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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat and word of encouragement to anyone considering seeking a seat on a city council or other committee this spring.

It's a difficult, time-intensive, pittance-paying job, and we can understand why residents are reticent. But this sort of sacrifice is necessary to keep things running around here.

There's no sugarcoating the job: It takes hard work, and it comes with responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. That's why having contested elections are so important. They help weed out those who admirably though wearily step forward without intentions of dedicating themselves fully to the position.

A term on city council or a committee is a hard burden to bear, but a successful community requires it. We hope to see some candidates apply before the March 8 deadline to get on the ballot.

The city of Pendleton has plenty of needs. Some economic life up at the airport tops the list, followed by overdue road and infrastructure repairs and more medium-income housing. There's also a dilapidated fire station to think about, a shrinking (and aging) population and some big holes to fill around town — Albertson's, PGG and the old St. Anthony Hospital come immediately to mind.

But the council is insistent that it's a messaging problem ultimately holding the city back, and is in favor of adding a staffer who doesn't directly solve any of the aforementioned problems, but instead finds a way to explain those problems to the public in a way that endears. And a way that makes tax and fee increases sound more palatable.

Well, a kick in the pants to that.

There is great value in clear communication, but it shouldn't be such a foreign concept to require a whole paid position in a city of Pendleton's size.

We make our editorial space available to any elected or appointed member of the city government, or anyone with something coherent to say, for that matter. Several, including City Manager Robb Corbett, City Councilor Al Plute and Economic Development Director Steve Chrisman have taken us up on the offer and have seen both the benefit and difficulty of communicating with the public through our pages and website. They're the same issues we face — some people hear you and agree, some hear and disagree, and some don't pay attention at all.

That's the case no matter what technology you use, and certainly there are ways the council could better incorporate the newest ones.

But chipping off another piece of the dwindling budget to pay for this position is a bad move that ultimately detracts from what the city's mission should be.

A tip of the backwards ballcap to The Kid, soon to be the newest member of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

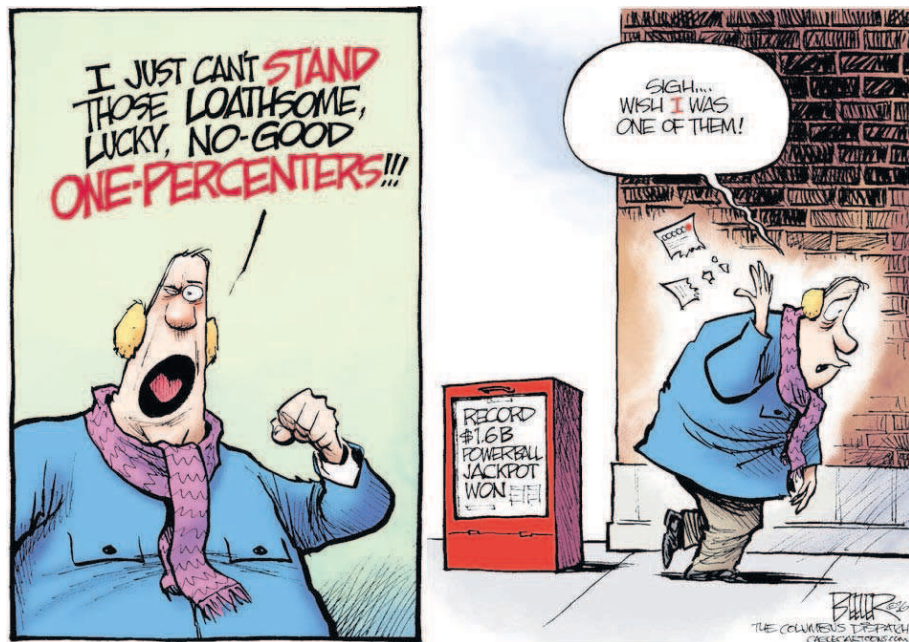
Fans of baseball in the Pacific Northwest owe Ken Griffey Jr. a debt of gratitude for reviving the Seattle Mariners franchise on the brink of collapse into one of the most exciting franchises of the late 1990s. Sure, the Yankees were the team that ended up dominating the decade (four rings in five years), but thanks to Griffey's Web Gem prowess in the outfield, picturesque swing and perpetual smile, the M's found an identity that kept the team in town.

There aren't very many players like Griffey, and baseball writers know it — 437 of the 440 Hall of Fame voters gave him the nod, the best percentage ever. It helps that even though his career stuttered in its second half due to injury, he was never implicated

with steroid or HGH use, while his contemporaries were dragged before the commissioner and Congress denying breaking the rules of the game, many to be found guilty anyway.

But best of all, Griffey will be the first to wear the Mariner logo on his Hall of Fame bust, an important milestone for a team entering its fourth decade.

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

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

A wife's wrenching decision

SITTWE, Myanmar — How much should you sacrifice to save your husband's life?

And how much hardship do you inflict on your son to rescue your husband?

Those are the questions Jano Begum faced. Jano, 22, and her husband, Robi Alom, 30, are among the more than 1 million Muslims who belong to the Rohingya minority in Myanmar, subjected to an ethnic cleansing that a Yale study suggests may amount to genocide.

I've written several times over the years about the brutalization of the Rohingya, but I know that for some readers it seems obscure and remote. Why worry about a distant people when there are so many crises in our own backyard? But put yourself in Jano's situation, as she sits in a hut in a concentration camp here, and think how far you would go to save your spouse.

Jano, Robi and other Rohingya have been confined since 2012 to concentration camps or isolated villages, stripped of citizenship and denied education, jobs and adequate food and health care. The conditions are calculated to induce despair. Sure enough, Robi proposed to his family that he join the wave of Rohingya boat people fleeing to Malaysia.

"I wouldn't let him go," Jano recalled. "We were arguing. He said, 'Even if I die in the ocean, it's better than being here.'"

Then one evening in October 2014 Robi disappeared. A friend passed a message to Jano: He had hopped on a human trafficker's boat. He hadn't dared to say goodbye for fear that Jano would stop him.

Jano was wounded and angry, but she also understood. "Here we live in something like a prison," she said. "No jobs. No nothing. So that's why he left."

The Rohingya feel abandoned. The U.N. system, with the exception of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has downplayed the problem. Western embassies and governments have been too complacent. And Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize winner whose party just won elections in Myanmar, has been silent.

In the same camp where I spoke to Jano I also met Arafa Begum, a 27-year-old widow who arranged with human traffickers last year to travel with her five children on a different ship to Malaysia. Arafa knew that she was at risk of being sold to a brothel, along with her daughters. But, not knowing how her children could survive if she stayed in Myanmar, she boarded a human trafficker's ship in July.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

"There was almost no food or water," she remembered — and conditions were hellish in the hold.

The ship sailed for 50 days, trying to sneak past the Thai navy, but finally gave up. Arafa and her children are back in the concentration camp, but she's thinking of trying again.

As for Robi, 2 1/2 months after he disappeared, Jano received a message from a human trafficker in Thailand. He was holding her husband, and he demanded \$1,200 for her husband's

life. Jano sold belongings, borrowed from relatives and pawned her food ration card, managing to raise \$500 and transfer it to the traffickers' bank account. In phone calls, the traffickers pressed for more money. Sometimes they put Robi on the line and beat him with sticks, so the family could hear his screams.

But Jano told them she had nothing left. She didn't quite tell me so, but she hinted that perhaps she could have raised a little bit more but feared that their 5-year-old son, Muhammad — already hungry — would starve. I got the sense that she also thought the traffickers would capitulate and eventually release Robi.

If that's what she thought, she miscalculated. She received a final call from the traffickers: Robi had died in the jungle.

"I didn't raise the money, so they killed him," Jano told me. After a long, aching pause, she added: "I blame myself. I didn't save my husband."

It's not clear what happened. Maybe the traffickers beat Robi to death or killed him to sell his kidneys. Perhaps he died of malaria. Or perhaps they sold him to a Thai fishing boat on which he is enslaved.

Jano hasn't told Muhammad that his father may be dead. The boy is losing weight, from either worry or malnutrition. The family owes \$200 to get back its ration card, so food is scarcer than ever. Jano washes clothes for neighbors, earning 20 cents a day to eke out an existence. (A human rights group called Fortify Rights is trying to help her.) Multiply Jano's tragedy by a million and you get the tapestry of the Rohingya suffering today. The horror arises not just from the savagery of human traffickers but also from a government's systematic effort to destroy a particular ethnic group, one met by global indifference.

Genocide? I don't know. A stain on our collective humanity? Absolutely.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill, Oregon.

YOUR VIEWS

Livestream militant infighting, earn money for Oregon

I haven't read the papers and may not have a good understanding of this subject, so please forgive me if I make any outlandish preposterous proposals or misguided assumptions to the following: I was driving by the Umatilla Army Depot Monday morning and had a thought that multiplied into several thoughts on my trip to the Tri-Cities this day. I have a plan.

What if The Constitutional Patriots of Bundy (I don't know what they call themselves, sorry if I offend) were granted safe passage to the Umatilla Army Depot and given this government albatross to occupy? There are about 1,100 places to hole up, if I'm not mistaken, and name one person who could honestly say that it wouldn't be fun to strap an AR over one's shoulder and ride a four-wheeler over those igloos.

Then, we're going to build a wall, people, and they're going to pay for it. We are also going to bring Columbia River water up for irrigation and graze as many cows as these cowboys want to range. They are going to pay for this too.

Here's how: At least four more patriots of the constitution groups will be invited to join the Bundy boys and fellow occupiers. Three hundred and sixty-degree web cams are going to be strategically placed on many, many igloos. In about three weeks there is going to be a fallout among these patriot groups. This is simple as just add water, folks, trust me. The good people of Oregon are then going to sell advertising on a membership-only website for people across the globe to catch up on what's happening out on the "Range."

This is going to create jobs, fellow

Oregonians. While the wall is going up there will be hazard pay and if this doesn't create living wage jobs, my friends, I'll eat my hat!

I'm not responsible and disclaim any responsibility if this idea is carried forward by anyone at any time. Please do consider me for some of the royalties from the website, though.

Denny Henshaw
Pendleton

Federal law is clear and Bundys are on wrong side of it

In regards to the Bundys, the law is clear. Federal lands belong to all of us.

I don't own land. There is such a thing as land wealth. These land-rich people want to steal from me. The only land I have a claim over is land that belongs to all of us.

These out-of-state thugs violated land that belongs to all Americans. When the federal government manages land, that means it belongs to the people. These armed thugs decided to invade federal lands. They've vandalized fence line. They've intimidated federal employees.

This no longer has anything to do with the Hammonds. It's long past that. Now there is a gang of thugs terrorizing us Oregonians. They need to be arrested and face jail time for what they've done.

If they are unable to do that, then it's clear: They just want to steal public lands from the rest of us.

If they weren't white, we'd have killed them by now. We should not let them leave Oregon without facing a trial for the crimes they've committed on our soil.

Josh Pearce
Pendleton