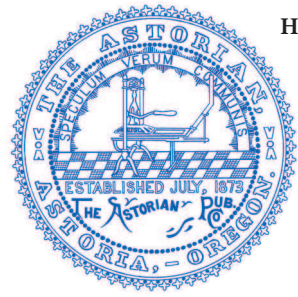


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OUR VIEW

No room in military for discrimination or intolerance

Imagine that your son enlists in the Marine Corps. Imagine that weeks later, you are told that he died. And because you are not given the whole story, you call your member of Congress.

That is what happened to the parents of Raheel Siddiqui.

Last Friday, Pvt. Siddiqui's drill instructor, Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Felix, was sentenced to 10 years in prison by a military jury.

Siddiqui, 20, a Pakistani-American from Taylor, Michigan, was one of three Muslim recruits abused by Felix. He hurled himself to his death after what the jury decided was mistreatment by Felix that included slapping Siddiqui and calling him a terrorist, according to the Associated Press. The government did not charge Felix with any crime directly related to Siddiqui's death, instead convicting him on abuse charges.

The Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island has long been the scene of other hazing incidents. Decades ago, a drill instructor marched his platoon into a creek at night. Some of the recruits drowned.

The Felix trial shows that the Marines have since drawn clearer lines between what instructors can and cannot do, said Michael Hanzel, a former Navy attorney who attended the proceedings at Camp Lejeune.

"This generation now, there's things that I think that we're much more focused on ... in this trial, it's calling people names based on their religion and targeting people based on their religion," said Hanzel, now a private attorney specializing in military law. "I don't think anyone would say that was acceptable ever, but it probably was not prosecuted in the past the way it would be now."

The crimes committed by Felix raised an alarm beyond the boundaries of Parris Island for two reasons. First, he targeted victims based on their religious beliefs. Second, he raised the bar on cruelty in the recruit barracks. His peculiar penchant was to order a recruit to enter an industrial-size clothes dryer, close the door and start it. He also commanded recruits to choke each other, punched them in the face or kicked them to the ground, among other abuses.

"He wasn't making Marines. He was breaking Marines," prosecutor Lt. Col. John Norman told the jury.

When U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell took up the cause of the Siddiqui family's search for justice, other members of Congress told her not to make waves about Marine Corps recruit training. She defied that conventional wisdom.

In addition to prison, Sgt. Felix is now a private, and he will receive a dishonorable discharge.

Implementing sweeping change in the military takes leadership from the top down, and even then it doesn't happen overnight. When President Harry Truman desegregated the armed forces in 1948, he encountered entrenched resistance from the almost entirely all-white officer corps. He had to forcibly retire the secretary of the Army for his refusal to enforce the presidential executive order. President Dwight Eisenhower later desegregated military schools, hospitals and bases. The last all-black unit wasn't abolished until 1954.

As a result of Truman's bold, historic move, nonwhite soldiers, Marines, airmen and sailors today have more leadership opportunities and advancement potential than the private, corporate world offers to minority employees. His order called for equal treatment without regard to race, color, religion or national origin, and as a result our armed forces have become the nation's greatest meritocracy.

There is absolutely no excuse for religious intolerance and hatred in the ranks. American Muslims are fighting and dying for this country, and deserve to be treated with the same respect as their comrades. After Siddiqui's March 2016 suicide, a hazing investigation led to charges against Felix, five other drill instructors and the training battalion's commanding officer. Eleven others faced lesser discipline.

As we endure a presidency that is painfully ambivalent on matters of racial bigotry, it is necessary for other leaders to draw the line between what is OK and what is not — between right and wrong.

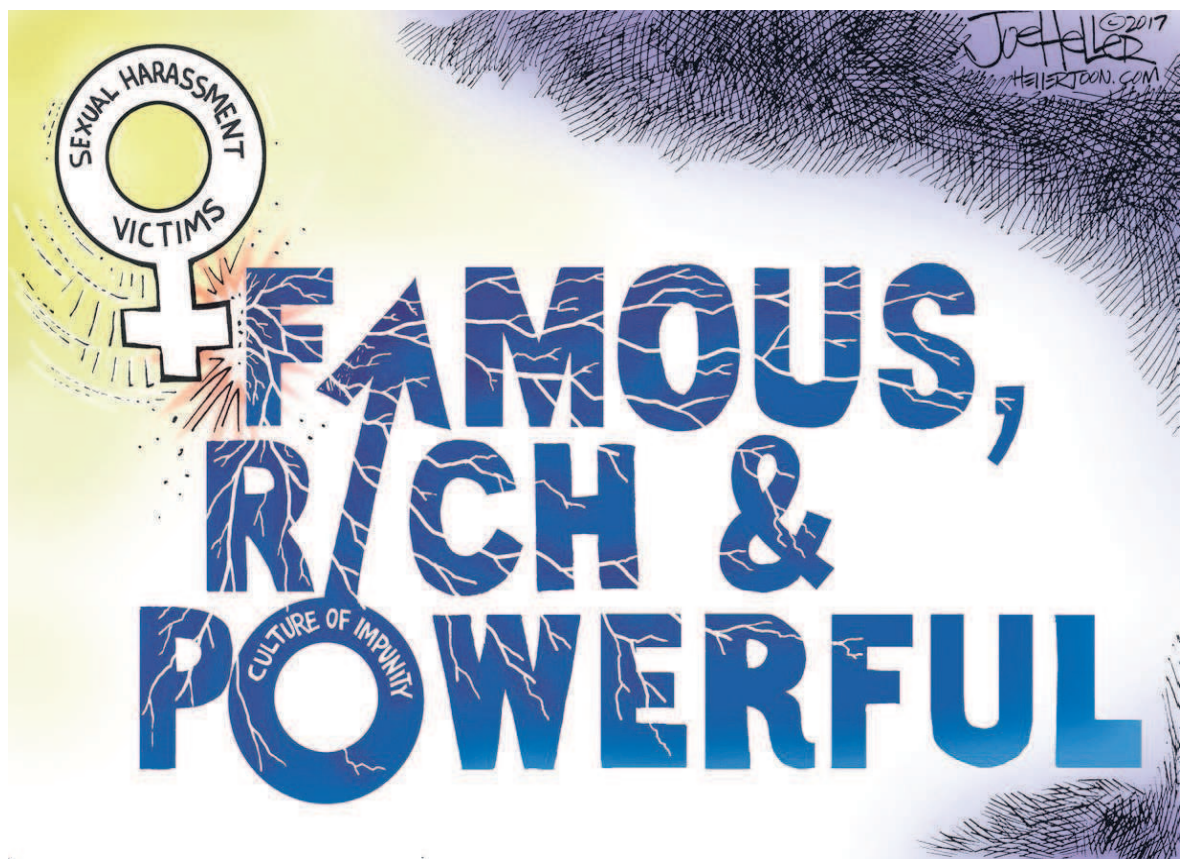
The superintendent of the Air Force Academy, Lt. Gen. Jay Silveria, exhibited such leadership earlier this year, when he denounced — in no uncertain terms — alleged bigotry against blacks at the academy's preparatory school.

"If you demean someone in any way, you need to get out," he said in a speech to cadets. "If you can't treat someone from another race, or different color skin, with dignity and respect, then you need to get out."

The allegations later turned out to be untrue, but Gen. Silveria stood by his message last week.

When the voices making such declarations are in military uniform, the message carries extra weight.

There is absolutely no excuse for religious intolerance and hatred in the ranks.



Monarch habitat restoration benefits farmers, environment

By ROBERT GIBLIN
For The Daily Astorian

Looking like small, flying black, orange and yellow stained-glass windows, monarch butterflies are prized for their beauty, and as a symbol of biodiversity and the need to protect ecosystems.

Due to a variety of challenges, however, monarch butterfly populations have declined. Collaboration among farmers, homeowners and other landowners will be crucial in helping to restore populations of monarchs and other pollinators.

There are many complex reasons for monarch population declines, including loss of breeding habitat, weather and climate change, predators, pathogens and parasites, and less overwintering habitat in Mexico.

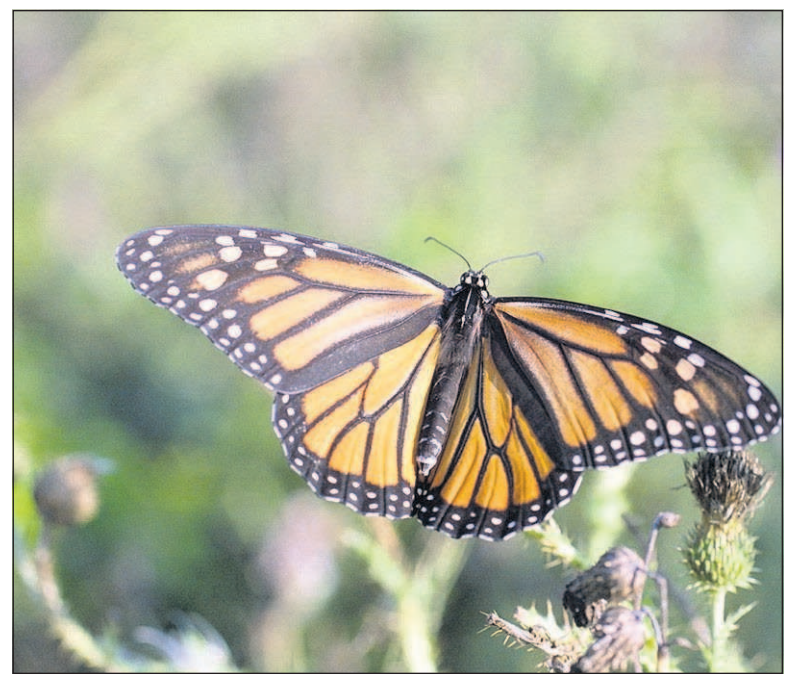
Monarchs need places to eat, live and reproduce during their yearly journey from Mexico, to as far north as Canada. To survive the migration, they need two kinds of nourishment — nectar and milkweed. Monarchs consume nectar from a variety of flowers, while milkweed provides shelter for the butterflies' eggs and nourishment for their caterpillars.

Re-establishing milkweed is essential to restoring the population of monarchs, but it has long been considered a nuisance for farmers and gardeners alike. Milkweed can be devastating to crop yields and may be toxic to some livestock if ingested. Gardeners often treat the plant like an invasive species. For years, milkweed was classified as a noxious weed in some areas and its control was required by local or county laws.

In response to a 2014 petition to list the monarch under the Endangered Species Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has begun the process of evaluating monarch conservation measures, including evaluating volunteer habitat conservation efforts in agriculture, to assess the impact toward ensuring long-term recovery and resilient monarch populations.

Farmers, ranchers and other landowners already are engaged in conservation initiatives focused on water quality, erosion control, wildlife and pollinator habitat. These efforts demonstrate that continuing innovation in agricultural practices can reduce environmental impacts, increase crop productivity and be compatible with monarch conservation efforts.

Farmers need to maintain good cropland, but they are in a great position to help restore monarch



U.S. Geological Survey

Clatsop County, along with the rest of Oregon, is included in the natural range of the monarch butterfly. Local farmers and homeowners can play a part in helping this charismatic insect survive.

Monarchs face many challenges on their long migratory journey. Agriculture can play a key role in helping these important pollinators reach their destination, but farmers can't do it alone.

habitat. The time to act is now. Farmers and other land managers should begin establishing or expanding monarch habitat in the fall of 2017 and spring of 2018. Milkweed can be established in many niches on the agricultural landscape, including conservation lands, grazing lands, rights-of-way, field margins and yard and garden areas. In some cases, solutions may be as simple as adjusting mowing or weed control practices to avoid time periods when monarch eggs and caterpillars are present.

Other land expanses, such as road and utility corridors or rights-of-way, also may be suitable for monarch habitat.

Many states and organizations offer information and volunteer registries for farmers and other landowners to enroll pollinator habitats and to share best management practices that will allow monarch habitat to survive. Along the monarch flyway, state wildlife agencies have been tasked to develop management plans that encourage conservation plans in ways that make sense locally or regionally. These state and local efforts should include input

from farm organizations and agribusinesses, which are uniquely positioned to support management practices that will result in sustainable monarch populations.

Federal government agencies, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Fish and Wildlife Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service also are cooperating to align programs and rules to foster monarch habitat restoration. The Farm Service Agency has enrolled more than 124,000 acres in the Conservation Reserve Program pollinator practice. FSA and NRCS are providing grants and incentives to implement practices to encourage establishment of pollinator habitat.

Monarchs face many challenges on their long migratory journey. Agriculture can play a key role in helping these important pollinators reach their destination, but farmers can't do it alone. Nor should they have to.

Robert Giblin is a freelance writer, speaker and consultant on agriculture and food issues and policies. This column appears courtesy of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

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