Kristof

This year, I'm afraid something similar will happen. We'll hear flowery rhetoric about Auschwitz, Armenia and World War II, and then we'll go on shrugging at crimes against humanity in Syria, Central African Republic, Sudan and South Sudan, Myanmar and elsewhere.

Darfur symbolizes our fickleness. It has disappeared from headlines, and

Sudan makes it almost impossible for journalists to get there, but Human Rights Watch reported a few days ago that the human rights situation in Sudan actually deteriorated in 2014.

Indeed, the Sudanese regime is now engaging in mass atrocities not only in Darfur but also in the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile regions. Sudan bombed an aid hospital in January in the Nuba Mountains, and the Belgian branch of Doctors Without Borders has just announced the closure of operations in Sudan because of government obstruc-

A decade ago, one of the most outspoken politicians on Darfur — harshly scolding President George W. Bush for not doing more — was an Illinois senator, Barack Obama. Today, as president of the United States, he is quiet. The United Nations force in Darfur has been impotent.

Granted, humanitarian crises rarely offer good policy choices, but there's no need to embrace the worse option, which is paralysis. We've seen in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Kurdistan and, lately, Yazidi areas of Iraq and eastern Congo that outside efforts sometimes can make a difference.

So, sure, let's commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz, the horror of the Holocaust and the brutality of the Armenian genocide by trying to mitigate mass atrocities today. The basic lesson of these episodes is not just that humans are capable of astonishing evil, or that some individuals like Witold Pilecki respond with mesmerizing heroism — but that, sadly, it's just too easy to acquiesce.

The lunacy of declining vaccines

By FRANK BRUNI New York Times News Service

few years back, an acerbic Infriend of mine who was a recent transplant to Los Angeles told me that she itched to write a satirical novel with the following narrative:

A group of wealthy, educated people in Santa Monica who deliberately didn't vaccinate their children subsequently take them on a "poor-ism" trip to a developing

The goal is to make them wiser and more sensitive to suffering in the world. While being sensitized, the kids catch diseases that they could have been inoculated against. Some of them die.

As a plot, it lacks subtlety (and compassion). But as a parable, it's crystal-clear. You can be so privileged that you're underprivileged, so blessed with choices that you choose to be a fool, so "informed" that you're misinformed.

Which brings us to Disneyland,

We're best

served by

vaccinating

all of those

who can be.

children

measles and the astonishing fact that a scourge once essentially eliminated in this country is back.

You've probably heard or read about the recent outbreak traced to the theme park. But there's a chance that you're unaware, because it hasn't received nearly the coverage that,

say, Ebola did, even though some of the dynamics at work here are scar-

It started in mid-December and is now believed to be responsible for more than 70 cases in seven states and Mexico; 58 of those are in California, which of course is where the park is — in Orange County, to be more specific.

As it happens, there are affluent pockets of that county where the fraction of schoolchildren whose parents have cited a "personal belief" to exempt them from vaccinations is higher than the statewide average of 2.5 percent. That's also true of some affluent pockets of the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas.

It used to be that unvaccinated children in America were clustered in impoverished neighborhoods; now they're often clustered among sophisticates in gilded ZIP codes where a certain strain of health faddishness reigns. According to a story in The Hollywood Reporter last year, the parents of 57 percent of the children at a Beverly Hills preschool and of 68 percent at one in Santa Monica had filed personal-belief exemptions from having their kids vaccinated.

Why? Many of them buy into a discredited theory that there's a link between the MMR (mumps-measles-rubella) vaccine and autism. They're encouraged by a cadre of brash alarmists who have gained attention by pushing that thinking. Anti-vaccine panic was the

path that the actress Jenny McCarthy tions he doled out didn't have sound traveled to innumerable appearances on prominent news and talk shows; she later demonstrated her singular version of concern for good health by working as a pitchwoman for

Other parents have separate or additional worries about vaccines, which can indeed have side effects. But they're weighing that downside against what they deem to be a virtually nonexistent risk of exposure to the diseases in question. And that degree of risk depends entirely on a vast majority of children getting vaccines. If too many forgo them, we surrender what's known as "herd

> immunity," and the risk rises. That's precisely what health officials see happening now.

> In 2004, there were just 37 reported cases of measles in the United States. In 2014, there were 644. And while none of those patients died, measles can kill. Before vaccines for it became widespread in

1963, millions of Americans were infected annually, and 400 to 500

"I don't think its fatality rate has decreased," said Daniel Salmon, a vaccine expert at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. "We just haven't had enough cases for someone to die."

An estimated 90 percent of unvaccinated people who are exposed to the measles virus become infected, and they themselves can be infectious four days before they develop a telltale rash.

But what's in play is more than one affliction's resurgence. The size and sway of the anti-vaccine movement reflect a chilling disregard for science — or at least a pick-and-choose, cafeteria approach to it — that's also evident, for example, in many Americans' refusal to recognize climate change. We're a curious species, and sometimes a sad one, chasing knowledge only to deny it, making progress only to turn away from its benefits.

The movement underscores the robust market for pure conjecture not just about vaccines, but about all



Frank Bruni

sorts of ostensible threats and putative remedies and the number of merchants willing to traffic in it. Look at Dr. Oz, a cardiothoracic surgeon now drawing millions of viewers daily as a television host peddling weight-loss tricks. The British Medical Journal recently analyzed dozens of his shows and determined that more than half of the sugges-

scientific backing. The Internet makes it easier for people to do their own "research" and

can lead them to trustworthy and untrustworthy sites in equal measure. "It can be difficult to know what

to believe," said Kristen Feemster, a infectious diseases specialist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "So many people can be an expert, because there are platforms for so many voices."

Salmon noted that the sheer variety and saturation of media today amplify crackpot hypotheses to a point where they seem misleadingly worthy of consideration.

"People say things enough times, there must be some truth to it," he said. "Look at the proportion of people who question where our president was born or his religion."

And we in the traditional media don't always help, covering the news in an on-one-hand, on-the-otherhand fashion that sometimes gives nearly equal time to people citing facts and people weaving fiction.

I'm not entirely baffled by the fear of vaccines, which arises in part from a mistrust of drug companies and a medical establishment that have made past mistakes.

But this subject has been studied and studied and studied, and it's abundantly clear that we're best served by vaccinating all of those children who can be, so that the ones who can't be — for medical reasons such as a compromised immune system — are protected.

Right now, Salmon said, only two states, Mississippi and West Virginia, limit vaccine exemptions to such children. If the anti-vaccination crowd grows, other states may have to move in that direction.

There's a balance to be struck between personal freedom and public safety, and I'm not at all sure that our current one is correct.

We rightly govern what people can and can't do with guns, seat belts, drugs and so much more, all in the interest not just of their welfare but of everybody's. Are we being dangerously remiss when it comes to making them wear the necessary armor against illnesses that belong in history books?