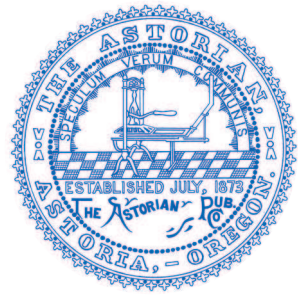


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

New library the heart of our community

It indicates great things about Astoria and its leadership team that the future of our library was a key discussion item during the City Council's daylong planning session Jan. 13.

Although some will note it has taken an inordinate amount of time to establish a path forward for this important community institution, it is better to be deliberate and be strategic than to act in haste when it comes to multidecade investments. In this sense, delays forced by the 2008 recession and its aftermath may result in a more sustainable library as we advance into this century.

After much back and forth over the years, the council, mayor and residents appear largely united in keeping the library at its current location, and keeping overall expenditures within the bounds allowed by existing resources and what a volunteer group can raise. The shining example of the Liberty Theater restoration tells us this community is capable of impressive fundraising feats for appealing goals.

We have in the past supported earlier plans to build a new library on part of Heritage Square. But a library, it should be needless to say, is far more than the building it occupies. Nowadays, it's more, even, than the physical collection of books and other publications it houses. For many residents, however, doing something meaningful about the current rather sad-looking structure is a natural top priority. At the most basic level, architectural tastes change. Astoria Library's building is not what anyone would choose today. Within our financial constraints, it will be fascinating to witness how a modern designer can repurpose the existing structure and end up with something we can all regard with pride.

A functional, inviting, user-friendly space must dovetail with our aspirations for what will happen inside. As we noted three years ago during an earlier iteration of this debate, when it comes to public libraries, perhaps the biggest mistake we can make is thinking they are mostly about printed words.

Just as the success or failure of a novel can be determined by the force and effectiveness of its opening lines, Astoria's foray into designing a new library depends in large part on how ambitious and imaginative we are. A city as public spirited as ours will surely manage to upgrade its aging library with something more vital. But that isn't really the key issue. The heart of the matter is developing a library that is truly capable of becoming the heart of the community.

"The library of the 21st century is a community workshop, a hub filled with the tools of the knowledge economy ... Instead of a warehouse of information, libraries need tools for use by the commons — a Netflix of things," is an inspiration we quoted in 2014, which should remain a guiding principle today.

Donations — and future library patrons — will be attracted by a smart and exciting vision of a new library as a kind of laboratory for invention and personal engagement with the wider world. It can and must reflect Astoria as it is today — an increasingly dynamic and interesting place that is a magnet for residents and investments from throughout our region.

This all is an intriguing prospect, one which deserves our time, energy, money and ideas.

Besides the library, it's also worth mentioning our enthusiastic interest in all the other goals discussed by the City Council. Affordable housing, disaster resiliency, better downtown parking and pedestrian safety all are important topics deserving of ongoing attention. We will have more to say about them in the future.

The heart of the matter is developing a library that is truly capable of becoming the heart of the community.

LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 350 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone numbers. You will be contacted to confirm authorship.

All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and, on occasion, factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are printed each month.

Letters written in response to other letter writers should address the issue at hand and, rather than

mentioning the writer by name, should refer to the headline and date the letter was published. Discourse should be civil and people should be referred to in a respectful manner.

Submissions may be sent in any of these ways:

E-mail to editor@dailyastorian.com; online at www.dailyastorian.com; delivered to the Astorian offices at 949 Exchange St. and 1555 N. Roosevelt in Seaside or by mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.



WE ARE DISSIDENTS; WE ARE LEGION



Brian Cassella/Chicago Tribune

Demonstrators wait for the Women's March on Washington, D.C., to begin Saturday on the National Mall.

By CHARLES BLOW

New York Times News Service

On Friday, Donald Trump, the embodiment, instrument and provocateur of American animus, was installed — and I use that word with purpose and displeasure — as America's 45th president. He delivered a particularly inauspicious speech to a seemingly

sparse crowd, presenting a vision for America that would best be described as aggressive atavism, a retrograde positioning of policy that threatens to drag the country back to a time of division and fear and hostility, when some stand in the light by casting others into darkness.

The speech was replete with phrases never before uttered in an Inaugural Address. Bleed, carnage, depletion and disrepair. Ripped, rusted and stolen. Tombstones, trapped and windswept. Urban, sad and Islamic. It felt at times as though he were reading aloud from a post-apocalyptic movie script.

Indeed, some have pointed out that portions of the speech sounded eerily familiar to one delivered by the movie villain Bane in the Batman movie "The Dark Knight Rises." Bane, too, promises: "We take Gotham from the corrupt! The rich! The oppressors of generations who have kept you down with myths of opportunity, and we give it back to you, the people," even as he plunges the fictitious city into chaos.

There were few overtures to his opponents, let alone his enemies, little attempt to seek unity and amity. The Dean of Discord made clear his purpose and his plan: It is not to bring America together but to rip it asunder.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the speech was partly written by Steve Bannon, Trump's white-nationalist chief strategist and senior counselor. At one point in the speech, Trump delivered the bewildering line: "When you open your heart to patriotism, there is no room for prejudice." Patriotism does not drive out prejudice; to the contrary, it can actually enshrine it. No one was more patriotic than our founding fathers, and yet most of the prominent founding fathers were slave owners.

Trump set forth a portentous proposition Friday. Saturday's



Beth Nakamura/The Oregonian

People gathered in Portland's Tom McCall Waterfront Park and marched through downtown Saturday in local support for the Women's March on Washington, D.C., following the election of Donald Trump.

It is possible that Trump has reactivated something President Barack Obama couldn't maintain, and Hillary Clinton couldn't fully tap into.

Women's Marches across the country and around the world answered with a thundering roar.

The marches, whose participants vastly outnumbered inauguration attendees, offered a stinging rebuke to the election of a man who threatens women's rights and boasts of grabbing women's genitalia.

And the marches, which included quite a few men and boys as well, also represented more than that. They were a rebuke of bigotry and a call for equality and inclusion. They demonstrated the awesome power of individual outrage joined to collective action. And it was a message to America that the majority did not support this president or his plans and will not simply tuck tail and cower in the face of the threat. This was an uprising; this was a fighting back. This was a resistance.

Members of Congress, laboring under the delusion that they operate with a mandate and feeling compelled to rubber-stamp Trump's predilections, should heed well the message those marches sent Saturday: You are on notice. America is ticked off.

There has been much hand-wringing and navel gazing since the election about how liberalism was blind to a rising and hidden populism, about how identity politics were liberals' fatal flaw, about how Democrats needed to attract voters who were willing to ignore Trump's racial, ethnic and religious bigotry, his misogyny, and his xenophobia.

I call bunk on all of that. I have given quite a few speeches since the election and inevitably some variation of this "reaching out" issue is raised in the form of a question, and my answer is always the same: The Enlightenment must never bow to the Inquisition.

Recognizing and even celebrating individual identity groups doesn't make America weaker; it makes America stronger. Acknowledging that identity groups have not always been — and indeed, continue not to be — treated equally in this country should not be a cause for agitation, but a call to action. Parity is not born of forced erasure but rather respectful subsumption.

Janelle Monáe, singer and star of the acclaimed film "Hidden Figures," put it this way at the march in Washington, D.C.: "Continue to embrace the things that make you unique, even if it makes others uncomfortable. You are enough. And whenever you're feeling doubt, whenever you want to give up, you must always remember to choose freedom over fear."

If my difference frightens you, you have a problem, not me. If my discussion of my pain makes you ill at ease, you have a problem, not me. If you feel that the excavation of my history presages the burial of yours, then you have a problem, not me.

It is possible that Trump has reactivated something President Barack Obama couldn't maintain, and Hillary Clinton couldn't fully tap into: A unified, mission-driven left that puts bodies into the streets. The women's marches sent a clear signal: Your comfort will not be built on our constriction. We are America. We are loud, "nasty" and fed up. We are motivated dissidents and we are legion.