

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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Washington Department of Ecology
 Scattered and burned oil tank cars are pictured, Saturday, after a train derailed and burned near Mosier, Friday. Union Pacific Railroad says it had recently inspected the section of track near Mosier, about 70 miles east of Portland, and had been inspected at least six times since March 21.

This accident won't be the last Northwest residents are at risk, but have no authority with railroads

It is unsurprising that a train hauling Bakken crude oil from North Dakota to West Coast refineries had an accident. After last Friday's derailment and explosion of such a train in the small Columbia River Gorge town of Mosier, the only uncertainty is whether lawmakers and regulators will finally start to give the issue the level of attention it deserves.

Though only a small fraction as bad as it might have been, the accident was plenty serious enough to warrant reforms. Toxic clouds of oily smoke fouled the sky as crude oil seeped into the ground — though thankfully not into the Columbia or one of its tributaries. Mosier residents were evacuated. Thousands of motorists were inconvenienced. Emergency responders were placed in harm's way. The cost of the response and cleanup will easily be in the millions.

This accident won't be the last. A minimum of 26 oil trains have been involved in major fires or derailments in the U.S. and Canada since 2006. One of them cost 47 lives.

Our economy and way of life still depend on petroleum — a fact of life we will accommodate for the immediate future. The Mosier train wreck must, however, generate thorough examination of oil-train routing. Immediate steps must be taken to enhance their safety. This will necessitate revamping an antiquated and unresponsive bureaucracy.

As we began editorializing three years ago, outmoded federal laws place rail companies largely beyond state oversight. This system sets up an untenable relationship. Pacific Northwest residents are at risk. But they are unable to do much about it. The Federal Railway Administration has "a real passive way of regulating. They don't have standards.

It's sort of self-regulation," a Washington state official noted in 2014.

The Mosier wreck only confirms that rail companies operate as a law unto themselves, with minimal communication and advance planning with key state and local officials. Rural fire departments along the oil-train routes lack much of the special foam needed to combat intense petroleum fires. In Friday's crash, the nearest source of flame retardant foam was Portland International Airport, which needs the stocks for emergencies.

Some Bakken crude shipments are starting to be chemically treated to lower the potential for explosion. It's clear that all must be. Obsolete rail tanker cars must be phased out more quickly. Trains either must be removed from the vital Columbia River corridor, where a single accident could spoil water quality and fisheries, or else far more money must be spent on emergency preparedness.

As we first editorialized in July 2013: The essential bottom line for all these proposals, and development of any kind, is to make sure that costs and benefits are appropriately allocated. Spills and other impacts must be planned for, insured against and there have to be enforceable legal mechanisms to make sure expenses are borne by the companies, not by taxpayers or downstream neighbors.

The madness of America

By CHARLES M. BLOW
New York Times News Service

The candidacy of Donald Trump, the fervor of those who support it, and the fierce opposition of those who don't is making America mad — both angry and insane, as the dual definitions of the word implies.

One of the most disturbing displays of this madness is the violence Trump has incited in his supporters, and the violent ways in which opposition forces have responded, like the exchange we saw last week in San Jose, California.



Charles Blow

Both forms of violence are unequivocally wrong, but speak to a base level of hostility that hovers around the man like the stench from rotting flesh.

What is particularly disturbing is to see anti-Trump forces lashing out at Trump's supporters, seemingly provoked simply by a difference in political position.

This cannot be. It's self-defeating and narrows the space between the thing you despise and the thing you become.

Listen, I understand how unsettling this man is for many.

I understand that he is elevating and normalizing a particular stance of racism and sexism that many view as a spiritual attack, a kind of psychic violence from which they cannot escape.

Furthermore, the election cycle promises at least five more months of this, until Election Day, and even more if by some tragic twist of fate Trump is actually elected.

And, if elected, the threat could move from the rhetoric to the real, wreaking havoc on millions of lives.

I understand the frightful, mind-numbing, hair-raising disbelief that can descend when one realizes that this is indeed plausible.

Recent polls have only added to this anxiety as some have shown an increasingly tight race between him and Hillary Clinton, the likely Democratic nominee; some even have him beating her.

(Now of course, these polls must be taken with a grain of salt. Trump and Clinton are in different phases of the fight: Trump is the presumptive Republican nominee with no remaining opponents and with Republicans



AP Photo/Noah Berger

Protesters against Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump climb on a car outside a Trump campaign rally on Thursday, in San Jose, Calif. A group of protesters attacked Trump supporters who were leaving the candidate's rally in San Jose on Thursday night. A dozen or more people were punched, at least one person was pelted with an egg and Trump hats grabbed from supporters were set on fire on the ground.

coalescing around his candidacy; Clinton is still in a heated contest with Bernie Sanders, who has given no indication of giving up.)

I understand that Trump represents a clear and present danger, and having a passionate response that encompasses rage and fear is reasonable.

It is understandable to want to make one's displeasure known.

But there is a line one dares not cross, and that is the one of responding to violent rhetoric with violent actions.

As I have said before, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said it best in his 1967 book *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?*, and he is worthy of quoting here at length:

"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it. Through violence you may murder the liar, but you cannot murder the lie, nor establish the truth. Through violence you may murder the hater, but you do not murder hate. In fact, violence merely increases hate. So it goes. Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."

You may feel activated by the cause of righteousness, but violence is most often a poor instrument for its implementation. Indeed, violence corrodes righteousness. It robs it of its essence.

The best way to direct passions is not only with the bullhorn, but also at the ballot box.

In a democracy, the vote is the voice. The best way to reduce the threat Trump poses is to register and motivate people who share your view of the threat.

It is easy to look at the throngs who support and exalt this man and be discouraged, but don't be. It is easy to look at Republicans like Paul Ryan abandoning their principles and selling their souls to fall in line behind this man and be discouraged, but don't be. It is easy to see the media fail miserably to counter Trump and his surrogates' Gish-gallop and be discouraged, but don't be.

These are the moments in which the nation's mettle — and ideals — are tested. I have a fundamental belief that although America was born and grew by violence and racial subjugation, that although it has often stumbled and even regressed, that its ultimate bearing is toward the better.

Folks must be reminded that one demagogue cannot lead to a detour or a dismantling. There is an elevated plane of truth that floats a mile above Trump's trough of putrescence.

Trump and his millions of minions have replaced what they call "political correctness" with "ambient viciousness."

This won't "make America great again," because the "again" they imagine harkens back to America's darkness. We are the new America — more diverse, more inclusive, more than our ancestors could ever have imagined.

Don't invalidate that by allowing yourselves to be baited into brutishness

In a democracy, the vote is the voice.

Hillary Clinton's really good day

By GAIL COLLINS
New York Times News Service

Hillary Clinton made a great speech last week. Not what we were expecting, which was just a sturdy slog through the summer.

Even though it was a policy address on national security that centered on the listing of six points, it was a super performance.

The bottom line was that America can choose her, or give the nuclear codes to a guy no sane person would put in charge of policing a parking lot.

And it drove the presumptive Republican nominee nuts.

"After what she said about me today in her phony speech, that was a phony speech, that was a Donald Trump hit job," he howled to a rally in California. "I will say this! Hillary Clinton has to go to jail, OK? She has to go to jail — has to go! That was a phony hit job! She's guilty as hell!"

It was a little less controlled than Trump's Twitter response: "Bad performance by Crooked Hillary Clinton! Reading poorly from the teleprompter! She doesn't even look presidential!" But equally deep.

On Thursday, Clinton strode out after a rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever," which was a nice change after months and months and months of Katy Perry's greatest hits. "Roar" seemed like a good idea when Clinton first opened her campaign, but then she got all those complaints about how she was doing too much roaring. About boring details. She managed to become a candidate who was simultaneously criticized for yelling and for putting people to sleep.

But that was before. On Thursday, standing in front of enough American flags to make it seem like Banner Day on the Home Shopping Network, Clinton took on Trump's history when it came to foreign affairs. She was clear and forceful and occasionally funny.

"He says he has foreign policy experience because he ran the Miss Universe pageant in Russia," she sniped.

Her friends have moaned forever that her sense of humor doesn't come across on stage. This week it emerged. And Trump did say the thing about Miss Universe.

Good as the speech was, it can't be the end of the conversation. While Clinton's experience as secretary of state is certainly a plus, her longtime hawkishness should be a minus. She needs to tell the country what she's learned about the limits to U.S. power, and if she isn't forced to during this campaign, that'll be one more thing we can hold against Donald Trump forever.

But you could see why this particular speech, which was really one large thought about her Republican opponent, was not going to be the venue where she parsed over her own record. Making the case against Trump as a wildly dangerous threat to U.S. security is both easy and hard. It's easy because he's said so many crazy things and hard because he's usually also said the exact opposite.

A *Washington Post* fact-check on Clinton's claim that Trump said "more countries should have nuclear weapons, including Saudi Arabia," referred to an exchange with Anderson Cooper on CNN that went in part like this:

Cooper: Saudi Arabia, nuclear weapons?

Trump: Saudi Arabia, absolutely.

Cooper: You would be fine with them having nuclear weapons?

Trump: No, not nuclear weapons. ...

"Donald Trump's ideas aren't just different — they are dangerously incoherent," Clinton said. "They're not even really ideas — just a series of



Gail Collins

Clinton was clear and forceful and occasionally funny.

bizarre rants, personal feuds and outright lies."

She then proceeded to go into, um, details. Like his enthusiasm for a trade war, and flirtation with the idea of defaulting on the national debt. Speaking to voters who sometimes reject Democrats as lacking in patriotism, she asked, in effect, what they were doing hanging around with a guy who says America isn't great.

There's no reason this should stop with foreign affairs. If Clinton could do the same thing on the domestic front, she could pulverize Trump on his insane tax plan, his wildly erratic positions on health care and his complete absence of any thoughts whatsoever about education. In the process, she could unroll an agenda of her own that's smart and responsible, but also large and exciting.

Hillary Clinton is about to become the first woman ever to win a major party nomination for president, but the getting there hasn't been a whole lot of fun. Polls keep showing that voters don't like her. Sensible Americans worry that voters are shrugging off what should be career-shattering details about Trump's background, like the fact that he ran a sleazy continuing-education school that wheedled senior citizens out of their savings.

He's diverting, and a lot of people seem prepared to look past almost anything for some entertainment and all-purpose anger. Clinton will never be as much fun to talk about.

But she's always been a learner, and this week suggests that after all these years, she can still become a better public speaker. Even if she doesn't, she did a great job of reminding everyone that there are more important things.