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OPINION

Rent Control, Gun Control and Impeachment

What would Nelson Mandela do?

BY LEW CHURCH

The excellent editorial cartoon and commentary about gun control (Preventing Gun Deaths and Protecting Gun Rights, Portland Observer, Nov. 15 issue) highlights the need to not lose heart when advocating for what the mainstream media tends to characterize as “impossible” goals.

At Portland State, our activist coalition has been discussing strategy and tactics with this in mind for three issues: Rent control, gun control and impeachment. We believe each of these is vital, and more importantly, achievable sooner, not later.

The Italian Marxist organizer Antonio Gramsci once said, “The challenge for modernity is to live life without illusions and without becoming disillusioned.” In terms of political issues in which the powers that be insist “will never change,” we at PSU have found it useful to ask, what would Nelson Mandela do?

I was one of the organizers of five pickets in Portland in support of the American Friends Service Committee’s anti-apartheid Coke boycott, before the white minority, racist government was overthrown in Pretoria. Some of us at PSU (now elders) believed that when the suffragette movement, and when the anti-slavery movement initially got started, the powers that be (usually white

male capitalists and their media brethren) would insist in the UK, for example, that to abolish slavery would be to destroy the jobs of thousands of UK workers, dependent on the slave trade for their industrial output and paychecks.

Likewise, suffragettes and anti-apartheid activists later on were

“Rent raisin’” Rod is now being challenged by two Democrats in the May Primary.

Portland Gray Panthers, based at PSU, is happy to endorse Kayse Jama of Unite Oregon to replace Monroe. The incumbent would be wise to follow the example set by Portland City Council member (and millionaire) Dan

Do we think housing and public safety (freedom from gun violence) are important enough issues to launch grassroots, mass movements, like the anti-apartheid, anti-slavery and pro-suffrage movements? Does the success of those decades-long organizing movements give hope (rather than despair?) to those of

ter she won the popular vote by almost 3,000,000 votes. Trump brags about grabbing women by their privates, trashes Gold Star families and John McCain, despises Black Lives Matter and Colin Kaepernick, and says there are “good Nazis” and good protesters on both sides of the racist marches at Charlottesville.

Trump says Judge Roy Moore is a GOP stalwart, but Senator Franken is sketchy. Trump also adds that NFL players who protest racism “should be fired.” Trump’s right wing practices mirror his TV celebrity, game show rhetoric.

What would rent control, gun control and impeachment look like? With enough grassroots support, these things are totally possible. After 27 years in jail in South Africa to secure voting rights for black folks, and then to become that country’s first black president -- many of us believe that Nelson Mandela would say if you organize long enough, and with strategy, tactics and a timeline -- you can win.

Rent control can be legal in Oregon, not just New York City or San Francisco or Berlin. Gun control can be legal in the world’s “best democracy.” And, we can eject a fascist, racist, sexist profiteer from what belongs to the people, in a democracy, our White House in Washington, D.C.

Lew Church is coordinator of Portland Gray Panthers and founding publisher and editor of two Portland State activist papers, the PSU Rearguard and PSU Agitator.

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told by those in power that giving the vote to women and black folk would destroy the smarter, more accomplished white male power structure that creates wealth for lesser folks.

Today, when it comes to the issues of rent control, gun control and impeaching Trump -- activists hear doomsday scenarios from those with something to lose by such changes.

In Oregon, rent control was blocked in Salem earlier this year by a blue dog Democrat and landlord state senator, Rod Monroe.

Saltzman -- by simply announcing he is retiring, Let Jama go to work for tenants, for immigrants, for people of color, for workers and the poor in our state capital.

In terms of gun control, I was able to write a funded grant (generously supported by the northwest’s McKenzie River Gathering) for a pro-gun control conference at PSU. I believe that Australia and European countries have acted to stop gun violence. As we know, the NRA, the Republicans and Trump -- are refusing to do so.

us who believe that rent control and gun control alike are sorely needed today?

But what about impeaching the current occupant of our White House? Are the offenses against our country and the world tantamount to ‘high crimes and misdemeanors’? Moreover, like rent control in Oregon and gun control in Estados Unidos -- is impeachment a ‘feasible’ and desirable goal? We believe it is.

Collusion with Russia is treason. Trump still wants to “lock” Hillary up, at his rallies a year af-

Invest in Treatment, Mental Health and Better Medicine

The pain behind opioid abuse

BY JILL RICHARDSON

Donald Trump recently declared the opioid epidemic a national public health emergency. At first I thought, is this the first time I approve of something Trump has done?

Alas, no. And here’s why: Nine years ago, I lost my brother to a heroin overdose.

My brother and I each grew up suffering trauma, and it profoundly affected each of our lives. For my brother’s part, he dealt with his unbearable pain by using drugs. He died before he could get help.



In my case, I shut down, lost my imagination, cut off my ability to feel both emotions and physical sensations, and lost my ability to have close intimate relationships with others, whether platonic or romantic. I’ve suffered daily migraines for 23 years now.

I went to doctor after doctor for my migraines, tried 20 different prescription drugs, mental health counseling, Botox injections, and more.

There are just two drugs that help my migraines: opioids and medical marijuana.

Until recently, my only option was the opioids, which I get legally from a doctor’s prescription. This is how many people get addicted.

My tolerance to opioids grows quickly. I try to use them less than once a month in order to avoid needing higher doses to quell the pain. At most I use them once a week, but even then, I start needing higher doses quickly just to make the pain stop.

Since I’m in pain every day, I can see how someone could get hooked. If I had popped a pill every time I had a migraine instead of rationing out my meds, I could’ve been one of the unlucky ones too.

Fortunately, I’ve gotten medical marijuana in the last few months, and it’s changed my life. I use it legally and responsibly. I don’t drive or work while using it. Now I can get pain relief as needed without worrying about form-

ing a life-ending addiction.

My brother used marijuana too, but he lacked the option to use it legally. Instead, he was arrested for it, which didn’t improve things for him.

In my decades of going to primary care doctors, neurologists, and even psychologists, nobody noticed my trauma. My brother suffered on his own too.

If we want to get serious about the opioid epidemic, we need to increase the availability of mental health help in a big way. We should have more counselors in schools, and we should train teachers to be more sensitive to and aware of children suffering from trauma, and doctors to be more aware of it in patients.

Importantly, we should also de-

criminalize marijuana throughout the nation and get serious about medical research on the drug. When the alternative for many is opioids, there’s simply no excuse to maintain the prohibition on pot.

Meanwhile, we must keep funding Medicaid, so that the most vulnerable Americans have access to medical care too — including addiction treatment, which barely one in 10 addicts gets.

But what does Trump say? Build his wall.

Trump’s right about the problem, but dead wrong about the solution.

OtherWords columnist Jill Richardson is the author of *Recipe for America: Why Our Food System Is Broken and What We Can Do to Fix It*.