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OUR VIEW

Minority report

The United States has come a long way when it comes to respecting minorities.

In some respects, we were pretty good right off the bat. This country was created by people who practiced minority religions in places where they were not treated kindly. They wrote a beautiful piece of prose about how "all men are created equal" and are "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights."

But in other respects, we got off to a pretty terrible start. Europeans slaughtered and abused Native Americans. Bought and enslaved Africans. Oppressed and bullied Mormons, the Irish, homosexuals, the Chinese, women. This was a country that was owned and dominated by straight, white, Christian men — all of whom were equal, while the rest were a couple of cuts below.

In the 239 years since, we've taken steps toward greater equality.

Those changes have come slowly and painfully. There was a Civil War. A universal suffrage movement. Civil rights marches. A Stonewall riot.

Through the blood and sweat and tears that brought cultural acceptance, and through the clunky machinations of the American legal system and legislatures, minorities have staked greater claims to equality than ever before. That initial document that created our country and the Constitution that came later provided the legal bedrock for the expansion of these rights.

For minorities, this is a good sign. But some straight, white, Christian men understandably yearn for their days of domination and the years in which they did not have to put up with things they disagreed with. Heck, just read recent letters to the editors in this newspaper for proof of such feelings.

Some consider the country's affirmation of gay rights as an infringement on their own right to treat another group as less than equal. Some consider a state's decision to remove the Confederate flag from a state capital as an infringement on their own right to fly demeaning and derogatory symbols on government grounds. Some consider the ruling that an Oregon baker cannot refuse to bake a cake for a gay wedding as an infringement against a business owner's ability to refuse service based on their religious beliefs.

These are illogical reactions. Straight people can still get married and the Catholic church can still refuse to recognize gay marriage. Confederate flags can still wave in your own back yard, on your truck or in your business. You cannot be denied service because you are a Christian or a Hindu or an American Indian. The key, then is to think hard about personal rights and liberty. By baking a cake for a gay wedding, you are defending your right to have a cake made touting Jesus as savior of our souls.

The transition to tolerance is hard, but empathy is key.

Recently, Greg Barreto went to Salem as a Republican in a Democrat-dominated world. His experience is enlightening.

> By baking a cake for a gay wedding, you are defending your right to have a cake made touting Jesus as savior of our souls.

For the first time in his life, Barreto — a straight, white, Christian father and business owner — was a minority. He expressed his frustrations about the feeling Tuesday in an engaging post-session recap with the *East Oregonian* editorial board. He described being the victim of Democrat politicking that kept his wolf bill from the House floor as though someone jammed "a screwdriver in my ribs."

He chased down who he thought was responsible for the shenanigans.

"I went to his office I lost it with him," Barreto admitted.

He was frustrated. Clearly, Greg Barreto feels he has ideas that would benefit Oregon and it's quite possible he's right about many of them. But in Salem he is voiceless and powerless, and damned if that doesn't make you question why you continue to fight.

"I asked myself: 'Am I doing a crummy job? What am I doing here? Is this a good use of my time?'" he said.

That is a new feeling for some, but it is a feeling that many others have felt for as long as they can remember.

Those people have important fights still to come over affirmative action, fair housing, Title IX, transgender issues, updated nondiscrimination ordinances and protected classes. These fights will come often and they are a sign of societal progress, not degradation.

An individual is the smallest minority and in that each of us is equal, endowed with certain unalienable rights. The more often we respect the rights of others, the less often we find our own are under attack.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

LETTERS POLICY

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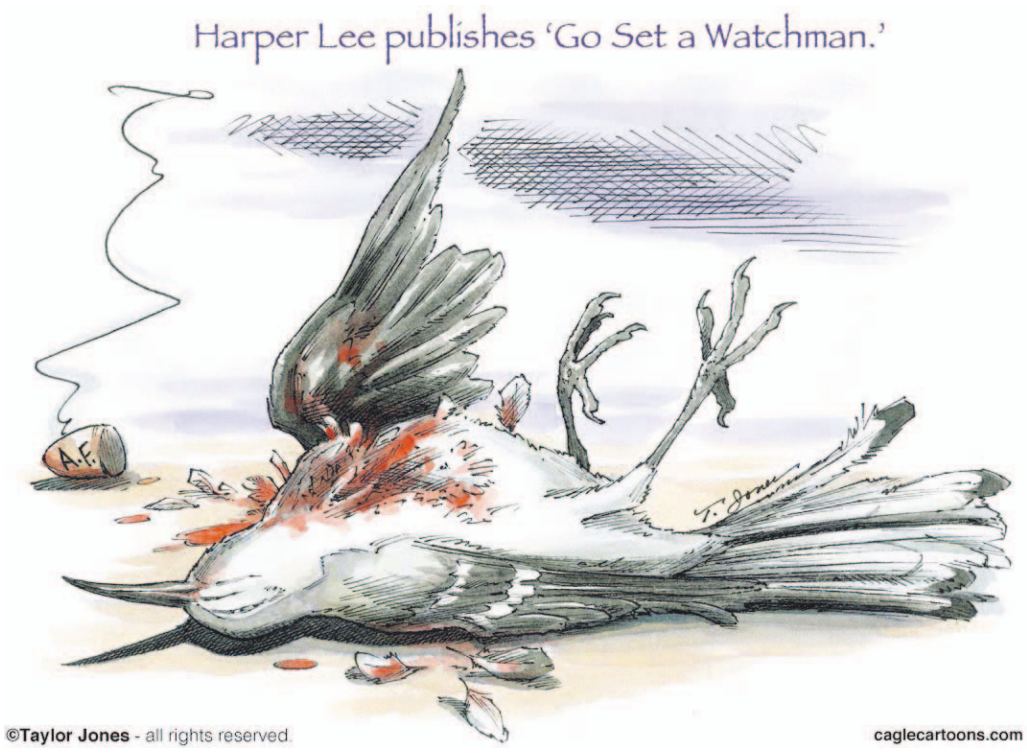

OTHER VIEWS

The new old liberalism

DAVID BROOKS
Comment

Well, Hillary Clinton hasn't gone crazy. At a time when some in her party are drifting toward Bernie Sanders/Occupy Wall Street-style rhetoric, Clinton delivered her first major economic address of the campaign. It was solidly liberal — very solidly — but in tone and substance it was well within the general election mainstream. If any Republicans were hoping that Clinton would make herself unelectable by wandering into the class warfare fever swamps, they can forget about it.

The main narrative of the Sanders camp is that the economic game is rigged against ordinary people. The top 1 percent controls the fundamental economic conditions. Major transformation is required. There's not much individuals can do given the structure of economic power.

Clinton did some Wall Street bashing in this speech, but it was either meaningless, bland (punish criminals) or broadly sensible (end the carried interest deduction). The main underlying assumption behind her speech was that individuals can rise and succeed if they are given the right helping hands from government.

> Hillary Clinton seems to have no awareness that many of the programs she endorsed have been tried and did not work.

This speech revealed a woman who does not have her heart in class conflict. The most passionate parts of her speech involved classic liberal efforts to give people a boost: early childhood education, family and medical leave, tax credits for job training, affordable child care programs.

She carefully avoided the more radical policy ideas embraced by the left, such as a blanket tax on the rich. She dodged the trade issue. She endorsed a minimum wage hike but didn't commit, as many progressive do, to a $15-an-hour rate.

This speech was more Children's Defense Fund than Thomas Piketty. It was the sort of speech you give if you spend more time listening to voters, especially female ones, than studying the quintiles in the income distribution charts.

Stylistically, Clinton still sounds as if she is talking down to her audiences. But there was a wonky authenticity to this speech, which would not have been there if she had tried to sound like a pitchfork marauder. She has echoes of Hubert Humphrey or George McGovern in her voice, or a more liberal Michael Dukakis.

She's way to the left of where her husband was and to the left of where Barack Obama was in 2008 or 2012. But she's responded to the reality of growing inequality with a revived paleoliberalism, not with the edgier, angry economic policy you find among Bernie Sanders and the cutting-edge left. She is best viewed, as the progressive commentator Matt Yglesias put it in a Vox essay, as a new paleoliberal.

This neopaleoliberalism is built less on going after Wall Street and the rich and more on a tremendous faith in government to manage the economy more intelligently than the private sector. It's less a negative assault on the elites and more an optimistic faith in the power of planning. The private sector is not evil or power hungry, just kind of dumb.

New Democrats like her husband believed in using market mechanisms to increase economic security. As a neopaleoliberal, Hillary Clinton used her kickoff economic address to embrace the idea that government can write rules to govern how much companies pay their workers. Government can direct investors toward more sensible long-term investments. Government can refashion the way companies distribute equity in their companies. Government can determine how companies should structure and manage themselves. "We'll ensure that no firm is too complex to manage and oversee," Clinton declared. One pictures squads of Federal Simplicity Enforcers roaming through the corridors of Midtown Manhattan telling CEOs when their outfits are too mind-boggling.

In each case, in this view, government is more competent at steering companies toward their own best interests than the companies are themselves. Clinton's constant refrain in this speech was that these federal interventions would increase growth and productivity, not limit them in the name of fairness.

Personally I find this faith epistemologically naive. Clinton seems to have no awareness that many of the programs she endorsed have been tried and did not work. The Obama administration spent mightily on green energy jobs programs and they did not work to significantly increase employment. Empowerment zones, which she endorsed, have mostly failed to help low-income neighborhoods. Clinton displayed no awareness that most federal requirements involve difficult trade-offs. According to the Congressional Budget Office, raising the minimum wage to even $10.10 an hour would increase pay for millions of workers, but would cost roughly 500,000 jobs.

Clinton's unchastened faith in the power of government planning is not shared by most voters. And she has no plausible chance of getting any of this through a divided Congress. But this agenda does pull off a neat trick. It will excite the progressive base without automatically alienating the rest of the country. Substantively she's offered at least a coherent response to today's economic conditions. Politically, she's cleared the first political hurdle in this campaign.

■

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

The religious should not be forced to accept gay marriage

The Supreme Court 5-4 decision redefining marriage in all 50 states will have many serious, even unintended consequences for the rule of law, self-governance and religious freedom.

Justice Anthony Kennedy in writing the majority opinion states, "those who adhere to religious doctrines may continue to advocate with the utmost conviction that, by divine precepts, same-sex marriage should be condoned."

He, like many of today's jurisprudence, is based on the pretension that the role of judges is not to resolve cases and controversies in the law, but to apply their own reasoned judgment. The Supreme Court is not Congress, even if they want to be.

Future collisions of same-sex marriages could have been minimized had the court respected the Constitution and had Congress debate the issues and pass a commonsense bill.

In response, Senator Mike Lee (R-Idaho) and Representative Paul Labrador (R-Idaho) have introduced the First Amendment Defense Act that would prevent any agency from denying a federal exemption, grant, contract, accreditation, or certification to an individual or institution for acting on their religious belief that marriage is a union between one man and a woman.

This is a commonsense bill that merely restates what Justice Kennedy's majority said was OK. Congressman Walden and our two senators should protect religious liberty and cosponsor the First Amendment Defense Act.

Donald Crawford
Klamath Falls

Wolf pack deserves a higher grade than a delisting

When I returned from hunting, Mrs. W. advised me that an article in the *East Oregonian* said that our packs had been D-listed. Please advise your readers that our packs have been and will continue to head the A-list. We are the alpha predators and will control all wild and domestic animals in Oregon.

Should any of your readers doubt this, please have them meet me on Double Woof Ridge at 4 a.m.

A. Wolf, packmaster and corresponding secretary (as told to Mike Mehren, the wolf listener, Hermiston)