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## OUR VIEW

## Fight bigotry and hatred

The hatefulness and plundering that accompanied the internment of Japanese Americans 80 years ago is our region's most notorious racist episode in recent times, though bias against Native Americans and historical pogroms directed at Chinese immigrants also stain our past.

It must be said Japanese families were supported by many friends and supporters in our community, people who welcomed them back as World War II paranoia faded. But there can be no sugarcoating of the ways in which property such as Willapa oysterbeds and family homes were unscrupulously seized with little or minimal compensation. Nor should we minimize the ways in which our residents of Japanese descent faced slurs and countless other indignities.

Although we all like to think our cozy and welcoming communities are too evolved for there to be much racism nowadays, such is not the case.

Like the nation as a whole, there is an unpleasant and uncomfortable undercurrent of prejudice in these otherwise admirable Pacific Coast counties. This was loudly evident during the crackdown starting in 2016 on Hispanic residents, who faced a veritable blowtorch of racist sentiment, almost irrespective of immigration status. Again, to be sure, there were many white people who did what they could to bolster and defend neighbors from the destructive predations of unprincipled U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and those who abetted them.

Most of us are never likely to personally encounter racism. These rural counties have overwhelmingly white populations. Although there is a sense



Damian Dovarganes/AP Photo

Kara Chu holds a pair of heart balloons at a rally to raise awareness of anti-Asian violence outside the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles in March.

that diversity is increasing as urban residents discover they can remotely work wherever they choose, it's still easily conceivable that a resident of Long Beach, Gearhart and most other local towns can drive down the street and see no one of a different color. However, ignorance of the presence of racism isn't proof of its nonexistence.

Speak to local people of Asian, Hispanic and African descent and — if they are good enough friends — they will share accounts of when they found hateful messages written in windshield dust, comforted tearful children after locker-room teasing, had to ignore insults muttered on sidewalks and store aisles and a dozen other forms of overt prejudice. This all must be so wearing and

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soul-sucking, far more so than we in the white majority will ever be able to imagine.

It is of course possible to make too much of anything, and there are those who have at least some justification in harrumphing about the ways in which big-city news media overtrump each new social cause and controversy. Black Lives Matter and, now, demonstrations by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders attract not only the sincerely aggrieved

but also some who are merely along for the fun of making noise, tagging buildings and breaking windows. It's also true that the kinds of good people most likely to read editorials like this one are least likely to need the kinds of advice being offered.

However, we all fail when we

allow others to mete out racist hatred without resistance or comment. It is shameful to allow bullies to get their way — whether on the playground, in everyday grownup life, or in the halls of Congress.

Whether they were murdered because they were Asian or because they were women working in an industry that offended one warped man, the victims killed in Atlanta in March are representative of generations of a marginalized, too-often despised immigrant group in our country. These murders were just the most recent factor in decades of slowly increasing anger inside a simmering pressure cooker. There's only so much men and women can take.

So what can good Americans do about any of this? Is it worth taking one more swing at keeping firearms out of the hands of volatile young fanatics, at least until they have a chance to cool down? Can we strengthen political backbones in Congress to insist on that, or on requiring comprehensive tracking of hate crimes at every governmental level? Is there more that schools can do to help young people overcome the toxic legacy of biases they may absorb at home?

As always, on a "hearts and minds" level, it is up to each good person to stand up for those who need our help. Speak out when we see or hear racial bigotry. Reach out to members of racial and ethnic minorities in our communities. Patronize their businesses when it makes sense to do so. And, at a minimum, treat others the way you want to be treated yourself.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Informed consent

Two facts you may want to consider about the COVID-19 vaccines: The vaccines have not been proven to stop transmission of the virus; and, as with all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccine manufacturers are exempt from liability, should you or a loved one be injured or killed by these experimental new vaccines.

While some COVID-19 vaccines are showing a 95% success rate at stopping the disease and symptoms, there is no data available from the COVID-19 safety trials as to the vaccines' capacity to stop transmission of the infection.

World health officials are on record stating this, as it is simply the truth about the data we have thus far. We do not know if this vaccine will create herd immunity — to imply that it would is spreading misinformation.

In 1986, Congress passed the National Childhood Vaccine Injury Act, which made all vaccine manufacturers, and the doctors who provide them, exempt from all litigation regarding vaccines, and those who are injured or killed by them.

Further, under the Public Readiness and Emergency Preparedness Act, COVID-19 vaccines are not eligible under the National Vaccine Injury Compensation Program. People can apply for help through the Countermeasures Injury Compensation Program, but the program has a history of rejecting many claims.

Essentially, if you're injured by a COVID-19 vaccine, you're on your own.

I am bringing this to the awareness of my friends and neighbors because informed consent is the core of medicine in a free society. Without informed consent, i.e. health freedom, we may soon wake up to find ourselves living under medical tyranny.

JOHNNY SHUE  
Seaside

## Two kinds

Referencing Rick Bowers' letter of March 6, there are two kinds of homelessness — economic and chronic.

Economic homelessness can be solved by additional housing stock, but that housing stock has to be affordable. When hous-

ing is scarce, as it is in Astoria, affordable housing can only be created by changes in zoning that permit greater density, and economic incentives to builders to charge affordable rents.

Affordable is a technical term defined by the federal government, but it often means housing at below-market rates. A number of at-market multiunit apartment complexes have been developed recently in both Astoria and Warrenton, but all of the units are priced beyond affordable.

The recent study done by the Clatsop County commission made it clear that the only practical locations for development of affordable housing are in the Warrenton area, but zoning changes and builder incentives are required to get that housing built.

Chronic homelessness is a more complicated issue than economic homelessness. Each individual who is chronically homeless requires a solution built around that person's unique circumstances. Most often, mental health issues are the primary source of an individual's chronic homeless-

ness. Occasionally, chronic homelessness is simply a person's rational choice, but that is rare.

In Astoria, there is a general consensus among those most actively involved in addressing chronic homelessness that the most effective first step for this community is a drop-in center, where trust can be built and basic services and supplies provided. Creating that drop-in center is where our efforts should be focused.

BARRY L. PLOTKIN  
Astoria

## Missed opportunity

Edward Stratton missed the opportunity to practice responsible journalism while reporting on an example of cooperation among neighbors to resolve a work-at-home issue.

This effort was recognized by Astoria City Council members as a significant achievement in neighborhood prob-

lem-solving. Instead, Stratton chose to focus on fomenting public scorn toward residents who worked through the public process to address issues of concern.

In his latest article on a work-from-home auto-detailing proposal (The Astorian, March 18), Stratton should have focused on the agreement by neighbors to support the business operation as proposed by Will Gutierrez.

Instead, Stratton highlighted an unsubstantiated claim that the 67-year-old Stephen Fulton was intimidating the recent Coast Guardsman, a claim that was not relevant to the agreement reached by the parties.

A chance was missed here to report on a success story. Instead, Stratton wandered off into playing up some imagined grudge match.

Readers are entitled the truth, and maybe some fairness from reporters, not a speculative advocacy piece.

SARA ORR  
Seattle

