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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the Umatilla County online jail roster, which has frequently contained egregious errors.

For instance — take Bryan Corona, the man who has been in jail for more than a week charged with attempted murder. Yet online, the charge still reads aggravated murder. There's a big difference there — namely a dead body.

The same mistake was made this weekend when Victor Contreras was booked under a charge of murder, which was later clarified as attempted murder. Not by the jail website, mind you, but by the FBI.

We're sure a defense attorney would look to exploit such a mistake made by law enforcement. If a newspaper made that kind of mistake and took no steps to correct it, we'd be an easy mark for a libel suit. We'd certainly lose our credibility, too.

It's not good for county departments to lose that credibility, either. Citizens should be able to depend on the fact that the information provided to them by authorities is accurate.

Technology can be wonderful. Online mug shots and up-to-date information about who is in custody is of real value. But if basic errors continue to be made, and continue to remain uncorrected, it reflects poorly on the department.

A tip of the hat to Nelson Summerfield, a Pendleton resident and former East Oregonian employee, who received some national attention this week from the website Vice.

Summerfield, 22, has been shooting full-length remakes of his favorite movies with hand-drawn paper models and his own voice, recorded by himself on a camcorder. And he's been doing it for years, completing more than 20 recreations of feature films. We featured Summerfield a few years back as he was honing his craft.

Fans of the "The Lord of the Rings," "Shawshank Redemption" or "Austin Powers"? It's worth watching Nelson's painstakingly-recreated masterpieces. And Nelson's work is worthy of the spotlight that national exposure can bring.

You can find the story online at Vice, or better yet, check out his work on YouTube by searching Nelson Summerfield.

If you're considering watching "Batman vs. Superman" this weekend, it might be worth the wait for Summerfield's recreation.

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.

OTHER VIEWS

Obama's home run in Cuba

The Miami Herald

Hours before taking in an exhibition baseball game in Havana between a Cuban team and the Tampa Bay Rays on Tuesday, President Obama hit a home run of his own with a soaring address to the Cuban people.

"I have come to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas," the president declared in an address that hit all the right notes. "A policy of isolation designed for the Cold War made little sense in the 21st century."

His speech contained the clearest rationale the president has yet offered for his new policy. And he brought it home by reciting a civic credo that holds special meaning for Cubans who have been denied liberty for more than half a century.

"I believe citizens should be free to speak their mind without fear — to organize, and to criticize their government, and to protest peacefully, and that the rule of law should not include arbitrary detentions of people who exercise those rights. I believe that every person should have the freedom to practice their faith peacefully and publicly. And, yes, I believe voters should be able to choose their governments in free and democratic elections."

These are words that the Cuban people needed to hear. It must have induced heartburn in Raúl Castro, sitting only a few feet away, to hear an American president standing on a privileged stage in Havana declare that "human rights are universal" and that democracy is the way to solve the problems of society.

Those words would be deemed seditious if said aloud by the average Cuban. Some of those political prisoners that Cuba doesn't have — if one were to believe its president — were locked up

for saying much the same.

The assault on the dissidents known as the Ladies in White on Sunday was a stark reminder that the old order still prevails. Castro and his aging hierarchy still call the shots, and they're prepared to maintain their grip on power by whatever means necessary.

No American policy in half a century has managed to change the authoritarian nature of the Cuban regime, nor is Mr. Obama's diplomatic initiative likely to have an overnight impact. But it has already changed the discourse between Cuba and the United States.

The core of Mr. Obama's message was that if Cubans control their destiny, their future can be better than their past. Change comes slowly in Cuba and — as the Ladies in White can attest — painfully. But it begins by believing in the possibility and the dispelling the Castros' myth that the United States is the enemy of the Cuban people.

Part of that change would involve bringing Cubans and Cuban Americans together in a common effort to improve the place both call home. "In the United States, we have a clear monument to what the Cuban people can build: It's called Miami," said Mr. Obama.

His visit was designed to end a half-century of mutual antagonism. The new policy, as we said when it was announced in 2014, remains a gamble. It didn't work when Mr. Obama tried to reset relations with Islam by declaring friendship with a speech in Cairo in his first term.

But it can be different in Cuba because even a half-century of estrangement has not wiped out the ties of commerce, joint history and common interest that date back well over a century.

Cuba and the United States have been a presence in each other's history since long before Fidel Castro burst onto the scene, and they will be again.

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.



"I'M A U.S. SENATOR AND I ENDORSED TED CRUZ FOR PRESIDENT!"

OTHER VIEWS

Does Obama have this right?

SULAIMANIYAH, Iraq — As one could see from President Barack Obama's recent interview in The Atlantic, he pretty much hates all the Middle East's leaders including those of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Iran and the Palestinians.

Obama's primary goal seems to be to get out of office being able to say that he had shrunk America's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, prevented our involvement on the ground in Syria and Libya, and taught Americans the limits of our ability to fix things we don't understand, in countries whose leaders we don't trust, whose fates do not impact us as much as they once did.

After all, the president indicated, more Americans are killed each year slipping in bathtubs or running into deer with their cars than by any terrorists, so we need to stop wanting to invade the Middle East in response to every threat.

That all sounds great on paper, until a terrorist attack like the one Tuesday in Brussels comes to our shores. Does the president have this right?

Visiting here in northern Iraq, in Kurdistan, and talking to a lot of Iraqis leaves one thinking Obama is not entirely wrong. Sitting through a forum at the impressive American University of Iraq, Sulaimaniyah, and watching Iraqi leaders squabble and point fingers at one another did not leave me wanting to buy a lot of stocks on the ISX, the Iraq Stock Exchange.

I was most struck by the moment when Sheikh Abdullah Humedi Ajeel al-Yawar, head of the giant Shammar tribe, centered in what is now ISIS-occupied Mosul, stood up in his elegant robes, looked at Iraq's oil minister and asked: "What happened to the \$700 billion (in oil money) that came to Iraq, and not a single bridge was built? What happened to this \$700 billion? We are asking this from the heart."

He got the loudest applause all day. We can't stabilize Iraq or Syria if their leaders won't share power and stop looting.

But sitting here also makes you wonder if Obama hasn't gotten so obsessed with defending his hands-off approach to Syria that he underestimates both the dangers of his passivity and the opportunity for U.S. power to tilt this region our way — without having to invade anywhere. Initially, I thought Obama made the right call on Syria. But today the millions of refugees driven out of Syria — plus the economic migrants now flooding out of Africa through Libya after the utterly botched Obama-NATO operation there — is destabilizing the European Union.

The EU is America's most important economic and strategic partner and the other great center of democratic capitalism. It amplifies U.S. power, and if it is hobbled, we will have to do so much more on our own to defend the free world.

We and the EU together have got to think



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment

about how to create safe places in Libya and Syria to stem the refugee tide before it breaks the EU. History will not be kind to Obama if he just turns away.

At the same time, Obama has an opportunity that no U.S. president ever had before. Two fledgling democracies have emerged in the Middle East — on their own. One is in Tunisia, whose civil society leaders won the Nobel Peace Prize, after writing the most democratic constitution ever in the region. But today guns, refugees and Islamist terrorists coming from Libya, which we recklessly uncorked, are helping destabilize the Tunisian experiment.

The West should be all over Tunisia with economic, technical and military assistance. "Tunisia is a startup democracy," its former

Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa told me. "It may be small, but its leverage for the future of the region is enormous. I can't imagine any stability in the region if Tunisia doesn't succeed."

The other self-ignited democracy experiment is Iraqi Kurdistan, where the Kurds on their own built an American-style university in Sulaimaniyah, because they want to emulate our

liberal arts, and just opened a second American University, in Dohuk. But tiny Kurdistan today is hosting 1.8 million refugees from other parts of Iraq and from Syria, and with low oil prices, it's almost bankrupt.

The Kurdish government, which was allowing a strong opposition party to emerge and a free press, is now backtracking, with its president, Massoud Barzani, refusing to cede power at the end of his term, and the stench of corruption is everywhere. The Kurdish democratic experiment is hanging by a thread. More U.S. aid conditioned on Kurdistan's getting back on the democracy track would go a long way.

"It is one big game of survivor out here," said Dlawer Ala' Aldeen, president of the Middle East Research Institute in Kurdistan. "America needs to constructively engage the Kurds, offer them conditional help and make them the partner that America deserves. Here, everyone listens to and likes America. (The Kurdish) people want America to protect them from Iran and Turkey."

Kurdistan and Tunisia are just what we dreamed of: self-generated democracies that could be a model for others in the region to follow. But they need help. Unfortunately, Obama seems so obsessed with not being George W. Bush in the Middle East that he has stopped thinking about how to be Barack Obama here — how to leave a unique legacy and secure a foothold for democracy ... without invading.

Thomas L. Friedman won the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, his third Pulitzer for The New York Times.

YOUR VIEWS

Milton-Freewater school bond would be a boon for children

It's the child's face that I see when I think of my vote on the Milton-Freewater School bond.

I don't have children or grandchildren that will benefit from passing this bond and improving our M-F schools. But there is a child that is looking at me. She may have freckles and braids or he may have beautiful dark eyes and a ready smile, but that child of my town looks at me to make a decision for their education and future. How can I say no?

When the child turns to look at me, my answer, my vote is mine alone. The child needs an answer about his education, her future.

I'm the adult, I am who she turns to for truth, for wisdom about his future. I'm going to answer the child: Yes. Yes to education, yes to future, yes to growth in our town, yes to progress. I allow that town child to square her shoulders, and watch him march bravely forward.

Jean Ann Mitchell,
Milton-Freewater

Governor only protects freedoms of liberals

It is bittersweet to read that Governor Kate Brown has urged rural Republicans to "show up, speak out."

While I agree whole-heartedly with the governor on this point, it does not make up

for her frantic demands to end the Malheur Wildlife Refuge occupations on a note that may otherwise have been as peaceful as the protesters themselves. Protecting liberal protesters, while rushing to stop conservatives? Well, I guess that's politics but it still disturbed me. Rest in Peace LaVoy Finicum. I wish your group had even the slightest opportunity to make that meeting.

Of course some agendas are protected while others are attacked, but I take personal offense to our governor urging rural Republicans to participate in government. Sure they sound like the right words to say, but are you willing to defend the liberties of those whose opinions differ from your own? Actions speak louder than words, governor.

Where are the rights for political dissidents? In a state that no longer nannies but bullies, to speak out against liberalism is dissent. That's not the America I grew up believing in.

Gov. Brown, I didn't need your feigned political compassion, nor did I need your advice. All I've needed was an equal opportunity in life, for both myself and my children, which is something liberal policy has taken away. Your bloated regime has put its own sustenance above morality, creating a caste system in which government employees parasitically attach themselves to those who do not consent.

We don't need your advice, governor. We need our birthrights back.

Carlin Sacco
Pendleton