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OPINION

Standing Up for Our Online Rights

FCC should protect net neutrality

BY JENN TOPPER



The Internet is the world's largest shopping mall, library, video store, post office and town square. When you turn on your computer, you're in the driver's seat, choosing what you want to read, watch, and hear.

We owe everything we love about the Web to net neutrality, the principle that the Internet is an open platform and service providers like AT&T, Comcast, and Time Warner can't dictate where you go and what you do online.

Without net neutrality, the Web would look a lot like cable, with the

most popular content available only on certain tiers or with certain providers. (Imagine AT&T as the exclusive home of Netflix and Comcast as the sole source of YouTube.)

In 2010, the Federal Communications Commission tried to establish concrete rules to protect net neutrality. But the agency ended up caving to pressure from the biggest phone and cable companies and left huge loopholes standing in the way of a truly open Internet.

And now Verizon is in court challenging those rules—and the FCC's authority to draft and enforce them to protect consumers and promote competition. That's because under the Bush administration, the FCC decided to give away much of its

authority to oversee our broadband networks. The current FCC could fix the problem by reclaiming this authority, but it hasn't yet.

If the FCC loses the case and fails to take the necessary action to re-

Internet.

Indeed, the second it looks like the FCC is going to be defeated, you can expect all the telecoms and ISPs to join hands and declare they've reached an agreement to self-regu-

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verse course, the agency will be toothless as the biggest Internet providers run amok and destroy everything we love about the

late.

If this happens, they'll win and we'll lose. Online privacy will be a thing of the past. (If you thought it

already was, believe me, things could get worse.) The ISPs will try to read all of your content so they can sell you to advertisers. New "troll tolls" will force content creators and others to pay discriminatory fees just to reach people online—and will require the rest of us to pony up for "premium" content.

Does that sound Orwellian? That's because it is. But this is no far-fetched scenario.

It's time for us to stand up and fight for our online rights. We need to tell the FCC to stop messing around. It's time for the agency to fix its past mistakes—and establish strong net neutrality protections that are 100 percent loophole-free.

Jenn Topper is the media manager at Free Press, an organization fighting for your rights to connect and communicate.

Communities Different from Our Own

Embracing diversity in our citizenship

BY ELIZABETH LEUNG

123 years ago this week, on Dec. 29, 1890, up to 300 Lakota men, women and children died in what has become known as the Wounded Knee Massacre.

It was the "unforgettable story of the last major military operation by the U.S. in its long battle to subdue the native population of North America," the website of the Wounded Knee Museum says.

This last significant engagement between Indians and soldiers on the North American Continent ended "nearly four centuries of warfare between westward-bound Americans and the indigenous peoples."

The above quotes refer to the centuries of domination and pat-



terns of oppression and its continuing impact on the Indigenous peoples which theological rationale has been based on the doctrine of discovery.

The doctrine originates from various church documents in mid-1400s Europe to justify the right to claim the indigenous lands, territories, and resources on behalf of Christendom, and to subjugate indigenous peoples around the world. It is a concept of public international law expounded by the United States Supreme Court in a series of decisions, and continually to be cited even today.

For those that descend from the westward-bound American, some see that they have no responsibility to the current plight of Native American communities, because they are not the original oppressors.

Still, some descendants acknowledge that they do benefit from the social systems that were built on the foundation of land theft from and subjugation of indigenous peoples

by their ancestor-settlers.

I have always wondered how all these views would be made relevant to the 21st century immigrant/citizen, who as minority settlers can both benefit from and be marginalized by the same established structures.

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The U.S. have always prided ourselves as being a nation of immigrants, though at the beginning our immigration policy only preferred those from western Europe, and only free white males were considered as

fit for citizenship. Nowadays, more than 600,000 immigrants become naturalized as U.S. citizen every year. One of the requirements for naturalization is to pass a civics test on U.S. history and government. Of course, citizenship isn't about passing a

civics test, as a similarly titled CNN op-ed by Peter Levine pointed out; "[f]or immigrants and native-born Americans alike, civic education should be about ... promoting high and diverse civic achievement."

According to Citizenship: A Very Short Introduction by Richard Bellamy (2008), there are two views of citizenship developed in western democracies: political and legal.

In voting, for example, one exercises his or her political citizenship. And in the possession of the right to the rights, one lays claim to his or her legal citizenship.

I would suggest, perhaps, in daily lives we can have an intercultural view of citizenship.

It is not about civic education in the abstract, but a practice of engaging our co-citizens outside of the election cycle and the immediate present. It involves a life-long practice of learning about our neighbor-citizen, of histories and concerns of the communities different from our own: race/ethnicities, economics, abilities, sexualities, and legal status.

Elizabeth Leung is minister for racial justice for Justice and Witness Ministries in the United Church of Christ.

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CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

news@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

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