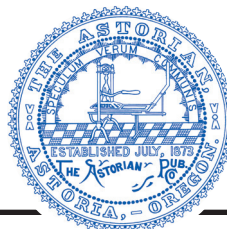


OPINION

editor@dailyastorian.com



the Astorian

Founded in 1873

KARI BORGEN
Publisher

DERRICK DePLEDGE
Editor

SHANNON ARLINT
Circulation Manager

JOHN D. BRUIJN
Production Manager

CARL EARL
Systems Manager

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

Tending to the garden

On a blustery day, I walked the leaf-covered steps to the Garden of Surging Waves. It was bliss.

The garden has grown up. The trees lining one of its borders make it feel tucked away. A refuge from the city.

The water from recent rains had puddled next to beachy grass surrounding the middle of the park. A homeless man sat on the far end with his back resting against the stones.



JONATHAN WILLIAMS

While the plants around the garden have matured, its message honoring Astoria's Chinese immigrants remains regal. The garden is a journey. History is embedded there. Rail ties

pay homage to the Chinese who built railroads. Long pavers remember the wood planks Chinese worked on at canneries.

As the text near the gate of the park states, "Immigrants, rich in their home cultures, values and sensibilities, ventured into a foreign land. In 1811, Astoria and Canton, China, met. Stories were shared and passed on to generations."

It is these stories that have so moved the garden's designer, Suenn Ho. And she wants people to keep telling them.

"We gave Astoria a town square that was never there before," she said. "We are able to see many, many of the events, celebrations, quiet moments, taking place at this very, very special little urban square. And it is the living room that people can laugh, cry and ponder."

Ho, an urban designer and principle at RESOLVE Architecture + Planning, is deeply attuned to the nuances of stories, memories and history. She sees the collective power of it and grows that sense of energy in the garden.

In October, Ho was among two others on the virtual panel discussion, "Hidden Histories: Deconstructing the Chinese Astorian Experience," organized by the Portland Chinatown Museum.

It was a powerful discussion.

The talk, which is available online, provided a window into the history of Astoria's Chinatown, how the Chinese were the essential backbone of the wildly successful cannery businesses, and the unfair obstacles the Chinese faced in exclusionary laws and racial prejudice. It also made clear how this



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

Suenn Ho gives a tour of the Garden of Surging Waves in Astoria.

history isn't widely known and has been minimized.

A slideshow presentation from Liisa Penner, the archivist at the Clatsop County Historical Society, was instructive in its scope and breadth of Astoria's Chinese history.

Penner presented powerful visuals in the form of photographs, newspaper clippings and maps. Chinese laboring in canneries. Living in bunkhouses. Operating businesses like clothing and grocery stores. Playing in a band.

Astoria had 13 Chinese residents in 1870. A decade later, there were more than 1,000 in the city and over 2,000 across Clatsop County. This went down significantly in later years because of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

About this same time, DeWitt Clinton Ireland, the publisher of the Tri-Weekly Astorian, claimed the Chinese were taking the jobs of white people. Sound familiar?

"He argued the money the Chinese earned was draining out of this country and going to China," Penner explained. "He wrote, 'It is foolish to spend time and money in the work of educating a horde of inferior people.' His beliefs were shared by many others."

Other newspapers wrote about form-

ing anti-Chinese organizations, encouraging people to patronize businesses hiring only white people and cutting the Chinese's pig-tails off if they were arrested.

"We need to learn from history," Ho said. We need to learn from history in a way that history comes in the form of written words. Who wrote them? Who gives you the view and who is able to tell you how things happened? ... And sometimes I think we forgot the voices of the people who were there were not heard and so the history becomes obscured."

As Ho later mentioned, when they began planning the Garden of Surging Waves, many of the local Chinese that were interviewed were reluctant to talk about unpleasant times. What really got them talking? Stories of their families.

Many had much to be proud of. Art Chan was the official photographer for the Miss Oregon pageant. Duncan Law had a seafood lab named after him. Dave Lum's family owned the Lum Quing Grocery. He went on to be one of the first few Chinese teachers in Oregon and owner of Lum's Auto Center.

These are names many will know. Some of them are dear friends to my parents and grandparents. They represent the best of Astoria. But, as Ho and this panel make

clear, there are others whose stories aren't as well known. They should be.

A wall of collected quotes at the garden gives space to consider Chinese Astorian's histories in their own words. It gives the affect, as Ho described, of being on a bus and hearing many people talking.

"My admired her ability to raise her son during a time when of Asian descent was a social obstacle."

"He repaired clocks with great skills & built cuckoo clocks with everyday materials."

"My grandfather brought home salmon cheeks a delicacy to the Chinese but a waste to the cannery owners."

"My mother graduated with a college degree but Chinese women seldom had job opportunities so she settled for a house-keeping offer."

Ho believes we can develop a higher level of empathy. I do, too.

What can people do now to support the garden and keep these stories alive?

While much of Astoria's Chinatown was destroyed, parts of it were located near Bond Street. You can see the recent Chinese mural made by high school students next to Children's Park near the post office.

You can visit the garden. It's free. If you can, donate online at astoriachineseheritage.org (there are also videos about Astoria's Chinese history to watch). You can also visit the Clatsop County Historical Society's new exhibit, "Blocked Out: Race and Place in the Making of Modern Astoria," which curator Chelsea Vaughn, who was also part of the panel, has helped organize.

You can stay engaged with the park by telling Astoria city councilors what should go in the pit and parking area next to it. Maybe even suggest cultural events to have at the park.

As Ho puts it best: "A square is only a square if we don't put in some heart and soul into how to make it beyond just a place. And if we look deeper, there are many stories, many different materials, many colors, many textures, and they're all different. All in the same place. Just like any community. And if we are able to say a community is only rich and wealthy if we embrace everybody's differences, I think we're going to have a great place to celebrate."

Jonathan Williams is the associate editor of *The Astorian*.

AS SUENN HO PUTS IT BEST: 'A SQUARE IS ONLY A SQUARE IF WE DON'T PUT IN SOME HEART AND SOUL INTO HOW TO MAKE IT BEYOND JUST A PLACE. AND IF WE LOOK DEEPER, THERE ARE MANY STORIES, MANY DIFFERENT MATERIALS, MANY COLORS, MANY TEXTURES, AND THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT. ALL IN THE SAME PLACE. JUST LIKE ANY COMMUNITY. AND IF WE ARE ABLE TO SAY A COMMUNITY IS ONLY RICH AND WEALTHY IF WE EMBRACE EVERYBODY'S DIFFERENCES, I THINK WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A GREAT PLACE TO CELEBRATE.'

WRITER'S NOTEBOOK

A light on our democracy

Imagine this page was blank except for one question: "What if there were no local reporters?" That was the front-page question posed by our friends at Pamplin Media last week.

It's a good question and regardless of how you get local news — by watching TV, listening to local radio or reading a story in the newspaper or on a news organization's website — it's not hyperbole to say communities suffer when there is no local news coverage or when independently owned media companies are gobbled up by hedge funds that gut newsrooms.

And it's a timely question because there is a bipartisan provision in the federal budget reconciliation bill working its way through Congress that will give media companies a temporary payroll tax credit to hire and retain journalists. Oregon's U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden chairs the Senate Finance Committee that will have a great deal of say on whether this provision makes it through to the finish line.

Wyden is a co-sponsor of the bill written by U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash. Being the son of a prominent journalist, he is a longtime champion of a free press. In a recent interview with the *Seattle Times*, Wyden responded to a question about the potential for some to dislike government helping the press. He said, "This is not the government putting its hand on certain types of speech. This is about generally empowering local journalism in a big way. By the way, there are plenty of local journalism outlets that span across the political spectrum, left, right, center, you name it."

On the House side, the bill was co-authored by U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., and U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, D-Ariz., and is strongly supported by two key Oregon representatives — U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio and U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer.

For anyone who follows the challenges of media companies and the reality of growing news deserts around the country, this temporary tax credit known as the Local Journalism Sustainability Act is a welcome relief that will directly aid news gathering organizations, including an estimated 113 newsrooms in Oregon. It's the only piece — some would say the most important piece — left of an original three-part proposal intended to stabilize and reform an industry upended by the deadly trio of Google, Facebook and the coronavirus pandemic.

The tax credit sunsets in five years, giving media companies a reasonable time frame to build a sustainable business model that supports local journalism in the internet age. It also sends a message to young people that journalism is a career worth pursuing where there will be jobs available with those companies that make the successful transition.

Numerous studies show what happens in communities where there's no professionally trained journalists asking questions and accurately reporting on what is happening at a local level: government waste and potential for corruption by public officials increases, voter turnout drops and communities find it harder to solve their own problems. News deserts create democracy deserts, especially in rural communities.

If you are reading this and want to help,



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Communities suffer when there is no local news coverage.

email our Oregon congressional delegation and let them know you support keeping the Local Journalism Sustainability Act temporary tax credit in the budget reconciliation package.

U.S. Senate

• U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden ron_wyden@wyden.senate.gov
• U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley senator@merkley.senate.gov

U.S. House of Representatives

• U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (District 1) congresswomanbonamici@mail.house.gov

• U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (District 2) cliff.bentz@mail.house.gov

• U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (District 3) earl.blumenauer@mail.house.gov

• U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio (District 4) peter.defazio@mail.house.gov

• U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader (District 5) kurt.schrader@mail.house.gov

Heidi Wright is chief operating officer for EO Media Group and the publisher of *The Bulletin in Bend*. She serves as treasurer for America's Newspapers, an industry group representing more than 1,600 newspapers across the country.