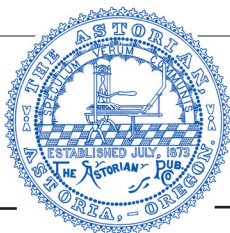


OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
Editor

JEREMY FELDMAN
Circulation Manager

DEBRA BLOOM
Business Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

OUR VIEW

How will history view anti-immigrant hysteria?

Was U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley's visit to an immigrant detention center a political stunt or a valid exercise in political theater that shed light on some hard truths of Trump administration policies?

While there may be room for both interpretations, Merkley's action illustrated a dangerous truth: America's ever-swelling system of immigrant prisons considers itself above legislative oversight.

Merkley's video of his attempt to gain entry to a facility in Brownsville, Texas run by the Office of Refugee Resettlement has gone viral. Watch it at tinyurl.com/Merkley-Refugee-Video.

Did he really expect to get in during an unannounced drop-in? Perhaps not. But in the nation most of us think we reside in, a visit from a U.S. senator to a federally funded facility warrants special consideration. Leaders of one of the three co-equal branches of government, it used to be that any bureaucrat or contractor would be loath to cross a senator. Such courtesy or instinct for self-preservation is apparently no longer to be expected from the industrial complex put in charge of imprisoning undocumented immigrants.

After calling the cops on Merkley, reporting revealed the detention center's CEO makes \$771,000 a year — four times more than a senator. No wonder,



In this image from video, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., attempts to gain entry to a detention facility in Brownsville, Texas.

then, that he treated Merkley like a door-to-door solicitor?

We should be even more outraged by the underlying policy to which Merkley was responding — the separation of immigrant children and parents, even when they are making claims for refugee status. The administration says this harsh step is meant to deter all unauthorized border-crossers, while critics observe it is a likely violation of international refugee-protection treaties.

All four Pacific Northwest senators joined in a 40-signature letter last week calling on Trump's Department of

Homeland Security to quit taking children from their parents at the border.

"Children and their parents seeking asylum and safety in the United States should not have to live in fear that they will be forcibly separated once they reach the border," Sen. Ron Wyden said about legislation aimed at ending the practice. "This bill will put an end to the Trump administration's inhumane policy of separating families, which runs counter to American and humanitarian values and only succeeds in further traumatizing innocent children."

Although the bill stands little chance

in the Republican-controlled Congress, it is urgently needed, along with a thorough review of other questionable moves by Trump officials.

For example, U.S. immigration authorities confirmed to the Associated Press last week that more than 1,600 people arrested at the U.S.-Mexico border, including parents who have been separated from their children, are being transferred to the federal Bureau of Prisons system because other facilities are out of room.

"There is simply no moral or legal justification for separating children from their parents in this draconian effort seeking to deter other immigrants," Matt Adams, legal director of the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, said in a written statement. "This is not only unlawful, but also contrary to basic human decency."

All this comes too close to our national mistake of interning Japanese-American citizens at the outset of World War II. Now seen as a grave moral error, too few of their fellow citizens possessed the courage to speak out against it at the time. History will look at today's anti-immigrant hysteria in a similar way. All politicians and citizens should aspire to be on the side of benevolence when it comes to safeguarding desperate families who come to us seeking mercy.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Celebrate coming out of the shadows

Recently a letter dismissed lighting the Column for gay pride, saying: "Making people's sexual preference a civic honor seems silly to me. I don't understand" ("Other causes more worthy of Column lighting," The Daily Astorian, May 29).

What is silly is saying we are bestowing a civic honor on a sexual preference. Heterosexual individuals do not have to explain their "preference." They don't have to live in fear of being publicly mocked, or fired from their jobs, simply for who they are. They don't have to worry that merchants will refuse to serve them for religious reasons.

Heterosexual children do have to fear being bullied if peers know whom they find attractive. Heterosexuals do not need to worry about being "discovered," and beaten to death, left in the wilderness as human refuse. If we were celebrating heterosexuality and cisgender identity, that would be silly.

What is being celebrated is coming out of the shadows. It is saying who I am is mainstream to the human condition, and not some freakish aberration. It is saying that I no longer accept the shame and guilt imposed upon me.

Our lighting of the Column is not to bestow a civic honor on people's sexual preferences. It is a small nod to the dignity of a group historically reviled and mistreated. What is given the civic honor is a change in attitude and the freedom to be who you are. I do not find these frivolous or silly.

RODNEY MERRILL
Astoria

If a Democratic president were doing this, you'd be horrified

President Donald Trump is fighting our allies, Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia and Mexico. He is separating us from democratic nations and a world order in place for the past 70 years. He is realigning us with Russia, an authoritarian dictatorship.

The Russians attacked our election, and are doing everything they can to undermine our democracy. He seems to be fine with this, and Republicans in Congress seem fine with it, also. They are aiding and abetting, not providing oversight, which is their constitutional duty.

Democracy is fragile. Our revered "checks and balances" do not apply themselves. They are applied by people. Right now, not so much.

Do this. Google "images of Russians in Oval Office." Why does everyone look so gleeful? And this, "image of Trump Putin handshake July 7, 2017." Look at those pictures. And you think there is no collusion? That picture is the definition of collusion. Which world leader has he never criticized? Nary a harsh word for Putin. Ever. Yet look at the insults for our allies.

You realize there were negotiations for a hotel in Moscow going on during the presi-



dential campaign? Republicans, if a Democratic president was doing this, you would be horrified. So why are you letting a Republican do it?

ERIC HALPERIN
Gearhart

guidelines of the weakest Forest Practices Act on the West Coast.

If this concerns you, contact the Oregon Department of Forestry and Weyerhaeuser.

GWENDOLYN ENDICOTT
Nehalem

on what happens when they're all mixed up together.

What can you do? Call or write your legislators. Tell them to end this reckless practice.

JANE ANDERSON
Garibaldi

Poison in paradise

Oswald West State Park is a place of pristine beauty — old growth trees, a clear running stream, and Short Sands Beach, treasured by surfers, people, children and dogs.

Did you know that its neighbor up the hill plans to spray a toxic poison, by air, adjacent to a stream that runs through the park "sometime" in the next few months? They can't say exactly when, because weather conditions are so unpredictable.

Those of us who live on the coast can verify that, yes, earth, air and water all move — especially downhill. But perhaps it would not matter if they let people know ahead of time, because according to the packaging the herbicide, Indaziflam, "has a high potential for reaching surface water via runoff for several months or more after application."

They need to spray, they say, because they are a tree farm. This is a big neighbor, Weyerhaeuser, one of the largest private owners of timberland in the U.S.

Although the packaging does read "toxic to fish, and aquatic vertebrates," and "Human Health Hazard: organ damage," what they are doing is legal — for they are following the

End reckless spraying of pesticides

In a world where media outlets cared more for the welfare of local citizens than fear of bullying from big corporations, this is an issue that would be covered in depth by a reporter, but instead this short (mandatory 250 words or less) note will have to do. My apologies for the brevity, and if you'd like to learn more, go to healthywatershed.org. Here's what you need to know:

An aerial application of a mixture of multiple pesticides is planned for the industrial timberland adjoining Oswald West State Park. You won't know when it is taking place, because the timber company, Oregon Department of Forestry and the Oregon State Parks Department think you don't need to know.

This is perfectly legal, thanks to your state legislators, most of whom think there is no need to change the rules on this, despite knowing that these operations can result in chemicals drifting for miles.

No one is providing you with a list of chemicals to be used so that you can make your own decision about whether they're really safe — and there is no information

God bless our president

In response to the letter about President Trump's support from his base ("Why do so many people tolerate President Trump?" The Daily Astorian, June 7), I would like to answer why we would continue to do so.

The writer talks about his behavior without considering what choice we were given after the debates. He asks, "Who among his base would find it acceptable for a child to bully or subvert a friend?" But the left finds no difficulty in killing the unborn baby in the womb.

The risk to the planet that the writer mentions was, in our eyes, much greater under Obama, who kowtowed to the bullies of nation states. And who knows what Hillary Clinton would have done? Possibly pushed the reset button over and over again, looking for a better result each time.

President Trump is at least responding to us, and not lying over and over again. He doesn't despise people who have guns and Bibles, while supporting factions who hate traditional American values.

God bless our president, now and in the next election.

CARL YATES
Seaside