

## Girl Scout helps animals

I am a member of Girl Scout Troop 10136, and we had to complete an award which is called the Bronze Award.

Here are some things about what the Bronze Award is, and how we completed it.

The Bronze Award is when Girl Scouts think of a problem that you can solve. Our project was to help the Clatsop County Animal Shelter. We held a pet supply drive for them, and also donated some of our Girl Scout cookie money we earned. We chose the Clatsop County Animal Shelter because we all voted to help out the animals.

If you would like to help the animals at the shelter, you can bring in pet food donations, volunteer time, or donate money online. You can find more information at [www.dogsncats.org](http://www.dogsncats.org)

NEVAEH MIEHE  
Astoria

## Build sea lions a floating dock

A reasonable alternative to sea lions occupying the city docks is to build a floating dock away from the area, but also somewhat close (simply because a sea lion's nature puts them in your locale).

The sea lions want to do their thing — rest, hang out — and people have taken up the space the sea lions have used over hundreds of years. Sea lions don't actually want to be so close to you, either.

Learn to live with nature, not against it.

Maybe Hollywood might be interested in the robotic orca.

SASHA FINLEY  
Boise, Idaho

## Go Sanders!

For the last 30 or 40 years I have voted for the "least worst" candidate for president. Many people do this: You've got to vote for so and so because the other guy is so much worse. Right?

This explains how we have come to where we are, and I am sorry to say that, being a lifelong Democrat, I have now become an Independent. Neither the Democratic Party or the Republican Party are what they used to be. Neither one serves the people anymore.

If you want things to change, leave your party. Maybe they will wake up. But meanwhile, look at other candidates. Vote for who you think is the best, even if you are told they can't win. Winning with the "least worst candidate" isn't winning — is it?

How about a woman for president? Is it time? So, elect any woman because it is time? If I voted for Elizabeth Warren, it wouldn't be because she is a woman, but how she has taken on the banks. She is not running. I heard a popular talk show host say that Hillary Clinton is now starting to talk the talk of a progressive. Well, how unique. Now that she is running for president she will say what she thinks you want to hear.

I am going to vote for a person who I have listened to for the last 10 years. He has been talking about the problems in this country and how to fix them. This person is still talking the same talk. He will be running on the Democratic ticket. The Democratic party doesn't want him because he is too Democratic. He is not for big banks or these terrible trade deals favored by Democrats like Clintons and Obama (Trans-Pacific Partnership = 70,000 more jobs lost).

He is for the middle class. Remember them? Probably the Democratic Party will not let him debate — he is too much of a challenge. You will hardly hear his name mentioned in mainstream media. But he is what we need, even if I have to write his name in, I will vote for him. Go Sen. Bernie Sanders!

DIXIE GAINER  
Nehalem

## What a Goondoggle

I've been feeling so disappointed with several of the recent decisions made by the Astoria City Council. They voted to pass the Bridge Vista Plan (with the exception of Councilor Drew Herzog), despite the objections of a room full of citizens who all spoke against it.

That they brushed off the concerns of those who offered comments by implying that the rest of town (not in attendance) was fine with the plan seemed like a slight to those who had taken the time to be there, and sent the message that the council's decision had already been reached before the meeting began.

That they even considered — let alone approved — the reimbursement of a large consulting fee taken on by the Friends of the Column was equally troubling. The Friends would like to relocate the cell/emergency responder tower from the column to Shively Park, so they took it upon themselves to hire a consultant to schmooze with Verizon to get the project moving forward more quickly (which apparently costs \$70,000), and later handed the city the bill.

Besides the fact that the whole thing is totally unnecessary — claims that the tower was responsible for the slow response time during the 2007 storm are bogus — I feel like this sets a dangerous precedent. As someone who's had friends marry at Shively Park, and have often used it as a refuge during our busy summers, I consider it a beautiful and sacred place; can I be a Friend of Shively Park, hire an attorney to fight to keep it free from a 150-foot monopoly, and then expect the city to pay for it?

It is so frustrating to watch our leadership waste taxpayer dollars on projects that improve the experience of tourists, and those seeking to make money off the town, when there are so many unaddressed needs of the people who actually live here.

I keep thinking of the term "boondoggle" to describe these projects, but since Astoria seems intent on cashing in on its Goonies fame, perhaps we could call them "Goondoggles." As the town rushes to sell itself off to the highest bidder, it seems sadly ironic that the actual plot of "The Goonies" was that a group of concerned citizens fights to save Astoria from greedy developers.

I guess this is the point where those of us who care about this town should never say die; I wonder, though, if anyone will listen?

TERESA BARNES  
Astoria

## A concrete contradiction

In the May 22 issue of the *Cannon Beach Gazette*, there is an article, "New sidewalk project could improve ADA accessibility on Spruce Street." This article states, "Councilor George Vetter said he wondered if there were a more aesthetically appealing way to handle the problem than just throwing concrete down. We're a town that prides itself on aesthetics, and concrete is not part of that."

We agree with Councilor Vetter. However, we wonder why the council didn't have any concerns about concrete before granting the property located at 532 N. Laurel St. to build four single residences on a half-acre lot. Typically a minimum of three acres are required for this type of development. This property design included a very industrial-looking concrete retaining wall/driveway, approximately 10 feet high and 125 feet long. Throwing down concrete? Wow.

The project also means the removal of many trees. And this from a town that "prides itself on aesthetics?"

Council, please reconsider before allowing this much concrete to be thrown down in our neighborhood.

DALE AND LINDA  
HINTZ  
Cannon Beach

## Women composers deserve festival spotlight

There are hundreds of classical composers who are women now documented in books, on television, in recordings, and in the press. Historical detectives and scholars have unearthed them from ancient libraries, discarded sheet music, and record bins over the past 70 years.

*The New Yorker Magazine* featured an article reviewing a musical event in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art ("Eyes and Ears" by Alex Roth). They have been featuring concerts in front of various paintings and sculptures, which compliment each other. Recently, in front of a Caravaggio, two 17th century composer compositions, by Francesca Caccini and Barbara Strozzi, were featured.

Caccini is the daughter

of Giulio Caccini, one of the pioneers of the opera genre. Strozzi is the adopted daughter of poet Giulio Strozzi. She was a prolific and well-documented composer who moved in lofty intellectual circles in Venice, collaborating often with several early opera composers. The Medici family sponsored much of her work.

In the U.S., Clara Schuman is well known, due to her brother, a composer also. Amy Beach was one of the most prolific and successful classical composers of the early 1900s. Born in England and emigrating to the U.S., Rebecca Clarke is known most for three compositions; "Morpheus for Violin and Piano," "Sonata for Viola and Piano" and "Passacaglia on an old English Tune." I could name 50 more, but these three will do to represent.

For 300 years the Catholic Church maintained Ospidali, orphanages in Venice and Florence. Jane Bauldauf-Berdes book, "The Women Musicians of Venice," opens a door long closed on an important era in the history of Venice — three centuries of music at the four major foundations of the former Republic of Venice, the Ospidali Grande. It provides a comprehensive account of the institutional, social, religious, civic and most important, the musical subsidiaries, or cori.

Girls in the Ospidali were trained in all aspects of music (the cori), composition, playing, singing, and even making instruments in shops. Hundreds of compositions written by these women, spanning 300 years, were discovered in Venice and Florence in the 1980s. Of note is a one of these composers, Maddalena Lombardini Sirmen. There is a popular CD of six violin concertos by the Allegri String Quartet on Calla Recordings.

In the effort to make this entreaty brief, I have only provided you with a first course in a feast of composers worth highlighting in the future festival. This is a timely proposal on a subject long overdue — include woman composers in the Astoria Music Festival.

PAMELA MATTSON  
MCDONALD  
Astoria

## The Delusions of Dolezal

By CHARLES BLOW  
*New York Times News Service*

Rachel Dolezal, a woman with no known black heritage, has apparently, through an elaborate scheme of deception and denial, claimed for years to be a product of black heritage.

This has sparked a national conversation about how race is constructed and enforced, to what extent it is cultural and experiential, and whether it is mutable and adoptable.

If this were simply a matter of a person appreciating, emulating or even appropriating the presentation and performance of a race other than the one society prescribes to her based simply on her appearance, it wouldn't be a story.

But this isn't simply that. This is about privilege, deceitful performance and a tortured attempt to avoid truth and confession by co-opting the language of struggle, infusing labyrinthine logic with the authority of the academy, and coat-tailing very real struggles of transgender people and transracial adoptees to defend one's deception.

This is a spectacular exercise in hubris, narcissism and deflection.

And we have been distracted from real conversation about real things in order to try to contextualize a false life based on a false premise. For a moment, black-face seemed to matter more than actual black lives.

On this issue of appearance, Ezra Dolezal, her adopted brother, has described her transformation as a form of "blackface." When Matt Lauer asked, "Have you done something to darken your complexion?" she responded, "I certainly don't stay out of the sun." (TMZ reported Wednesday that according to their "tanning sources," Dolezal was a "loyal customer at Palm Beach Tan in Spokane" and "was a fan of Mystic Tan ... a brand of spray tan.")

Dolezal added: "This is not some freak 'Birth of a Nation' mockery blackface performance. This is on a very real, connected level."

Full stop. Let's just marvel at the efficient catchphrase saturation in those sentences. She takes the whole universe of possible attacks and issues them in her own tongue as a method of neutralizing them. It is a clever, if calculated, bit of argumentation, the kind that one might practice in a mirror.

But Dolezal didn't stop there.

She also told the MSNBC host Melissa Harris-Perry, "I have really gone there with the experience, in terms of being a mother of two black sons and really owning what it means to experience and live blackness."

Yes, but she did so by choice and with a trap door. She was always aware that she could remove her weave and stop tanning (assuming that's true) and return to what society registers as whiteness. People of actual black heritage don't have that option. Her sons don't have that option. And make no mistake: Having that option is a privilege.

The whole notion of "transracial" as it has been applied to Dolezal is flawed in part because it isn't equally available to all.

Whiteness in this country has historically been incredibly narrowly drawn to protect its purity, and this was not simply enforced by social mores, but also by law. Conversely, blackness was broadly drawn, serving as something of a collecting pool for anyone with even the most minute detectable and provable Negro ancestry. If you weren't 100 percent white, you were black.

This meant that society became accustomed to blackness presenting visually in an infinite spectrum of possibilities, from pass-for-white lightness to obsidian darkness lacking all ambiguity.

This means that the way Dolezal was able to convincingly

present and perform blackness as a light-skinned black woman is a form of one-directional privilege that simply isn't available to a black person starting at the other end of the melanin spectrum.

Racial passing has been a societal feature probably for as long as race has been a societal construct. But it was more often practiced by a person who was not purely white by heritage passing herself or himself off as such. In some ways, this may have been understandable, even if distasteful, as these people identified as white in a society that privileged whiteness and devalued, diminished or attempted to destroy — both spiritually and physically — others.

Choosing a life of privilege over one of oppression must have seemed particularly attractive to some, particularly to those whose parents are different races and who, one could argue, could make the most compelling case to identify with whichever parent's heritage they chose.

But Dolezal wasn't passing

in that sense. She was commandeering and concocting a biography of burden to obscure the shift and lay claim to authenticity.

According to a report in *The Washington Post*, however, the transracial-adoption ("when a child of one race is adopted by the family of another")

community has not taken kindly to being linked to Dolezal's deception. Kimberly McKee, the assistant director of the Korean-American Adoptee Adoptive Parent Network and a professor at Grand Valley State University where she studies transracial adoption, told *The Post*, "You're turning something that is a historical experience into something that's almost being made a joke."

A letter signed by McKee and 21 other scholars and advocates made the point even more forcefully: "We find the misuse of 'transracial,' describing the phenomenon of a white woman assuming perceived markers of 'blackness' in order to pass as 'black,' to be erroneous, ahistorical, and dangerous."

Indeed, one would be hard pressed to find scientific support for transracialism, as it is being applied for Dolezal's deception and identity, as a legitimate area of serious inquiry beyond a sociological phenomenon.

How can one be born discordant with a racial identity if race is a more socialized construct than rigid, biological demarcation and determinism? In other words, how can one be born discordant with an experience one has yet to have?

At best, this appears to be an issue of having an affinity for a culture that grows around a social construct. That is because, to my sense of it, cultural race identity has more scientific grounding than biological race identity, and those cultures of racial identity are in fact a response to the structure itself. Some people perform in response to their privilege and others to their lack thereof.

In that regard, one cannot only like and want to emulate the look of another racial group (though, one must be ever-questioning of oneself as to what motivates this, making sure that it isn't the out-growth self-hatred), but one can even prefer the culture that developed around that look.

But changing appearance and even cross-cultural immersion doesn't alter the architecture of race that gave birth to and reinforced those differences in the first place.

Dolezal's performance of blackness may have been born of affinity, but it was based on a lie — one she has never sufficiently recanted — and her feeble attempts to use professional language and faux-intellectual obfuscations only add insult to the cultural injury.



Charles Blow

**This is a spectacular exercise in hubris, narcissism and deflection.**

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