

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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## Thank you, LaMear, Price and Warr Fluoride would crowd out big unfinished business

The 2014 Astoria municipal election was a highly visible event. Candidates for mayor and City Council made numerous appearances, and our letters pages were full of advocacy.

No one — not a candidate or a voter — mentioned fluoride during that campaign season. Thus it was a big surprise several weeks ago when Councilor Zetty Nemlowill raised the issue during a City Council session. Nemlowill said she heard concerns from constituents about whether fluoride should be in Astoria's water supply.

Astoria's water has been fluoridated since 1953, following a popular vote in 1952. An attempt to revoke that decision failed in a 1956 election.

At last Monday's meeting, Councilor Drew Herzig revisited the fluoride question, suggesting it be on the November ballot. When Herzig proposed having staff draft a ballot measure, Nemlowill joined him in voting yes. Mayor Arline LaMear and Councilors Cindy Price and Russ Warr voted no.

The council has dodged a bullet, and we are grateful for LaMear, Price and Warr

for understanding the explosiveness of the land mine that Nemlowill and Herzig wanted to plant in the middle of town.

Describing what Portland went through in 2013 in its fluoride vote, then-publisher of *Willamette Week* Richard Meeker likened fluoride to "an absolute piece of dynamite." On the ballot, Meeker said, "It unifies the radical left and the radical right. If you have (fluoride), you're better off. If you let it be a political thing, it brings out all of Bernie Sanders and all of Donald Trump and more."

LaMear, Price and Warr wisely pointed out that if the council hopes to complete important business, the fluoride matter would be a distraction.

The future of the Astoria Public Library and Heritage Square are two such pieces of unfinished business. If the council can chart a course forward on both of those, that would be a major accomplishment.

## In battles over trees, seek advice first

When it comes to trees in developed areas of the Pacific Northwest coast, better protocols must be designed to avoid increasing conflicts over preservation, maintenance and removal. At a minimum, when public agencies are involved, better consultation is needed.

Disputes about trees are not unique to this area. An Internet search reveals many squabbles, hurt feelings, administrative challenges and lawsuits around the nation. As communities and rural zones around the mouth of the Columbia increasingly fill with permanent and seasonal residents, we're well on the way to becoming an active battleground in this fight.

Most recently, some residents of Bay Center, Wash., believe the Pacific County Department of Public Works acted with a heavy hand in removing a line of mature spruce trees from a scenic county park that doubles as a town park — ostensibly as a safety measure.

Last Wednesday's fatality near Seaside when a falling alder smashed a vehicle and killed the driver is ample evidence that safety is genuine concern, at least when it comes to trees along rights-of-

way and in other public areas.

Much Northwest tree cutting is done to protect power lines. The fact that few Pacific County residents lost power in last week's storm is at least partly due to sometimes-unpopular branch and tree removal near lines — plus a policy of now burying many lines.

A frequent point of friction is the perennial issue of residential views versus landscape s.

Some of these conflicts are inevitable and unavoidable when competing values collide. For some, a tree is something you cut down. Others would sooner cut off a finger. In many cases, however, communication and compromise can avoid needless strife. Pruning, cost-sharing and replacing tall species with more-compact ones all are valid answers.

There is a standard agency policy in many urban areas of marking trees for removal and providing a legal avenue to appeal these decisions. Advance consultation with a professional arborist may avoid the need to remove some trees.

All these steps can be said to consist of good manners and getting along. We'll need to polish these skills as our desirable region continues to gain population.

# The Holocaust and the Jewish identity

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER  
*Washington Post Writers Group*

WASHINGTON — Bernie Sanders is the most successful Jewish candidate for the presidency ever.

It's a rare sign of the health of our republic that no one seems to much care or even notice. Least of all, Sanders himself.

Which prompted Anderson Cooper in a recent Democratic debate to ask Sanders whether he was intentionally keeping his Judaism under wraps.

"No," answered Sanders. "I am very proud to be Jewish." He then explained that the Holocaust had wiped out his father's family. And that he remembered as a child seeing neighbors with concentration camp numbers tattooed on their arms. Being Jewish, he declared, "is an essential part of who I am as a human being."

A fascinating answer, irrelevant to presidential politics but quite revealing about the state of Jewish identity in contemporary America.

Think about it. There are several alternate ways American Jews commonly explain the role Judaism plays in their lives.

(1) Practice: Judaism as embedded in their life through religious practice or the transmission of Jewish culture by way of teaching or scholarship. Think Joe Lieberman or the neighborhood rabbi.

(2) Tikkun: Seeing Judaism as an expression of the prophetic ideal of social justice. Love thy neighbor, clothe the naked, walk with God, beat swords into plowshares. As ritual and practice have fallen away over the generations, this has become the core identity of liberal Judaism. Its central mission is nothing less than to repair the world ("Tikkun olam").

Which, incidentally, is the answer to the perennial question, "Why is it that Jews vote overwhelmingly Democratic?" Because, for the majority of Jews, the social ideals of liberalism are the most tangible expressions of their prophetic Jewish faith.

When Sanders was asked about his



Charles Krauthammer



Phelan M. Ebenhack/AP Photo

Supporters listen as Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks during a campaign rally in Kissimmee, Fla., Thursday.

Jewish identity, I was sure his answer would be some variation of Tikkun. On the stump, he plays the Old Testament prophet railing against the powerful and denouncing their treatment of the widow and the orphan. Yet Sanders gave an entirely different answer.

(3) The Holocaust. What a strange reply — yet it doesn't seem so to us because it has become increasingly common for American Jews to locate their identity in the Holocaust.

For example, it's become a growing emphasis in Jewish pedagogy from the Sunday schools to Holocaust studies programs in the various universities. Additionally, Jewish organizations organize visits for young people to the concentration camps of Europe.

The memories created are indelible. And deeply valuable. Indeed, though my own family was largely spared, the Holocaust forms an ineradicable element of my own Jewish consciousness. But I worry about the balance. As Jewish practice, learning and knowledge diminish over time, my concern is that Holocaust memory is emerging as the dominant feature of Jewishness in America.

I worry that a people with a 3,000-year history of creative genius, enriched by intimate relations with every culture from Paris to Patagonia, should be placing such weight on martyrdom — and indeed, for this generation, martyrdom once removed.

I'm not criticizing Sanders. I credit him with sincerity and authenticity. But

it is precisely that sincerity and authenticity — and the implications for future generations — that so concern me. Sanders is 74, but I suspect a growing number of young Jews would give an answer similar to his.

We must of course remain dedicated to keeping alive the memory and the truth of the Holocaust, particularly when they are under assault from so many quarters.

**Memory is sacred, but victimhood cannot be the foundation stone of Jewish identity.**

Which is why, though I initially opposed having a Holocaust museum as the sole representation of the Jewish experience in the center of Washington, I came to see the virtue of having so sacred yet vulnerable a legacy placed at the monumental core of — and thus entrusted to the protection of — the most tolerant and open nation on earth.

Nonetheless, there must be balance. It would be a tragedy for American Jews to make the Holocaust the principal legacy bequeathed to their children. After all, the Jewish people are living through a miraculous age: the rebirth of Jewish sovereignty, the revival of Hebrew (a cultural resurrection unique in human history), the flowering of a new Hebraic culture radiating throughout the Jewish world.

Memory is sacred, but victimhood cannot be the foundation stone of Jewish identity. Traditional Judaism has 613 commandments. The philosopher Emil Fackenheim famously said that the 614th is to deny Hitler any posthumous victories. The reduction of Jewish identity to victimhood would be one such victory. It must not be permitted.

## Hillary! Bernie! Debate! Please!

By GAIL COLLINS  
*New York Times News Service*

Let's give a hand to Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders.

After all we've been through with the Republicans, it's nice to hear presidential candidates go at each other's throat while they're talking about where they stood on immigration issues in 2007.

This was Wednesday's Democratic debate — the second one in a week, not counting the back-to-back town halls in between. People, do you remember when we used to complain that there weren't going to be enough debates? Ah yes, long ago. Dinosaurs roamed the earth and Marco Rubio was a hot ticket.

Clinton held up well, given that her first three questions involved why she lost the Michigan primary, her emails and whether she'd drop out if she was indicted. ("Oh, for goodness — that is not going to happen. I'm not even answering that question.") It was a tough evening. Sanders accused Clinton of cruelty to Honduran children. She claimed he had sided with the Minutemen.

Since the debate was on Univision, there was a strong emphasis on immigration, which provided a kind of mirror image of the Republican debates. Clinton and Sanders bickered long and hard about who had been less in favor of deportation, going back more than a decade. ("Madam Secretary, I will match my record against yours any day of the week!")

In truth, immigration is not an issue that actually separates these two people. The real gulf is between the grand vision and the practical plan. Sanders

thinks he can provide free public college tuition and Medicare-like health coverage for all. "My dad used to say, If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," Clinton rejoined.

And then there's the auto industry bailout. One of the biggest moments in the Democrats' Week of Endless Debates came Sunday when Clinton caught Sanders off guard by accusing him — in Michigan! — of refusing to support Detroit during the economic crisis.

"He voted against the money that ended up saving the auto industry," Clinton claimed while Sanders looked stunned.

What followed was the most quoted moment of the encounter:

Sanders: "If you are talking about the Wall Street bailout, where some of your friends destroyed this economy —"

Clinton: "You know —"

Sanders: "Excuse me, I'm talking."

Audience: "Ooooooh"

**People, do you remember when we used to complain that there weren't going to be enough debates?**

It's certainly a tribute to the general decorum with which the Democrats have conducted themselves that this was enough to draw a gasp from the crowd. The bar is so high on the Republican side that to get a real response one of the candidates would have had to hit the other with a hammer.

But let's look at the bailout issue for a minute. Sanders did vote for a bill to lend money to the auto industry. But it got blocked in the Senate. Then during the stupendously complex end-of-the-Bush-ad-

ministration negotiations, the bailout got moshed into a huge, messy bill that did indeed involve helping Wall Street. When the only choices were



Gail Collins

nothing or a big, unappetizing legislative stew, he refused to bite.

That pretty much sums up his career in Congress. Sanders stood up for his principles, but he didn't play any real role. At one point he offered an amendment to raise taxes on high-income individuals, which was basically ignored. He was marvelous, but symbolically

marvelous. He was in no way like Ted Cruz, who just tries to get attention by stopping things. Nobody hates Bernie Sanders. But he's a maverick legislator, a man without a party. That's a way, way different kind of life than being the person who has to run the country.

"You have to make hard choices when you're in positions of responsibility," Clinton said.

Clinton is a stupendous debater, and she's developed smooth and sensible-sounding answers to sticky matters like the State Department emails and Benghazi. But she still hasn't been able to handle Sanders' attacks on her \$225,000 speeches to finance industry insiders. She shrugs and says she'll release the transcripts when "everybody else does," which generally involves mentioning that President Barack Obama "took a lot of money from Wall Street."

"I don't have any comment," she said when she was questioned earlier in the week about campaign donations. "I don't know that. I don't believe that there is any reason to be concerned about it."

This is the stuff that makes Democrats want to send a message. Clinton is by far the best qualified candidate for president. But at this point in the campaign, you can understand why some people feel that voting for her against Sanders is like rewarding Washington for its worst behavior.

In the end, Clinton is the one who knows how to make the system work. But she's just got to be clearer on how she can work against the system.