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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the city of Pendleton, whose poor communication and decision making led to the cancellation of Yoga Round-Up.

Nearly everyone has been trying to get more use out of the Round-Up Grounds, one of the jewels of the city. So news that a Pendleton Whisky Music Fest was coming to town, bringing a big name band and thousands of people to the Grounds, was universally well-received.

That is until we realized the stadium was double-booked for July 15. The Zac Brown Band was set to play on what the seventh annual Yoga Round-Up thought would be the second day of their weekend event.

It seems as if Pendleton Convention Center staff, which divvies out 16 days of Round-Up Grounds use, made an initial mistake and didn’t realize it until it was too late. That’s a shame — Pendleton has plenty of weekends empty of big events. Good communication and leadership can allow events to grow, not just replace and cannibalize each other.

And while the music festival will certainly bring in a larger crowd than the yoga event had planned to, Pendleton can’t afford to alienate events of any size.

It’s unknown if the city is legally liable for losses, but a suit that taxpayers would have to pay for would add another insult to a city that cannot afford these unforced errors.



A tip of the hat to Pokémon Go, the latest tech craze that has swept the nation and world.

The phone-based virtual reality game has attracted all age groups, from tweens to those old enough to have been fans of the 1990s cartoon to their parents.

Although it is probably just a passing fad, the game is the first step toward melding the natural and virtual world into an environment that is fun and social and interesting. While that process will surely be filled with pros and cons, it sure is neat to be around to see it.

And though there are clear bugs in the system, it is getting young people outside, exploring their city and their world, and lessening for at least a little while, insistence on a 24/7 social media presence.

Even the most stalwart “kids these days” complainers should have trouble finding fault in a video game that exercises more than just your thumbs or swiping finger. And clever local businesses should be able to cash in on an audience actively exploring their town.

Catch ‘em all, but watch where you’re walking.



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.

YOUR VIEWS

Planned depot development would harm wildlife

I am among the many citizen volunteers who have invested time, energy and resources to the burrowing owl project on the Umatilla Army Depot since 2008. Volunteers have constructed artificial burrows, trapped, tagged, recorded and released nesting owl pairs and offspring, and assisted in breeding bird surveys for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Army.

The ongoing burrowing owl project has been more than successful, creating habitat for the largest continuous nesting colony of owls in the western United States.

The proposed solar projects blessed by the Columbia Development Authority will eliminate 900 acres of the most important burrowing owl habitat on the Depot Wildlife Refuge that during the 2016 season saw 20 of the 29 successful nesting owl pairs. For further consideration, this land is also nesting habitat for long-billed curlews, loggerhead shrikes, grasshopper sparrows, horned larks, Western meadowlarks, lark sparrows; wintering habitat for migrating snowy owls and white-crowned sparrows; and home to badgers, coyote, redbill hawks, common ravens, black-tailed jackrabbits and other animals and birds.

An ordinance signed by Umatilla County commissioners in 2014 designated the Umatilla Depot Wildlife Refuge Zone to preserve the natural

shrub-steppe desert landscape, which is disappearing at a rapid rate, for wildlife habitat, environmental protection and public education.

Although the ordinance does allow for commercial solar power generation for sale for public use within the Wildlife Refuge Zone with an approved conditional use permit, there are specific conditions that must be met for the permit.

Removal and destruction of burrowing owl burrows and placement of solar power structures on the 900 acres of the land is contradictory to the Wildlife Refuge Zone’s purpose. The CDA, in backing these projects, is in effect making a public land and resources grab for the benefit of profiting off the energy that would be sold to the power grid. Education and low-impact recreation by the public, shrub-steppe habitat protection and preservation, and the management and future uses of the area have not been addressed.

The Department of Defense/Army has not yet transferred the land to the CDA. To further protect and manage the land for the public and to comply with federal environmental and cultural laws, the DOD should instead laterally transfer the land to another federal entity or to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation for management, since they have cultural and environmental interests and historic ties to the land.

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Pendleton

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OTHER VIEWS

A history of white delusion

NICHOLAS KRISTOF

Comment

In 1962, 85 percent of white Americans told Gallup that black children had as good a chance as white kids of getting a good education. The next year, in another Gallup survey, almost half of whites said that blacks had just as good a chance as whites of getting a job.

In retrospect, we can see that these white beliefs were delusional, and in other survey questions whites blithely acknowledged racist attitudes. In 1963, 45 percent said that they would object if a family member invited a black person home to dinner.

This complacency among us white Americans has been a historical constant. Even in the last decade, almost two-thirds of white Americans have said that blacks are treated fairly by the police, and 4 out of 5 whites have said that black children have the same chance as white kids of getting a good education. In short, the history of white Americans’ attitudes toward race has always been one of self-deception.

Just as in 1963, when many well-meaning whites glanced about and couldn’t see a problem, many well-meaning whites look around today, see a black president, and declare problem solved.

That’s the backdrop for racial tensions roiling America today.

Of course, there have been advances. In 1939, 83 percent of Americans believed that blacks should be kept out of neighborhoods where white people lived. But if one lesson from that old figure is that we have made progress, another is how easy it is for a majority to “otherize” minorities in ways that in hindsight strike us all as repugnant.

In fairness, the evidence shows black delusions, too. But what is striking in looking back at historical data is that blacks didn’t exaggerate discrimination but downplayed it.

In 1962, for example, a majority of blacks said that black children had the same educational opportunities as white children, and nearly one-quarter of blacks said that they had the same job opportunities as whites. That was preposterous: History hasn’t discredited the complaints of blacks but rather has shown that they were muted.

My hunch is that we will likewise look back and conclude that today’s calls for racial justice, if anything, understate the problem — and that white America, however well meaning, is astonishingly oblivious to pervasive inequity.

As it happens, the trauma surgeon running the Dallas emergency room last Thursday when seven police officers were brought in with gunshot wounds is a black man, Brian Williams.

He fought to save the lives of those officers and wept for those he couldn’t help. But in

other contexts he dreads the police: He told The Associated Press that after one traffic stop he was stretched out spread-eagle on the hood of a police car.

Williams shows his admiration for police officers by sometimes picking up their tabs at restaurants, but he also expressed his feelings for the police this way to The Washington Post: “I support you. I defend you. I will care for you. That doesn’t mean I will not fear you.”

That’s a narrative that many white Americans are oblivious to. Half of white Americans today say that discrimination against whites is as big a problem as discrimination against blacks. Really? That contradicts overwhelming research showing that blacks are more likely to be suspended from preschool, to be prosecuted for drug use, to receive longer sentences, to be discriminated against in housing, to be denied job interviews, to be rejected by doctors’ offices, to suffer bias in almost every measurable sector of daily life.

In my mind, an even bigger civil rights outrage in America than abuses by some police officers may be an education system that routinely sends the neediest black students to underfunded, third-rate schools, while directing bountiful resources to affluent white schools.

“If America is to be America, we have to engage in a larger conversation than just the criminal justice system,” notes Darren Walker, the president of the Ford Foundation. “If you were to examine most of the institutions that underpin our democracy — higher education, K-12 education, the housing system, the transportation system, the criminal justice system — you will find systemic racism embedded in those systems.”

Yet Walker is an optimist, partly because of his own trajectory. In 1965, as an African-American child in rural Texas, he was able to enroll in Head Start soon after it was founded — and everything changed. “It transformed my life and created possibilities for me and a glide path,” he says. “It provided me with a life I would never have imagined.”

As Walker’s journey suggests, we have tools that can help, although, of course, racial inequity is complex, involving not just discrimination but also jobs, education, family structure and more. A starting point is for us whites to wake from our ongoing mass delusions, to recognize that in practice black lives have not mattered as much as white lives, and that this is an affront to values that we all profess to believe in.

■

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. A columnist for The New York Times since 2001 he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1990 and 2006.