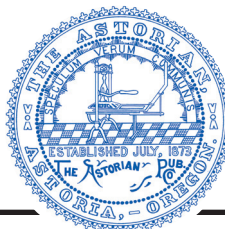


# OPINION

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# the Astorian

Founded in 1873

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## GUEST COLUMN

# Every vote counts

I turned 21 on April 1, 1970. I don't remember actually registering to vote, but I do remember that I knew voting was a very important privilege. I have voted in every election, local, regional, state and national since I qualified for the privilege.

The research I have done to inform myself in writing this essay has proved interesting, demoralizing and uplifting. And, for myself, dismaying in learning about events that were not included in my history classes. Further, and personally dismaying, was to understand how much I have taken for granted about my privilege to vote.

While taking that privilege seriously enough to inform myself as much as possible about issues by reading voters' pamphlets, watching debates and attending forums, I did not take the privilege seriously enough to learn and understand the fraught history of its existence. For that, I am thankful to have been invited to share my thoughts at this centennial of the ratification of the 19th Amendment.

It has provided me the opportunity to research, learn about and be more thankful for this privilege.

For example, my mother was born in Puerto Rico in 1919. Puerto Rico is a territory of the United States. Residents were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917, so my mother was born a U.S. citizen. However, only literate women were granted the right to vote in 1929; but, in 1935, this limitation was lifted.

Even now, however, the citizens of Puerto Rico do not have any voting representation in the U.S. Congress. Puerto Rico is "allowed" one nonvoting resident commissioner in the House of Representatives. Puerto Rico's residents and citizens cannot vote for the U.S. president. Do you think that makes a

difference today? Thankfully, my mother's family moved to Louisiana in the 1930s.

I was born in Washington, D.C. Women in D.C. were not able to vote after the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, but neither were men. It took another constitutional amendment, the 23rd Amendment, ratified in 1961, for D.C. residents to win the right to vote for president and vice president.

In 1973, Congress passed a Home Rule Act for D.C., which established an elected but nonvoting delegate in the House of Representatives. Congress still has the power to impose laws on Washington, D.C., or to veto any laws passed by the D.C. Council. A constitutional amendment establishing full representation in Congress for Washington, D.C., passed in 1978 but was not ratified by enough states. Proposals for D.C. statehood have so far failed to pass Congress. What's that saying, taxation without representation?

As an adult, I've been a resident of Washington state and Oregon. In Oregon, voters defeated measures to enfranchise women as voters five times between 1884 and 1910. In 1912, women in Oregon finally won the vote. Oregon was the 25th state to ratify the 19th Amendment in January 1920. The only woman serving in the Oregon Legislature had introduced the ratification measure.

In Washington, women finally won the right to vote, after many wins and losses through the previous years, in November 1910. Washington, with a goodly number of women in the Legislature, was the 35th state to ratify the 19th Amendment in March 1920.

Because I traveled often for my job, I began utilizing absentee ballots for voting in the 1980s. I loved the convenience and the clarity it provided me.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Tita Montero serves on the Seaside City Council.

So, I was happy to learn of Oregon's mail-in balloting, successfully in place for more than 25 years, when I moved here in 2002.

Congress passed the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1970 requiring all states to register citizens between the ages of 18 and 21 as voters. Amazingly, it was Oregon, under Gov. Tom McCall, that led the states that objected to lowering the voting age and filed suit on the grounds that the act was unconstitutional. The Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in favor of the respondent, U.S. Attorney General John Mitchell. Isn't it interesting to learn history?

When I worked at Tongue Point Job Corps Center, one of the responsibilities I was honored to have was to explain to students the importance of registering to vote and then exercising that right by educating oneself about the candidates and issues and then voting. I spoke to students weekly during their orientation and conducted a voter registration drive every year. Those whose residences were in other states registered for absentee ballots; so, I learned about

the registration process for most states in the country. I was amazed to learn how many states conducted their registration process online.

People tend to not believe that their one little vote makes a difference. As someone who has run for elected office, I can provide a very personal example that every vote counts. The first time I ran for Seaside City Council, the "other guy" got one more vote than I did. A recount occurred, with the same result. He won the Ward 2 seat by one vote. Yes! Every vote counts!

I'm not sure how many young women are aware of the struggles encountered by so many brave women to provide females the ability to have a voice in the processes of government. Personally, I will offer up thankful thoughts for their foresight, resistance, protests, activism and resilience every time I vote from now on.

Tita Montero serves on the Seaside City Council. This guest column is one of several being published by The Astorian in August to mark the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which guaranteed women the right to vote.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Unspoken fear

I'm writing to try to clarify an unspoken fear which seems to be an undercurrent in our local elections. It was writ large in a recent letter from a writer in Seaside who said we "do not want Astoria to become Portland."

I'm not sure how our small towns become a metropolitan area, or if she is warning us away from the diverse community of cultures, gender choices, university students or traffic and commercialism. It's left open-ended; plug in your favorite fear.

She mentions "loyalty to the Portland agenda," and a "threat to our way of life here on the coast." What does "Portland agenda" mean, and how does it threaten us?

Do peaceful demonstrations for human rights qualify as being sucked into whatever she sees as the "urban" agenda? Is walking at the beach or forest threatened by being thoughtful about our values? What, then, is "our way of life"?

This then becomes connected to campaign financing by outside groups. Campaigns are supposed to report contributions, and I encourage you to do your research at the OreStar website.

Don't be bamboozled by fear. I invite you to vote for a candidate who keeps it honest when others stoop to untruths and innuendo. Debbie Boothe-Schmidt owns a small business and has been a single mom, now married.

Debbie is a staunch supporter of the union movement and workers. She volunteers in community groups, and had a career in public service. She'll work for all of us.

JAN MITCHELL  
Astoria

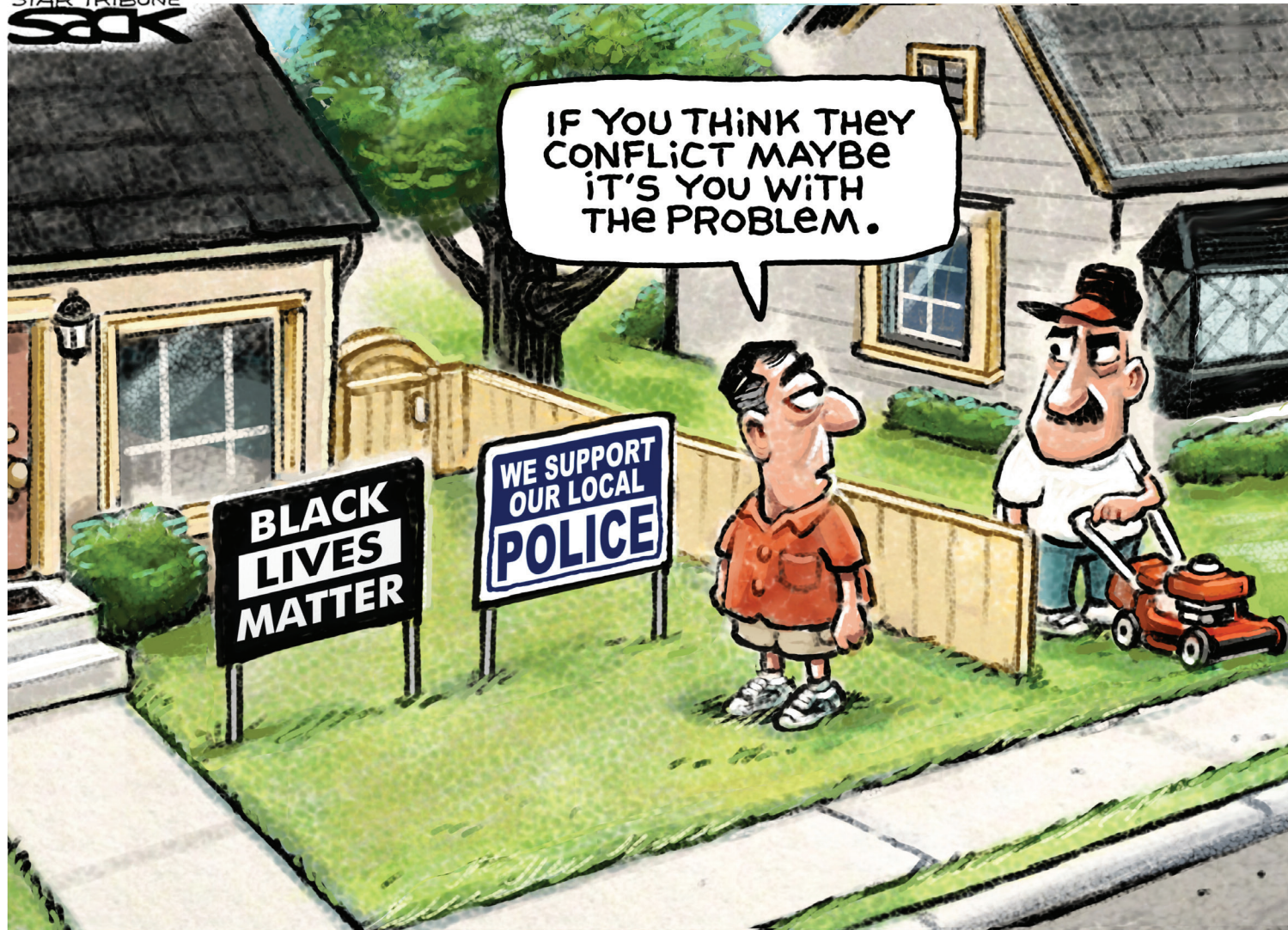
### Honor the legacy

The 19th Amendment, which allowed the "other half of the population" to gain equal footing and have their say, will celebrate its 100th anniversary Aug. 26. Now 100 years later, we can honor the women who worked for over 72 years to finally get suffrage and be able to help make the laws they have to abide by.

There is still plenty of work to do to make our society a just society, to help with the education of our children, the future generation, to keep our citizens healthy and live with dignity as we all age.

If you would like to know more about this historic anniversary, two movies stand out: "Iron Jawed Angels," with Hilary Swank, and the English movie "Suffragette," featuring Helena Bonham Carter and a brief glimpse of Meryl Streep. Both

STAR TRIBUNE  
SACK



movies give one a pretty good idea of the real-life struggle women faced in making changes.

You can honor the legacy of the thousands who worked so hard so we can have "our say" by balancing the benefit and the responsibility of suffrage for all citizens by voting.

LaREE JOHNSON  
Astoria

### Disturbing

In Oregon, most of us believe in equal treatment and justice for all.

It is disturbing that people with ties to Patriot Prayer and Proud Boys white supremacist groups showed up in Seaside, some carrying weapons. People of color on Seaside streets were visibly afraid. A friend who is Black was working at a store, and texted me about her fear.

At the same time and place, high schoolers and other North Coast residents were protesting in support of Black Lives Matter. BLM is a rallying cry against racial inequality endangering Black people in this country. Many of these same residents have hosted regular peaceful protests in Seaside for weeks. By, and on behalf of

Black people, they call for racial equality and justice.

Funded by the #TimberUnity PAC, a candidate for House District 32 posted on Facebook, without any proof whatsoever, that these BLM organizers had previously staged "riots."

She implied the police had to act in response to "taunts and hate" by the BLM protesters. That is not true at all. She wasn't there. And nothing like that happened. In her post, she made no mention of Patriot Prayer and Proud Boys or the guns.

This politician is trying to win by dividing us based on race or place. All it tells me is that she has nothing else to offer. We can choose a leader who brings us together. We can choose Debbie Boothe-Schmidt, who will show up for all of us, and work for racial equality and justice.

LAURA ALLEN  
Seaside

### Heartbreaking

Orca need salmon, and salmon need something more than the final environmental impact statement. Critically endangered orca are largely ignored in the

federal government's latest salmon plan.

Southern resident orca need many more salmon to survive, and even though the federal government and Northwest ratepayers have spent over \$17 billion on salmon recovery efforts, no salmon or steelhead populations have been recovered. This spells disaster for many of the species who depend on these lower Snake River fish to survive, especially orca.

We're seeing orca populations sink toward extinction and it's heartbreaking. Right now, researchers have seen that at least three orca in the J pod are pregnant, which is exciting, but orca advocates are holding their breath, because without enough food 70% of orca pregnancies are lost, and half of the calves that are born die in the first two years. One of the pregnant orcas right now is J35, or Tahlequah, who carried her dead calf around the Puget Sound for 17 days in 2018.

We need salmon, orca need salmon, and orca and salmon need dam removal on the lower Snake River. It's past time for our political leaders to step up and develop a plan that restores the lower Snake River, recovers salmon and invests in our Northwest communities.

BRIANNE LEE  
Pacific City