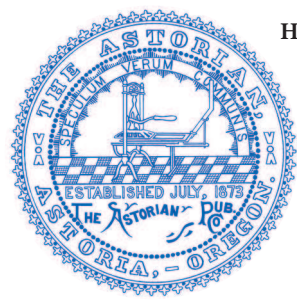


THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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OUR VIEW

Robust editorials, columns help blaze policy trails

There are many places in the world where people are either too apathetic or too afraid to publicly express an opinion about much of anything. This isn't one of them.

The Daily Astorian has a long tradition of serving as a community sounding board — a clearinghouse where readers may argue their cases and tell their stories.

Letters to the editor are among our most-read content.

Editorials representing our views help frame debates among ourselves and also serve to inform state and federal lawmakers of community preferences. The Astorian's editorials have won many prizes. More importantly, they have helped set the stage for this area's economic and cultural rebirth — blazing a trail on everything from saving the Liberty Theatre to holding the line against fossil fuel developments on our shorelines. Years ago, they raised the alarm about climate change and its effects on our maritime environment.

The Astorian is today beginning a process of revamping and redesigning its opinion pages. This process is an outcome of the change in our newspaper and newsroom management.

A team of editorial writers will create the content for this page. They include Matt Winters, Jim Van Nostrand, Steve Forrester and Dick Hughes. Winters is publisher of the Chinook Observer. He is our regional opinion editor.

Van Nostrand is the Astorian's editor. Forrester is the retired publisher and editor and the president and CEO of EO Media Group. Dick Hughes — former editor of the Salem Statesman-Journal — is part of EO Media Group's Salem bureau. The other player on this new editorial board will be Kari Borgen, the Astorian's new publisher.

Over the coming months we'll recruit column contributors who live here. If you have something you feel passionate about — or find amusing, curious or bewildering — please think about writing a column. If interested, write Winters at mwinters@dailystorian.com.

We welcome feedback as we strive to make our opinion pages more engaging and reflective of this amazing place. Drop us a note at the email address above, or call Winters at 800-643-3703.

Banks symbolized a watershed moment for Native Americans

Dennis Banks died Sunday night in Minnesota. The American Indian Movement founder was 80.

While taking note of his detractors, who saw him as a vain and irresponsible attention-seeker, the New York Times said, "To admirers, Mr. Banks was a broad-chested champion of native pride. ... He was a paladin who defied authority and, in an era crowded with civil rights protests, spoke for the nation's oldest minority."

Is there any reason we on the Pacific Northwest coast should cast a thought in his direction?

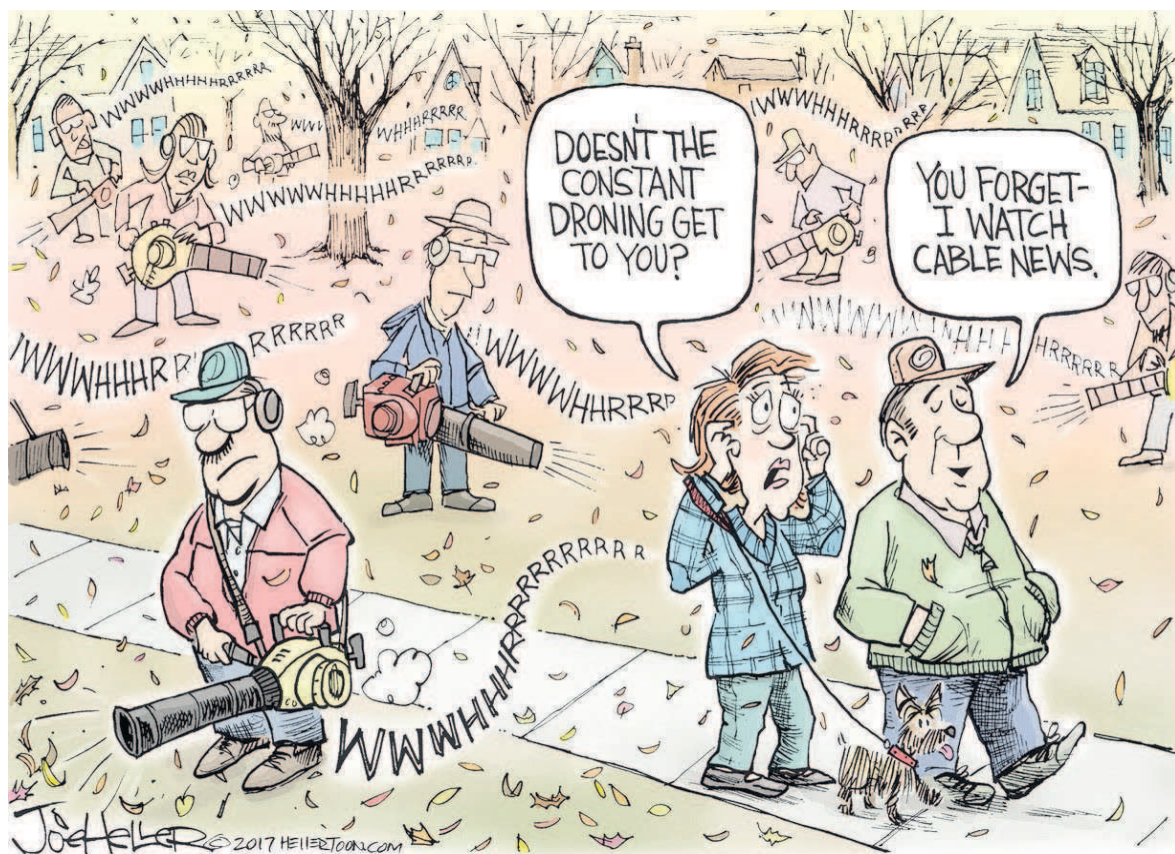
Along with contemporaries including Billy Frank Jr. in Washington state, Banks symbolized a watershed in Native American history — a firm determination to begin controlling their own destiny.

"We had reached a point in history where we could not tolerate the abuse any longer, where mothers could not tolerate the mistreatment that goes on on the reservations any longer, where they could not see another Indian youngster die," Banks said.

Banks and others with A.I.M. occupied the old federal prison island of Alcatraz from November 1969 to June 1971, turning it into an enduring symbol of Indian empowerment.

Speaking this week about Banks, Chinook Indian Nation Chairman Tony Johnson said, "My family and I will be visiting Alcatraz over the weekend. Definitely have had those guys on my mind. One thing amazing is how small Indian Country is. There are a lot of people, both friends and family, who were there during the occupation. Probably also important to remember is all of the average native people who were there and made those significant events happen." A Chinook Indian from South Bend, Washington, participated in support of the occupiers at considerable personal risk, Johnson said.

Indian and non-Indian alike, we live on lands that were home to Native civilizations for many centuries. Banks, no matter his human flaws, played a significant part in helping all Americans understand the price his people paid. It benefits everyone to know the truth and for our Indian neighbors to be full and honored participants in modern society.



When politics becomes your idol



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When politics is used as a cure for spiritual and social loneliness, it's harder to win people over with policy or philosophical arguments.

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

I didn't get to Richard Linklater's brilliant 2014 movie, "Boyhood," until this past weekend. That was the movie, filmed over 12 years with the same actors, about a boy growing up in Texas. But I did have the advantage of seeing it in the Trump era.

It's a sadder movie now. Different themes leap out at you, which were not as prominent in the reviews written three years ago.

What you see is good people desperately trying to connect in an America where bonds are attenuated — without stable families, tight communities, stable careers, ethnic roots or an enveloping moral culture. There's just a whirl of changing step-fathers, changing homes, changing phone distractions, changing pop-culture references, financial stress and chronic drinking, which make it harder to sink down roots into something, or to even have a spiritual narrative that gives meaning to life.

You can see why, in the disrupted landscape depicted in the film, people would form the sort of partisan attachments that are common today. Today, partisanship for many people is not about which party has the better policies, as it was, say, in the days of Eisenhower and Kennedy. It's not even about which party has the better philosophy, as it was in the Reagan era. These days, partisanship is often totalistic. People often use partisan identity to fill the void left when their other attachments wither away — religious, ethnic, communal and familial.

Last week my colleague Thomas Edsall quoted a political scientist, Alex Theodoridis, who noted this phenomenon: "Partisanship for many Americans today takes the form of a visceral, even subconscious, attachment to a party group. Our party

becomes a part of our self-concept in deep and meaningful ways."

When politics is used as a cure for spiritual and social loneliness, it's harder to win people over with policy or philosophical arguments. Everything is shaped on a deeper level, through the parables, fables and myths that our most fundamental groups use to define themselves.

For years, the meritocratic establishments in both parties told an implicit myth. The heroes of this myth were educated, morally enlightened global citizens who went to competitive colleges, got invited to things like the Clinton Global Initiative, and who have the brainpower to run society and who might just be a little better than other people, by virtue of their achievements.

If politics is going to get better, we need better myths, unifying ones that are built on social equality.

President Donald Trump tells the opposite myth — about how those meritocrats are actually clueless idiots and full of drivel, and how virtue, wisdom and toughness is found in the regular people whom those folks look down upon.

Trump's supporters follow him because he gets his facts wrong, but he gets his myths right. He tells the morality tale that works for them.

It should be said that people on the left and on the right who try to use politics to find their moral meaning are turning politics into an idol. Idolatry is what happens when people give ultimate allegiance to some-

thing that should be serving only an intermediate purpose, whether it is money, technology, alcohol, success or politics.

As Andy Crouch points out in his book "Playing God," idolatry is seductive because in the first phase it seems to work. The first sip of that martini tastes great. At first a new smartphone seems to give you power and control. The status you get from a new burst of success seems really sensational. But then idols fail. What seemed to offer you more control begins to control you.

As Crouch puts it: "All idols begin by offering great things for a very small price. All idols then fail, more and more consistently, to deliver on their original promises, while ratcheting up their demands. ... In the end they fail completely, even as they make categorical demands. In the memorable phrase of the psychiatrist Jeffrey Satinover, idols ask for more and more, while giving less and less, until eventually they demand everything and give nothing."

Politics these days makes categorical demands on people. It demands that they remain in a state of febrile excitement caused by this or that scandal or hatred of the moment. But it doesn't actually transform life or even fill the hole left by the lack of other attachments.

If politics is going to get better, we need better myths, unifying ones that are built on social equality. But we also need to put politics in its place. The excessive dependence on politics has to be displaced by the expulsive power of more important dependencies, whether family, friendship, neighborhood, community, faith or basic life creed.

To be a moderate is to be at war with idolatry. It's to believe that we become free as we multiply and balance our attachments. It's to believe that our politics probably can't be fixed by political means. It needs repair of the deeper communal bonds that politics rest on, and which political conflict cannot heal.

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@dailystorian.com; online at www.dailystorian.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.