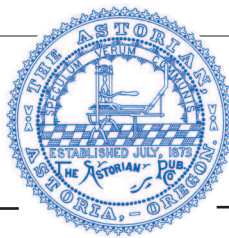


OPINION

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THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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OUR VIEW

Immigration actions chill press, speech freedoms

The detention of 15-year Ocean Park, Washington, resident Baltazar “Rosas” Aburto Gutierrez by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ought to worry even those who vigorously defend the Trump administration’s deportation policies. It chews away at essential American values.

Aburto Gutierrez spoke to a Chinook Observer writer for the series “Stories From the Heart” about local ICE arrests of residents lacking formal immigration status. With his consent, he was identified by a nickname. He also was easy to identify from the circumstances of his story, which can be read at tinyurl.com/Rosas-Aburto-Gutierrez. He was later included, anonymously, in a Seattle Times article about ICE’s activities in Pacific County, where undocumented immigrants are employed in the aquaculture, farming and hospitality industries.

After his arrest, Aburto Gutierrez said an agent told him: “My supervisor asked me to come find you because of what appeared in the newspaper.”

With one old \$100 traffic ticket to his name, Aburto Gutierrez has a cleaner record than some locals who applaud his arrest. He is in no sense one of the serious criminals ICE is supposed to prioritize. So why was Aburto Gutierrez arrested? Was it in retaliation for daring to be an “uppity Mexican” willing to speak up? Was his arrest meant to be a warning to all other immigrants to keep their mouths shut? “Yes” is the obvious answer to both questions.

Oversized impacts

The 2010 U.S. Census counted 1,677 Hispanic residents in Pacific County, undoubtedly a significant underestimate since many without documents are known to dodge enumerators. Around 50 have now been

detained by ICE this year. This hardly qualifies as a wholesale roundup. However, its impacts extend far beyond simply those 50 individuals.

In Aburto Gutierrez’s case, the initial arrest and deportation of his partner, Gladys Diaz, broke up a stable family. Diaz and the couple’s three girls — ages 4, 7 and 12 — are now getting by in a beautiful but crime-infested area of Mexico’s Pacific Coast. The two youngest girls are U.S. citizens. The 12-year-old and 7-year-old will no longer be taught in Ocean Beach School District. The shellfish operation that relied on Aburto Gutierrez is without a highly regarded worker. Gladys’ little business making piñatas is no more.

The family will probably adjust to its new circumstances. But the Long Beach Peninsula is poorer for their loss.

“Press- and free-speech freedoms ... are guaranteed to all in our nation, not just citizens.”

Why care?

Judging from social media comments about the Aburto Gutierrez story, there are many who regard informal immigration as an unforgivable crime. Often ignorant about how their own ancestors arrived in America, they nevertheless are supremely judgmental about others. Why might they want to reexamine their opinions with regard to this case?

“Family values” voters should care about breaking up families and about the school district losing kids. Economic leaders should care about depriving industries of



Baltazar “Rosas” Aburto Gutierrez at work on Willapa Bay.

Gladys Diaz

good workers.

And we should all be troubled when a government agency targets someone for telling their story to the news media.

As the Times said in an editorial, “These actions send a terrifying message to people who have been living in the United States for years and actively contributing to their communities. ... ICE’s crackdown on otherwise law-abiding immigrants undermines those efforts. It dissuades them from reporting crimes, becoming

active in their children’s schools and interacting with their neighbors. Effectively, it consigns them to the shadows.”

Imagine the howls of outrage if a Democratic presidential administration began selectively prosecuting rural gun owners after they wrote critical letters to the editor.

ICE’s actions deliberately chill press- and free-speech freedoms, which are guaranteed to all in our nation, not just citizens. This is unacceptable.

Changes to the opinion page, letters policy

By JIM VAN NOSTRAND
The Daily Astorian

The Daily Astorian editorial board announces some changes to the newspaper’s letters policy, starting today.

First, letters to the editor will be limited to 250 words, down from 350. This will allow us the space to get more letters into the newspaper, especially during high-volume times of the year such as election season.

Any letters submitted through today will be grandfathered, so to speak. We’ll run those at the length sent.

Second, all letters will be subject to greater scrutiny for tone and civility. Writers are entitled to their opinions, regardless of their political viewpoints. We welcome all points of view and encourage a robust discussion of the issues of the day. But we will not tolerate personal insults, attacks on other letter writers or hateful rhetoric.

The goal of the greater scrutiny is to elevate the discussion and encourage a forum where all of our readers feel comfortable expressing themselves in front of the community and the world.

That should not be a problem for the great majority of our letter writers. There have been a few writers, however, who have pushed the boundaries of civil discourse. Going forward, they won’t be allowed to use some of the language they’ve become accustomed to. Our policy has always been that letters are subject to editing — we will exercise that right more frequently than we have in the past. Questions about editing decisions should be directed to me.

We will print every local letter that meets our guidelines, even if we have to devote more pages. Your opinions are important to us.



The editorial board is comprised of myself, Publisher Kari Borgen, retired Publisher Steve Forrester, retired Managing Editor Patrick Webb and Chinook Observer Publisher Matt Winters.

Op-ed columns sought

We would also like to encourage local writers to submit longer opinion columns of up to 1,000 words on topics of local interest.

The bar for publication of these is set much higher than letters to the editor. They should be well-researched and written, and authors should have a well-rounded knowledge of the subject matter.

Excellent recent examples include retired teacher and park ranger Tom Wilson about the Lewis and Clark expedition and pastor

Bill Van Nostrand about the separation of church and state.

If you have an idea you’d like to pitch, email editor@dailyastorian.com. Ideally, we’d like to be able to run local columns and letters every day of the week.

Other cartoonists

You may have already noticed some different editorial cartoons on our pages over the past couple of weeks.

We’ve contracted with a service called Cagle Cartoons to provide a more diverse stable of dozens of voices from around the country, such as Nate Beeler of the Columbus Dispatch (pictured).

We’ll continue to run cartoons from Joe Heller.

We hope you enjoy seeing some different perspectives.

Editorial page redesign

We’re experimenting with a new design for our opinion page, which allows flexibility for us to try new things and a fresh look for our readers.

Also, we will start publishing letters during the week as they come in, rather than saving them until the end of the week. They’ll generally run first-come, first-served. Letters about timely topics and events may get bumped to the head of the line.

Questions? Comments? All feedback appreciated about any of these changes. You can email me directly at jimvan@dailyastorian.com.

New letters policy

Letters should be exclusive to The Daily Astorian.

Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer’s name, address and phone number. 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 allowed 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. Letters in poor taste will not be printed.

Send via email to editor@dailyastorian.com, online at dailyastorian.com/submit_letters, in person at 949 Exchange St. in Astoria or 1555 North Roosevelt in Seaside, or mail to Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103.

Jim Van Nostrand is editor of The Daily Astorian.