

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN Publisher
DANIEL WATTENBURGER Managing Editor
TIM TRAINOR Opinion Page Editor
MARISSA WILLIAMS Regional Advertising Director
MARCY ROSENBERG Circulation Manager
JANNA HEIMGARTNER Business Office Manager
MIKE JENSEN Production Manager

OUR VIEW

Petticoats and politics

A century ago this week, a group of marginalized voters took to the ballot box in Umatilla to make a change in their local government.

Informally known as the Petticoat Revolution, a group of women came together on Dec. 5, 1916 to upend the good ol' boy leadership in town. They were dissatisfied watching the town fall further into disrepair, with laws loosely enforced, and set a plan in motion to toss them out.

According to an *East Oregonian* report from the time, the women conspired under the guise of a card game to write their names onto the ballot. The men who ran the city were so "cock-sure" of their re-election that they didn't bother to campaign for their seats. Oregon had given women the right to vote in 1912, but the idea was still new and none of the men on the council saw what was coming until it was too late.

One element that made the coup possible was dismally low voter turnout. In a town of 198 people, Laura J. Starcher defeated her husband and mayor E.E. Starcher, with 26 votes to eight. Gladys Spinning, Florence Brownell, Anna Means and Stella Paulu all won council seats, Lola Merrick was elected treasurer and Bertha Cherry became recorder by the same means.

Once in office, the women got to work. Laura Starcher set the agenda of replacing street lights that were removed by the previous administration, cleaning and fixing the streets and sidewalks, and enforcing the laws of the town, among other things. E.E. Starcher, after the initial shock of losing the election to his wife, found some words of praise for her to *The Oregonian*, saying she was "the best housekeeper in the United States."

In the 1920 election, the year women's suffrage was added to the U.S. Constitution in the 19th Amendment, no women ran for the council and it was again filled with men.

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.

History has a strange way of not just repeating, but inverting. We saw it just last month as Hillary Clinton, the first female major party candidate in U.S. history, lost a narrow presidential election that she was widely and confidently expected to win handily.

Many pundits, experts and editorial boards considered her opponent,

Donald Trump, to be the leader of an unsustainable and impractical following. His campaign was not carried out in secret, like the Petticoat Revolution, but his message hit some of the same notes of anger toward leadership perceived as disinterested, complacent and compromised.

Trump's win also relied on a disengaged

electorate, with the lowest turnout since the 1996 election and down about nine percentage points from 2008. While Clinton won the most votes, Trump won the important ones in the important states and will take office in January.

Both the Petticoat Revolution of 1916 and the Make America Great Again campaign of 2016 gave political power to people with no prior experience wielding it.

But the similarities end there, especially considering the magnitude of the U.S. president's responsibilities compared to that of an early 20th century Umatilla City Council.

Donald Trump's campaign and victory will be dissected for decades, and it is a new template for a political upset. There were factors both in his control and outside of it that led to his election.

What the women of Umatilla pulled off a century ago is now a curious footnote in our area's history, a parable of the ability to overthrow stereotypes and give voice to the previously powerless. They saw the opportunity to take power and grabbed hold, changing the mindset and culture of their town.

Donald Trump's campaign and victory will be dissected for decades, and it is a new template for a political upset.



OTHER VIEWS

Finding America's Mother Teresa

PINE BLUFF, Ark. — If this political season has you feeling down, meet Annette Dove. She's a salve for our aches and wounds, for she represents the American grass roots' best.

Dove, 60, is a black woman who dropped out of high school when she became pregnant and who has endured racism and domestic abuse. Drawing on her own experience overcoming difficulties, she now runs a widely admired program for troubled children. Funding the program in part with her own savings — even going into personal bankruptcy to keep it going — she transforms lives.

Dove works seven days a week and struggles month to month to pay the bills with donations, foundation support and a state grant; when the money runs out, she prays.

The poverty and disadvantage that Dove is fighting here in Pine Bluff, a poor, majority-black town of 50,000, are found all across America. But so, too, are people like Dove, battling for progress through churches, schools, Big Brother programs, advocacy efforts.

These heroes get no headlines, no reward, no glory, and they regularly have their hearts broken, only to soldier on to help the next child. This is the spirit that Tocqueville admired in 19th-century America, and it's why in a brutal political year, Dove and those like her help restore my faith in America.

Consider Jesse Spencer, a young man who says he was kicked out of his house at age 13 by his mom's boyfriend. Homeless, he turned to street gangs to survive and missed learning to read.

Spencer had a few run-ins with the police, and then at age 16 he joined with friends in robbing a pizza delivery woman with a pellet gun. He was arrested, charged as an adult and sentenced to 12 years in prison; he ended up serving more than nine years and was released in August.

Dove is helping him get a job and an ID, and here's one gauge of how marginalized he is: Even the spelling of his name is an issue. He says it's Jesse, but some police record shows him as Jessie, and because he was arrested at 16, he's never had a normal adult identification card.

Spencer had brief interactions with Dove's program as a boy, and he told me ruefully that if he had had more, "it would have made a great difference." I keep thinking this: Taxpayers spent more than \$200,000 imprisoning Spencer, yet we're unwilling to invest sufficiently in programs like Dove's that help break the cycle of poverty and keep kids out of trouble.

It's in places like Pine Bluff that one sees how much federal, state and local policies matter in shaping ordinary lives, and the most heroic charitable efforts can't make up for failed policies. We wouldn't build an interstate highway system through charities, and we can't build a comprehensive program for at-risk kids that way, either. But in difficult times, people like Dove keep their fingers in the dike and avert catastrophe.

Dove is so driven to help these children because this is her world. After becoming



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

pregnant at 16 and dropping out of school, she earned her GED and a college degree, became a star special education teacher, and, after her beloved husband died, she quit her job and started TOPPS, for Targeting Our People's Priorities with Service.

It evolved into an after-school program that also feeds 600 children a day in the summer and offers mentoring, tutoring and help staying out of jail, off drugs and in school. The first children to go through TOPPS are now in college — 33 of them.

"We have a lot of drug-infested families," Dove said, and she and her mentors come across as surrogate parents, telling kids how to dress and use birth control, and steering them to college admission tests and applications for scholarships.

The boys learn skills that middle-class children absorb routinely, such as how to tie a necktie or look a job interviewer in the eye. This training doesn't erase the damage from troubled schools or dangerous neighborhoods, but it helps. In meetings, they discuss politics, sex, AIDS, budgeting and financial literacy, and how to treat girls with respect.

"We teach about holding hands with a lady instead of grabbing hold of her and touching them all over," explained Mike Dove, Annette's son, who oversees the boys' mentoring and precollege programs in his spare time.

I asked several boys in the program what would happen if one made "locker room" comments about girls. They looked aghast. "That'd be push-ups," said Devonta Brown, who came into the program as a troubled fourth-grader and is now senior class president, aiming for all A's this year, and headed for college.

Despite all the good work TOPPS does, Dove still struggles constantly to meet its expenses (more information about it and options to donate are at toppsinc.org). She has no regrets.

A month ago, I wrote about a struggling Pine Bluff 13-year-old named Emanuel Laster, a black boy who does well at school but has no books in the home and is in danger of being sucked into the world of gangs and drugs. Dove has now recruited Emanuel to attend her after-school programs and is talking to him about college. She is also giving him books and offering him \$5 for each one he reads and writes her a report about.

One afternoon, we stood outside Emanuel's home and spoke of his tremendous promise — and the enormous risk that he'll be waylaid without achieving it.

"The way we're going to break the cycle is to give these kids an opportunity and show them how to take it," Dove told me. By force of will, she creates opportunities for kids who have none — and reminds us that whatever happens in Washington, there are miracle workers at the grass roots.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

City getting in the way of voter-approved pot shops

After no small amount of Pendleton pot-smokers urging their fellow Pendletonians to vote yes on the three magic questions, in addition to non-pot-smoking Pendletonians seeing no harm in adults over the age of 21 smoking recreational pot, or people with a genuine need using pot medically, the three questions passed! We could take this time to muse on the hilarity of 55 percent voting for recreational marijuana, 60 percent for medical, and 83 percent for taxing it, since all three needed to pass in the first place, but I'm writing on a character limit here, so we'll have to have a laugh some other time.

My last published letter hinted at a corrupt government apparatus operating at 500 S.W. Dorion Ave. This caused some to wonder what it was that I was referring to. I don't have a ready-made answer for anything under the sun, but I believe that the headline that greeted *East Oregonian* readers on the front page of the December 3-4 Weekend Edition sums my statements up quite nicely. If the people vote to do something that is contrary to the agenda set in motion by

City Hall, the city administration still has some tricks up its sleeve to pervert the democratic process.

Why should a marijuana business license cost any more than any other business license? With the already high cost of opening a marijuana business that meets the requirements set by the state of Oregon, it would stand to reason that a city which hemorrhages money like Pendleton would want to make it as easy as possible for potential businesses to set up shop and start generating revenue that the city can collect taxes on! But this doesn't seem to be the case. Anyway, let's have another round of statues on Main Street, complete with tacky voice-overs; that'll get people coming here again.

If the measures would not have passed, then we would not be having this discussion. But from the discussions that I've had with various administrators, they didn't think that the ordinances would pass in the first place. However, they are so out of touch with Pendleton voters it's really a wonder that any of them were elected. I am of the opinion that it's because of a lack of choices.

James Tibbets
Pendleton

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.

