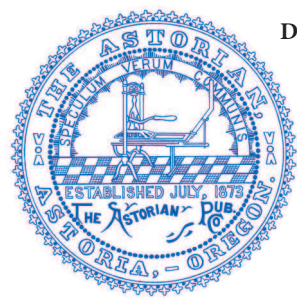


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Election meddling isn't a partisan issue or problem

Reports of Russian interference in an American election should be concerning to everyone in this country, regardless of their political affiliation. A foreign government meddling in our sovereignty and independence is not a partisan issue.

And multiple nonpartisan U.S. intelligence agencies, as well as intelligence agencies of some foreign allies, have reported that Russia attempted to influence our democratic process during the 2016 presidential election.

It doesn't matter who won the election. Outside interference is an affront to our way of life. It undermines the belief that Americans have in our institutions and our government.

Almost as scary as the fact that our country has been under intense, sustained cyberattack is the fact our population has become so polarized that some are willing to see their neighbors as enemies, rather than a foreign power actively trying to manipulate our country for their benefit.

This is something that should bring us together. In the face of a real enemy, we should remember we're all on the same team, hoping to make our country as safe and prosperous as possible.

We should all want to know exactly what happened during the run up to the 2016 election. We should all demand the truth so we are better protected from interference in future elections.

Questioning and condemning a foreign country's involvement should not be conflated as an attack on our president. Unless an investigation determines a member of Donald Trump's campaign colluded in the interference or that the president obstructed justice regarding the investigation into the matter, he should be presumed innocent. No evidence has yet been presented that either occurred.

There is ample evidence, however, that Russia attempted to influence our election and undermine our democracy. That should be concerning to everyone, including the president, both political parties and every elected official.

During his testimony before Congress, former FBI Director James Comey was clear he believes this will happen again and again. Russia and other enemies will look for any means they can to disrupt our nation's free election process, and cyberattacks are the most efficient way to do damage covertly.

Election interference is not a party-line issue. It is a threat to all Americans. We should demand answers from our intelligence agencies, and implore Congress to get to the bottom of what happened and figure out how we can stop it from happening again.

# Scholarships are a show of confidence in high-schoolers

Admittance to college and then financing that education isn't easy, especially in an era where college tuition and room and board has steadily increased.

For any student or family, that affordability is a great challenge, and sometimes overwhelming, preventing them from continuing their education. That's exactly why scholarships play such an important role in the process of students moving from high school to college.

In that regard, Astoria High School Scholarships Inc., plays an extremely important part of our students' future. Established in 1976, the fund holds a principal of about \$7 million. At this year's honors night, 87 students received \$240,500 in scholarships from AHS Scholarships, which coupled with more than \$70,000 from businesses, groups and individuals, the students received more than \$300,000 in aid for their coming college years. In all, Astoria's graduating class, the largest in the region, received more than \$1.3 million in scholarships from its annual honors night and from financial aid from colleges and universities.

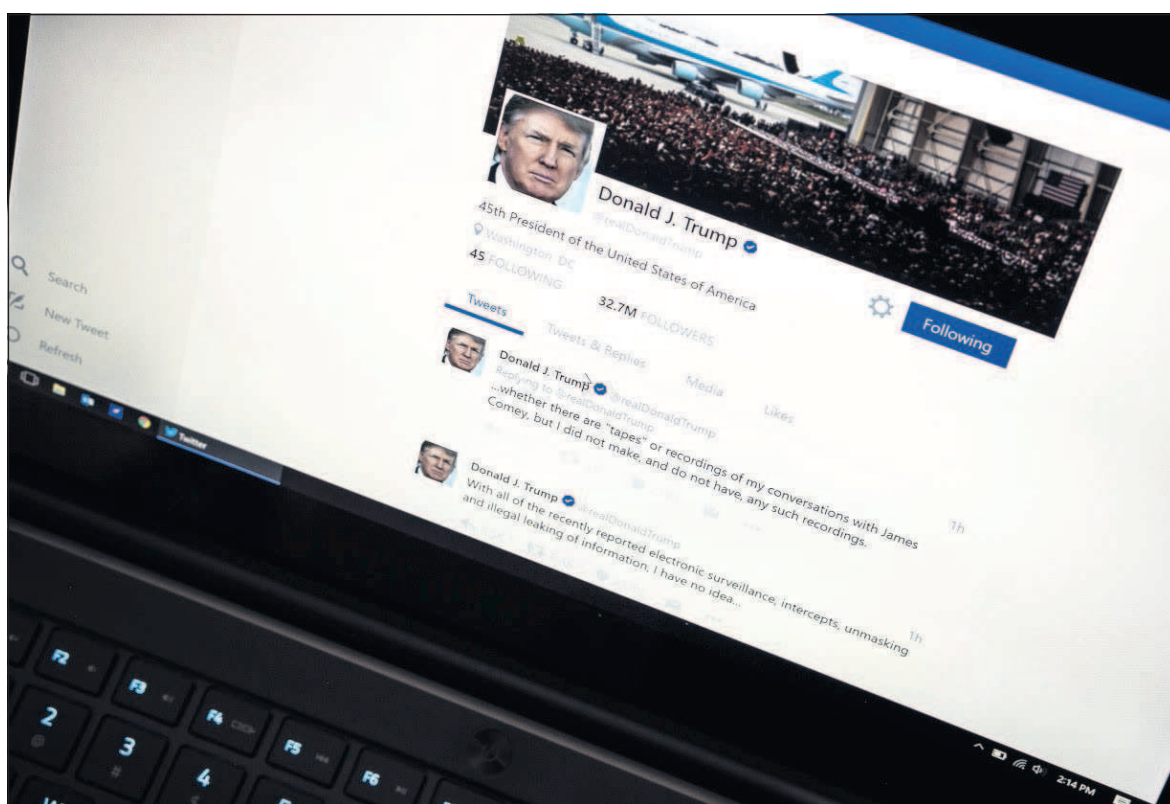
AHS Scholarships Inc., is a collection of more than 50 funds that have been established by a variety of alumni and friends of the school, and a dozen companies give scholarships annually.

Warrenton High School's scholarship funds are also significant and the community provided more than \$300,000 in aid to its graduates, while Seaside High School students received scholarships that totaled \$147,000 to continue their education. Knappa High School's scholarship funds and college aid provided \$72,000 to its graduates.

No matter the amount to each, scholarships to deserving graduates show a vote of confidence in their future, and in ours as well. At a time when we need an educated work force and citizenry, those who give and award that aid are wisely investing in our collective future.



# How Twitter pornified politics



AP Photo/J. David Ake

President Donald Trump's Twitter page with his tweets about not recording his conversations with former FBI Director James Comey on Thursday.

By BRET STEPHENS

*New York Times News Service*

This is the column in which I formally forswear Twitter for good. I'll keep my



Twitter handle, and hopefully my followers, but an editorial assistant will manage the account from now on. I'll intercede only to say nice things about the writing I admire, the people I like and the music I love.

Why now? Because, while reading a cover story in *New York* magazine, it occurred to me that Twitter is the political pornography of our time: revealing but distorting, exciting but dulling, debasing to its users, and, well, ejaculatory. It's bad for the soul and, as Donald Trump proves daily, bad for the country.

The story, by Maureen O'Connor, makes use of a decade's worth of big-data analytics from the website Pornhub, which attracts 75 million visitors a day. The result is what she calls "the Kinsey Report of Our Time" — an unvarnished and unfiltered portrait of the unchecked libido.

## You want what you see

Since this is a family newspaper, readers will have to learn the more salacious details of O'Connor's article by consulting it for themselves. But one important point stands out. "Pornography trains us to redirect sexual desire as mimetic desire," she writes. "That is, the sociological theory — and the marketers' dream — that humans learn to want what they see."

Steve Jobs expressed a similar thought in 1998: "People don't know what they want until you show it to them." Technology doesn't merely service needs. It

also teaches wants. You never thought you'd need an iPhone, but you do. You didn't know you were into kinky massage videos, but you are. We discover our innermost — and bottom-most selves — only when someone else opens the basement door.

That is what Twitter has been for our politics. Short-form writing can be informative, aphoristic and funny. Twitter is terrific when tailored as a personalized wire service and can be a useful way to communicate with readers. And where would our literary culture be without @WtfRenaissance or @LosFelizDaycare?

But Twitter's degrading uses tend to overwhelm its elevating one. If pornography is about the naked, grunting body, Twitter is about the naked, grunting brain. It's whatever pops out. And what pops out is altogether too revealing.

## Ugliness on Twitter

Another insight from O'Connor's article: "Porn has always been a place for indulging irrational, secret and socially unacceptable desires — which makes it a place where people feel free to let their racial prejudices and fantasies run wild, too."

Twitter is no different. Bigotry flourishes on Twitter, since it offers the bigot the benefits of anonymity along with instantaneous, uncensored self-publication. It's the place where their political minds can be as foul as they want to be — without the expense or reputational risk of showing their face at a Richard Spencer rally.

Twitter doesn't merely amplify ugliness. It erases nuance, coarsens thought, turns into a game of "Telephone" in which original meaning becomes hopelessly garbled with every successive retweet. It also facilitates a form of self-righteous digital bullying and moblike behavior that can wreck

people's lives.

Ask Justine Sacco, a PR executive who in 2013 sent an ironic tweet to her 170 followers just as she was about to step on a flight to Cape Town. "Going to Africa," she wrote. "Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!"

She emerged from the plane to discover that what she had intended as a mordant observation about white privilege hadn't been read that way, and that in 11 short hours she had become the poster racist in a worldwide shaming campaign. She lost her job. Twitter, as the author Jon Ronson has noted, is the 21st century's answer to the pillory.

That, too, is part of the pornography of Twitter: pleasurably bearing witness to the mockery or humiliation of others. Things we would never say in person, acts we would never perform, become safe to indulge thanks to the prophylactic of a digital interface. After I took this job, one wag on Twitter wrote that he hoped I'd be "Danny Pearl-ed." He must have found it funny. My 11-year-old son didn't.

No discussion of the evils of Twitter would be complete without trying to understand the 45th president's fondness for it. It should be no surprise that he's a keen user, since it's the reptilian medium for the reptilian brain.

But it's also ideally suited for his style of crowd politics: unmediated, blunt and burstlike. It's how he escapes the softening influence of his advisers and speechwriters. It's how he maintains the aura of charismatic authenticity that is the prerequisite of populist politics. It's how he pretends to mingle with his followers while increasing his distance from them. Juan Perón would have loved Twitter.

Politics, like eros, can open the way to the elevation of our souls. Or it can do the opposite. Time for people who care about politics and souls to get off Twitter.

## 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:

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