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OUR VIEW

Pick your protest, make it count

Never let anyone tell you protests don't matter.

From the French Revolution to Selma, and from the Malheur Wildlife Refuge to Standing Rock, otherwise powerless people gain influence when they join together to defy the government, corporations, or the law of the land.

Often this kind of statement requires some law-breaking. It was the case in the Boston Tea Party, it was the case in the Nat Turner's Rebellion and in more recent cases, too.

Protesters must ask themselves if they are willing to break the law in order to stand up for their beliefs.

They must ask themselves if the law in question is immoral or unconstitutional, or better yet both. They must ask themselves if they are willing to go to jail, willing to be kicked and punched and humiliated.

There is a line of thinking that protesters are sitting on their rumps, collecting welfare and waiting for any micro-aggression to get bent out of shape about while the rest of us working stiffs earn our paychecks. But living through the blizzard in North Dakota right now is anything but easy, as anyone who went outside their front door for more than a few minutes during this week's snow storm know. Likewise, there is nothing easy about heading toward John Day and seeing police lights in your rear view mirror.

Black Lives Matter protesters have blocked streets and even highways, and similar tactics were used by protesters against Donald Trump in Portland last month. Negatively affecting people's lives is no way to engender support, but organizers believe the problems they create bring light to their concerns.

And yes, there are insurgents who try to capitalize on the illegal aspect of protest, who try to twist the mob mentality. Protests require extreme vigilance and dedication to stay on message, to keep everyone on the same page and to disavow violence at every turn. How well organizers and protesters can do that

often portends how successful their protest will be.

Success is not assured. In fact, it's often unlikely. The anti-Trump protests in Portland were mocked, infiltrated by a violent element, and ultimately did no good except to reiterate that many people don't want Donald Trump to be the next president.

The thousands of people at Standing Rock got at least a temporary win, and brought their concerns to a much wider audience who found their plight sympathetic and honorable.

The people who occupied Wall Street were unable to reach the politicians who had the power, despite months of media coverage.

Nat Turner was hanged for his violent rebellion 30 years before the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

The Boston Tea Party spurred the creation of the most powerful nation on Earth.

Maybe because this country was conceived in protest, the Founding Fathers made sure to protect the right to assembly and speech. It's something we shouldn't take for granted, and we should always be wary when peaceful protests are banned preemptively or shut down violently.

But it's also not a right we should misuse. Potential protesters must go forth understanding the risks, their rights and what they are trying to accomplish.

The anti-Trump protests in Portland were mocked, infiltrated by a violent element, and ultimately did no good except to reiterate that many people don't like Donald Trump.

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

Getting the lead out

Apparently the Pendleton Convention Center has more than its share of lead left behind by the Oregon National Guard when the building was sold to the city. With traces of lead found in our older schools, perhaps it's time to check city hall, itself being a former junior high school. During a recent visit to city hall, I noticed a bottled water distributor making a delivery. Evidently the water there is unfit to drink.

Maybe it's time to get the lead out of city hall. Perhaps that would reverse some of those cloudy decisions, such as the planning commission requiring a property owner to install an 18-foot sidewalk out on Westgate in conjunction with a property improvement project, making it the only commercial property in the area with a sidewalk. Is this an example of that new "business friendly" approach the city is striving for?

A friend recently approached the planning office wishing to combine two adjoining lots to construct an additional shop/garage, which would raise the assessed value of the vacant

lot. Though all survey pins are visible from a previous survey, the planning commission would require a resurvey and hearing, roughly \$4,000, before a building permit could be purchased. The property owner has decided not to build. Is this how city leaders expect to raise tax bases? Is it lead in the water eroding all common sense?

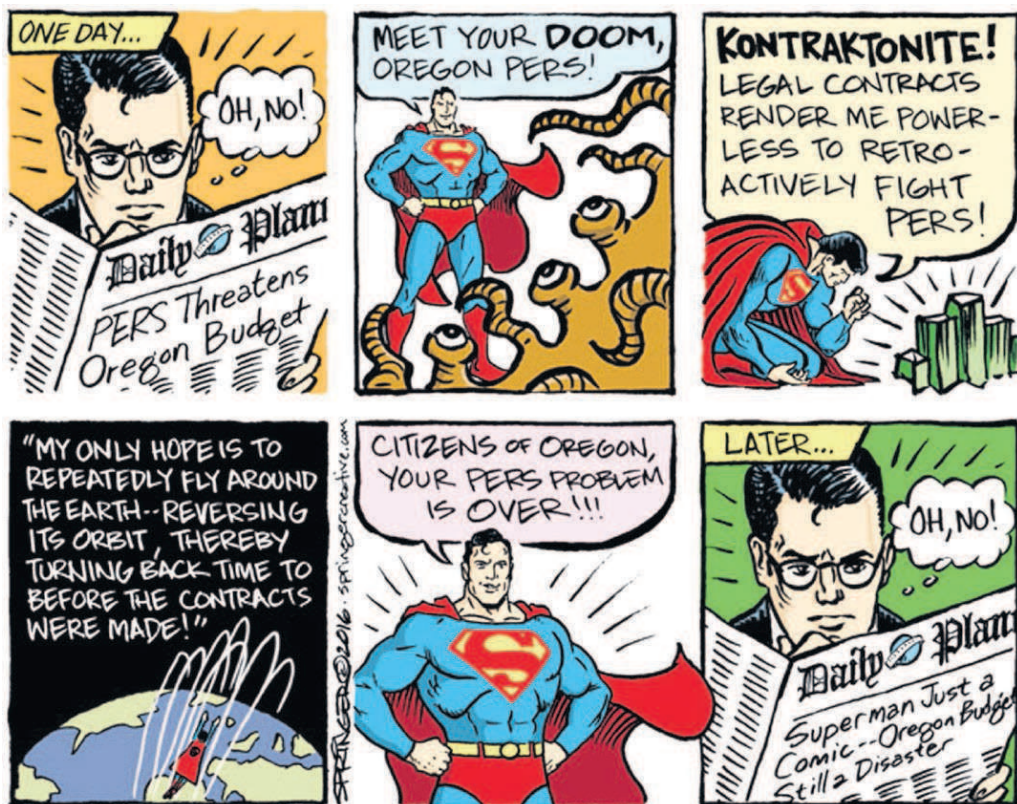
Then there is speaking out. Apparently that 30 minutes allowed by the city council to citizens for speaking out at meetings on issues has become just too much for the council president to handle, an inconvenience lengthening meetings, and has become intolerable. The simple solution is to ban the public from the meetings altogether. After all, it worked for Fidel.

How about that planning commission! After months and months of study, city hall can still not figure out the difference between a stick built, a manufactured, and a modular home. The city manager says he can't tell the difference. Could be time for a trip to the eye doctor.

Rick Rohde
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.



OTHER VIEWS

Identity politics and an Oklahoma father's loss

This fall I sat down in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with a black pastor whose unarmed son, Terence Crutcher, had been shot dead on the street by a white police officer.

The Rev. Joey Crutcher told me that Terence's killing was just the latest loss his family had suffered. He had also lost a child to crib death years ago, and another to cancer. In addition, his grandson had been shot dead while driving home from church in a gang hit that was a case of mistaken identity.

Such heartbreak: Three children and a grandchild dead, each for a different reason. I've been thinking of the Crutchers because of the debate raging in the Democratic Party about its future. One faction argues that the left became too focused on "identity politics" — fighting for the rights of Muslims, gays, blacks and Latinos but neglecting themes of economic justice that would appeal to everyone, working-class whites in particular.

Mark Lilla of Columbia University helped spark the civil war with a provocative essay in *The New York Times* warning that "American liberalism has slipped into a kind of moral panic about racial, gender and sexual identity that has distorted liberalism's message and prevented it from becoming a unifying force."

Speaking in Boston, Sen. Bernie Sanders partly endorsed Lilla's principle: "One of the struggles that you're going to be seeing in the Democratic Party is whether we go beyond identity politics. I think it's a step forward in America if you have an African-American CEO of some major corporation. But you know what, if that guy is going to be shipping jobs out of this country, and exploiting his workers, it doesn't mean a whole hell of a lot whether he's black or white or Latino."

Lilla and Sanders have a legitimate point, and it's clear in retrospect that the Democrats should have talked more about jobs and fairness for all. But Lilla and Sanders's argument also collides with the basic truth that it's not possible to have a serious conversation about justice, jobs and opportunity in America without talking frankly about race, gender and ethnicity.

Consider the Crutcher family: Each of the children's deaths wasn't exactly about race, yet each was linked to it. Young black men are disproportionately likely to be stopped by police officers, and shot dead by them. Crib death and cancer both are more lethal among African-Americans, because of disparities in incomes and health care. And crime in America disproportionately involves blacks, as both victims and arrested perpetrators.

So, sure, Democrats sometimes go overboard with identity and can do a far better



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

job appealing to ALL who have been left behind — but identity still matters profoundly. The Crutchers have lost four young people, each in a way that statistically suggests a racial element.

How can we discuss a way forward without acknowledging that race is an issue here?

The blunt truth is that America's most egregious failures have often involved identity, from slavery to anti-Catholic riots, from the Chinese Exclusion Act to the internment of

Japanese-Americans, from unequal pay to acquiescence in domestic violence and sex trafficking. Ditto for the threats by President-elect Donald Trump to deport 11 million immigrants or to register Muslims.

Yet Lilla and Sanders are right that identity sometimes has distracted from the distress in working-class white America. Life expectancy for blacks, Latinos and other groups has been increasing; for middle-aged whites, it has been dropping. Likewise, the race gap in education used to be greater than the "class gap"; now the class gap is greater.

It's also true that broad efforts to create opportunity would help not only working-class whites, but also working-class blacks, Latinos and others.

I once asked Bryan Stevenson, the civil rights lawyer, how to think of the class gap versus the race gap, and he joked that for the many people caught in the criminal justice system who are both poor and black, "it's like having two kinds of cancer at the same time."

So do we really need to choose between identity and justice? Can't we treat both cancers?

In moving beyond that dichotomy, maybe we can find some inspiration from the Rev. Crutcher, who is truly something of a saint: He told me that he forgives the white officer who shot his son and prays for her.

"Every night, my wife and I cry because we see our son with his hands up," he said. But he added, speaking of the officer who shot him: "She's got people around her who are hurting, too. My heart goes out to her."

Crutcher is modeling the broadest possible inclusiveness. Yes, there's a tension between focusing on bigotry and highlighting jobs. Yes, Democrats should more clearly emphasize economic justice for all, including struggling whites. But I hope that Democrats won't needlessly squabble over whether to prioritize identity or justice.

Like Crutcher, we can reach for both.

Nicholas Kristof has been a columnist for The New York Times since 2001. He grew up on a farm in Yamhill, Oregon, graduated from Harvard, studied law at Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar, and then studied Arabic in Cairo.



AP Photo/Sue Ogrocki
The Rev. Joey Crutcher, left, the father of Terence Crutcher, and his daughter wait in a hallway in the Tulsa County courthouse in September.

