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Refugees have come before; we'll survive

Did you know that 55 languages are spoken at Portland's David Douglas High School? That is an aspect of the large immigrant population in outer southeast Portland.

Willamette Week described that aspect of David Douglas nearly three years ago. In last week's edition of *WW*, Beth Slovic paid another call and engaged five students in a conversation about their journey to America, the process of assimilation and the process of learning English. The students were from China, Cuba and Somalia.

Slovic reported that instead of treating immigrants differently in its elementary grades English-language program, all students are put into the same track. "Now, all children from kindergarten to fifth grade — no matter their native language — spend blocks of time in English-language instruction grouped by ability," she reported.

The larger context of *WW*'s visit to David Douglas is the discussion of immigrants and refugees in the Republican presidential primary campaign. The practical effect of Slovic's window on the challenge faced by

David Douglas High School was twofold. Her article gave human proportion to immigrant students — a dimension that political demagogues don't want to know. And it described how creative administrators are dealing with such an influx of non-English speakers.

It is important to remember that America has done this before. If you could time-travel to Astoria's schools in the last decade of the 19th century, you would see a large number of immigrant children from Scandinavian countries, principally Finland. As Wally Palmberg describes in his 1993 book *Toward One Flag*, there was rivalry among Astoria's immigrant populations. Some staffers of Astoria's Finnish language newspaper *Toveri* were deported for their political beliefs.

Donald Trump and those who defer to him would like us to believe America is incapable of assimilating immigrant populations. Trading on fear, they sell this nation short.

Storm's anniversary is a good planning tool

Eight years isn't ordinarily considered a notable anniversary, but a high-wind warning last week sparked memories of the history-making December 2007 storm that crippled the coast for days.

Though we all can hope it was a 100-year storm — a once-in-a-century event — such catastrophes appear to be happening with greater frequency now than in the past. The start of another winter is a good time to review some of what we learned from the 2007 typhoon and its aftermath.

One of the most fundamental lessons was that the coast is largely on its own during and immediately following a major disaster. Although inland areas weren't as impacted by the hours of hurricane-strength winds as we were, thousands of downed trees blocked every access highway along which emergency personnel and supplies would travel. In 2007, these routes were partially cleared in fairly short order. After a future subduction zone earthquake and tsunami, they will be blocked far longer and inland areas will be preoccupied with their own problems.

Coastal agencies and families must plan on getting by for a protracted period. Three days used to be the recommendation, and this was about right in 2007, but three weeks is a more likely scenario after a subduction event.

Keeping three weeks-worth of food, gasoline, money and vital prescriptions on hand is close to impossible for many coastal residents, but we all should do our best to prepare in light of our own financial wherewithal. Public agencies and private charities

should plan to have to make up the difference between the essentials that residents have on hand and what they actually must have following a disaster.

For more frequent small-scale crises, such as coastal wind storms and associated power outages, residents have learned to better monitor weather forecasts and warnings. The relatively new Doppler radar on the south Washington coast has greatly improved the accuracy and timeliness of these warnings. When we know a big storm is coming, it behooves us to fill our gas tanks, get some cash out of the bank, stock up on easy-to-prepare foods and drinking water, firewood and cooking fuel, and make sure we have warm clothes and blankets in case the power is out for long. Keep extra batteries on hand and make sure you have some way to recharge cellphones from car batteries or some other way.

The 2007 storm taught much about how we depend on one another, reminding us of the need to check on neighbors and family members to make sure they're safe and have what they need to get by. In Pacific County, this led to creation of Community Emergency Response Teams who do things like check vacant houses following cold snaps to make sure pipes haven't burst. Citizen ham radio operators have placed equipment in key locations to facilitate emergency communications during and after a disaster.

Surviving is both an individual responsibility and a social obligation. Planning for emergencies on the coast has to be an automatic part of living here.

No more thoughts and prayers

By TIMOTHY EGAN
New York Times News Service

We never had enough time to rationalize, in the uniquely American way, why that middle-aged white man killed a cop, a mother of two and an Iraq War veteran in Colorado Springs, when the latest slaughter of human life intruded. He was — what, pro-life? Screaming something about "baby parts" while he unloaded in a Planned Parenthood clinic?

Slow down, slow down, the mind wants to say — one absurd mass murder at a time. They all "make sense," eventually. Don't they?

In Colorado Springs, the man arrested in the killings, Robert L. Dear Jr., fit a profile. Here was another bearded introvert who lived at the edge of modernity, his head stuffed full of hate and half-truths. "He claims to be a Christian and is extremely evangelistic," his ex-wife wrote in a court document. "He is obsessed with the world coming to an end." And of course, he had a semi-automatic rifle to go with his delusions.

How did this malcontent become a domestic terrorist? We'll never know for sure if his withdrawal — to a shack in the South, then a trailer in Colorado — led him further down the path to savagery. But we do know that isolation can breed ignorance. And when people with abhorrent views are not challenged, their hatred only hardens.

Well, that's the Colorado Springs story. Got it. The Unabomber, the Atlanta Olympic Park killer, that guy in Tennessee who shot up a church while kids performed a musical — they were domestic crazies of a certain type, the rugged individualist

gone mad.

But what about San Bernardino? A young man and his wife drop off their 6-month-old baby at Grandma's, and then go mow down a room full of people at a workplace holiday luncheon. His workplace. With their assault rifles, they killed 14 people in several minutes, left another 21 injured. Makes no sense.

I thought, initially, this had to be an anti-government wacko. You know, getting revenge against the system, as represented by all those county workers at a facility for people with disabilities. A Timothy McVeigh type. Except, the co-workers were known to one of the shooters. The victims were friends with lives and families of their own, not just targets. That makes no sense either.

So, workplace violence? A personal slight that became a seething that metastasized into a commando-style raid at the Inland Regional Center. It happens all the time.

On the surface, the homicidal couple were living the American dream. One, the son of immigrants, with a degree from a California state college, the other, his bride from overseas. Had a good job. But this suburban couple was making pipe bombs and assembling an arsenal to murder people in the country that took them both in, educated one of them, provided him with a good job. The surface life was a mirage.

When we heard the identity of the homicidal couple, Syed Rizwan Farook, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, another explanation immediately came to mind. They're Muslim. Too much of the most deadly, inexplicable violence in the world today is committed in the name of this religion, and its strain of radical Islam. The shooters are people like Farook, kneeling at prayer in the back of the



Timothy Egan

mosque, kindly and devout. Oh, we never suspected a thing, the imam says. The explanation is tiresome, and increasingly implausible.

What religion would direct a young married couple to shoot up a room that would include members of their own faith? Farook was "radicalized," we are told. And his wife, officials say, had pledged allegiance to the barbarians of the Islamic State. With that information, it made sense. Once a radical, no longer a human being.

The village of victims, their best friends, the children who lost parents, the parents who lost adult children, they can clench their fists and cry. We all know the ritual by now. Politicians of one cowardly type will say their "thoughts and prayers" are with you. What garbage. Better to say nothing at all.

And politicians of another cowardly type will refuse to see that hundreds, maybe thousands of the world's 1.6 billion Muslims find justification for mass murder of innocent people in their holy book.

"Your 'thoughts' should be about steps to take to stop this carnage," tweeted Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut. "Your 'prayers' should be for forgiveness if you do nothing — again."

A day after the California carnage, the Senate decided to do nothing, again, voting down a measure that would have made it more difficult for people on the terror watch list, felons and the mentally ill to buy guns.

By next week, with the professional football playoff picture starting to take shape, and the holiday festivities in full swing, we'll have this San Bernardino thing figured out. And we'll hope that it doesn't happen again tomorrow. But it will happen tomorrow — on average, one multiple-victim shooting a day. Every day. It will make sense in the only country where mass killings make sense.

Once a radical, no longer a human being

The not-so-bad economy

By PAUL KRUGMAN
New York Times News Service

According to the economist Kevin O'Rourke, who has been doing a running comparison between the Great Depression that began in 1929 and the Great Recession that began almost eight years ago, the world has just passed a sad landmark.

While the initial slump this time around wasn't nearly as bad as the collapse from 1929 to 1933, the recovery has been much weaker — and at this point world industrial production is doing worse than it did at the same point in the 1930s. A remarkable achievement!

But the bad news is unevenly distributed. In particular, Europe has done very badly, while America has done relatively well. True, U.S. performance looks good only if you grade on a curve. Still, unemployment has been cut in half, and the Federal Reserve is getting ready to raise interest rates at a time when its counterpart, the European Central Bank, is still desperately seeking ways to boost spending.

Now, I believe that the Fed is making a mistake. But the fact that hiking rates is even halfway defensible is a sign that the U.S. economy isn't doing too badly. So what did we do right?

The answer, basically, is that the Fed and the White House have mostly worried about the right things. (Congress, not so much.) Their actions fell far short of what should have been done; unemployment should have come down much faster than it did. But at least they avoided taking destructive steps to fight phantoms.

Start with the Fed. In his recent

book *The Courage to Act*, Ben Bernanke, the former Fed chairman, celebrates his institution's willingness to step in and rescue the financial system, which was indeed the right thing to do. But everyone did that.

The real profile in courage was the Fed's behavior in 2010-11, when it stood fast in the face of demands that it tighten policy despite high unemployment. The pressure was intense, with leading Republicans including Paul Ryan, now the speaker of the House, accusing Bernanke of "debasement" of the dollar and suggesting that he was corruptly aiding President Barack Obama. Hard-money advocates seized on a rise in headline consumer prices, claiming that it was a harbinger of high inflation to come.

But the Fed stuck to its, um, printing presses, arguing that the rise in inflation was a one-time blip driven mainly by oil prices — and it was proved right.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic, the European Central Bank gave in to inflation panic, raising interest rates twice in 2011 — and in so doing helped push the euro area into a double-dip recession.

What about the White House? Some of us warned from the beginning that the 2009 stimulus was too small and would fade out too fast, a warning vindicated by events. But it was much better than nothing, and was enacted over scorched-earth opposition from Republicans claiming that it would cause soaring interest rates and a fiscal crisis. Again, this is in strong contrast to Europe, which never did much stimulus and turned quickly to savage austerity in debtor nations.

Unfortunately, the U.S. ended up doing a fair bit of austerity too, part-



Paul Krugman

ly driven by conservative state governments, partly imposed by Republicans in Congress via blackmail over the federal debt ceiling. But the Obama administration at least tried to limit the damage.

The result of these not-so-bad policies is today's not-so-bad economy. It's not a great economy, by any measure: Unemployment is low, but that has a lot to do with a decline in the fraction of the population looking for work, and the weakness of wages ensures that it doesn't feel like prosperity. Still, things could be worse.

And they may indeed get worse, which is why the Fed's likely rate hike will be a mistake.

Fed officials believe that the solid job growth of the past couple of years — which happened, by the way, as Obamacare, which conservatives assured us would be a job killer, went into full effect — will continue even if rates go up. I'm among those who believe that America is facing growing drag from the weakness of other economies, especially because a rising dollar is making U.S. manufacturing less competitive. But those officials could be right, in which case waiting to raise rates could mean some acceleration of inflation.

On the other hand, they could be wrong, in which case a rate hike could end the run of good economic news. And this would be much more serious than a modest uptick in inflation, because it's not at all clear what the Fed could do to fix its mistake.

I'm not sure why this argument, which a number of economists are making, isn't getting much traction at the Fed. I suspect, however, that officials have been worn down by incessant criticism of their policies, and want to throw the critics a bone.

But those critics have been wrong every step of the way. Why start taking them seriously now?

U.S. performance looks good only if you grade on a curve.

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