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Nehalem author examines our defining myths

By ERICK BENDEL
The Daily Astorian

Sacred stories guide people's lives and shape their characters; they make the world comprehensible and imbue it with meaning.

Though everyone has his or her own sacred stories, not everyone can name them. For such stories are often buried so deeply within people's worldviews that they go unnoticed, and unquestioned.

Tricia Gates Brown, a Nehalem author, calls these stories "myths" — not in the sense denoting legends or other fantastical fabrications but narratives that help people make sense of the world and their place within it.

"Even if you don't know what a myth is, you have one. In fact, you have several personal myths because we all do," she told an audience at the Columbia Forum Thursday evening at the Columbia Memorial Hospital Community Center. "And most of us are not conscious of our personal myths."

In her talk, "Understanding the value of sacred stories," Brown argued that, because people often fail to recognize their own operating myths, they can't know if theirs are healthy or unhealthy.

Brown knows from personal experience that, without conscious, healthy myths, people starved for sacred stories will adopt the prominent myths in their culture. Some myths may do active harm, leading folks quietly but inexorably away from happiness.

"When we aren't conscious of our myths, and we don't choose them carefully, we sometimes adopt the loudest myths around us," she said. "And there are no myths more compelling than those that prey on, and offer solutions to, our fears."

Romantic comedies, for example — seemingly the most benign form of entertainment —

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Tricia Gates Brown
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Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

ABOVE: People listen as Tricia Gates Brown speaks during her talk "Understanding the value of sacred stories of mythologies" at the Columbia Forum Thursday. TOP: Tricia Gates Brown smiles as she shares stories from different religions during her talk "Understanding the value of sacred stories of mythologies." After telling each story, Brown asked if preconceived notions about each religion impacted the way the story was received.

contain an unhealthy underlying myth: "For all of us, there is a special someone, and that we are lonely and generally flummoxed until we find them," she said. "And then we have a wedding at the end."

Brown admitted that, "as a young adult, and as an adolescent, I was very much shaped by the myth of the romantic comedy — and this to detrimental effect," she said. "So, years and three marriages later, I can tell you, this is not a healthy myth."

Healthy and unhealthy myths

Presidential campaigns offer a revealing look at the salient myths within U.S. culture.

Candidates' stump speeches, she pointed out, frequently contain some variation on the classically American myth of "pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps," which is "perhaps the defining myth of our culture," she said.

"Almost every candidate uses this myth to connect with people, because this myth is a part of almost all of our personal mythologies if we were raised in America," she said.

Republicans make liberal use of another common myth, the "myth of scarcity and being uniquely threatened," which, she said, goes something like this:

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Wages get a bump

Three-tiered minimum wage passes House

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A three-tiered minimum wage plan cleared its last hurdle Thursday when the state House of Representatives approved the measure 32 to 26.

Gov. Kate Brown said she plans to sign the bill. The Senate approved the bill last week.

"Today's action advances one of my priorities for 2016: raise the minimum wage," Brown said in a statement Thursday.

The plan increases wages to \$14.75 in the Portland metro area, \$12.50 in rural and coastal areas with struggling economies and \$13.50 in the rest of the state — including Clatsop County — by 2022.

The first pay bump starts in July, from \$9.25 to \$9.75 statewide.

"Thousands of working families are in poverty," state Rep. Paul Holvey, D-Eugene. "They can't make ends meet. We have the opportunity to address this issue, which hasn't been addressed in 25 years."

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Paris Achen/Capital Bureau

Advocates for a hike in the minimum wage to \$15 pitched their tents at the Capitol Thursday as the state House of Representatives debated and passed a three-tiered plan that increases the wage more slowly than a proposed ballot initiative.

Feds say 'yes' to storm aid

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

President Barack Obama has declared Oregon's record rainfall and storm damage in December a disaster, opening the way for support from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Gov. Kate Brown declared a state of emergency in 13 counties, beginning preliminary damage assessments last month by local agencies working with the state and national emergency agency. Tiffany Brown, emergency manager for Clatsop County, said the national declaration starts the second phase of the assessment process, in which FEMA vets the estimated damage.

Through FEMA's Public Assistance Grant Program, the government can cover at least 75 percent of emergency repairs to and replacements of public infrastructure, utilities, buildings, recreational areas and other property.

The Port of Astoria, city of Astoria, Columbia River Maritime Museum, state Parks and Recreation Department, state Department of Forestry and Western Oregon Electric Cooperative Inc., have collectively estimated more than \$1.2 million in damage. Brown said all the amounts are rough estimates and do not include damage being reported by the county, state Department of Transportation and Cannon Beach.

To get a state declaration of emergency, she said, the county needed to suffer \$3.56 in damage for each of its 37,000 residents, but ended up with \$32.75 in damage per capita.

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Shooting unlikely to dampen tourism

By CYNTHIA WASHICKO
EO Media Group

The fatal shootout in downtown Seaside this month was a tragic but isolated incident, the city's tourism leaders believe, and is unlikely to dampen business or tourism.

Sgt. Jason Gooding was shot and killed while trying to arrest Phillip Max Ferry on a felony assault warrant. Ferry was killed by a second Seaside officer.

Seaside's economy depends on tourism, but while potential visitors may have heard of the shooting, Jon Rahl, the director of tourism for the Seaside Visitors Bureau, does not think it will deter visitors.



Daily Astorian/File Photo

People walk on the West Broadway Bridge in Seaside in 2015. Business owners and advocates don't anticipate a drop in tourism because of the tragic shootings earlier this month.

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