

Confronting pain everywhere

My husband is in pain, but the waiting room at the pain clinic is crowded. No one has been called back to see the doctor for some time, and as the clock ticks on, more people enter. The server's down. We'll all have to wait until they can retrieve patients' records, their scans and MRIs, X-rays.

People brace against their pain or retreat into the space that holds them when they can't quite hold themselves. Today there's an athletic young man immobilized after an accident, a woman whose eyes look frantic with love for the man in a reclined wheelchair, sheepskin pads strapped to the arm and leg rests to protect his skin.

At least I've brought a book, the one that came in today's mail: Layli Long Soldier's new poetry collection "Whereas." It's nothing short of amazing, the way she questions and explores and confronts language. I will be a long time truly understanding everything she's doing in this book.

But when I reach the section for which her book is titled, I think I've found my footing. "Whereas" is Long Soldier's response to the Congressional Resolution of Apology to Native Americans, a document signed on December 19, 2009, by President Obama. No Native representatives were

invited to receive the declaration, which was read aloud only five months later by Senator Sam Brownback to a gathering of five tribal leaders, then folded into the unrelated 2010 Defense Appropriations Act.

It's not much of an apology. No mention of genocide. Just "conflict." "Numerous armed conflicts in which, unfortunately, both took innocent lives."

Both sides. Many sides. Language with which we have become all too familiar.

I turn the page. Here's a poem about Long Soldier's daughter, whose friends carry her into the kitchen bleeding from a fall on rough asphalt just as Long Soldier has come to this line in the apology: "The arrival of Europeans in North America opened a new chapter in the history of Native Peoples." The little girl is quivering a nervous laugh for her friends, but Long Soldier tells her, "Stop, my girl. If you're hurting, cry." And she does. "In our home," Long Soldier reminds her child as she washes and bandages the wounds, "in our family we are ourselves, real feelings. Be true."

"Yet I'm serious," she adds in the next line, "when I say I laugh reading the phrase, 'opened a new chapter.' I can't help my body."

"I shake," she continues. "The realization that it took this phrase to show. My

daughter's quiver isn't new — / but a deep practice very old she's watching me."

I close the book. How can we "be true?" Racism is nothing new in America, but recently — since the deaths of Trayvon Martin and so many others, since the events at Standing Rock, since the repeal of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, since the chants of "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us" from swastika and torch-bearing marchers — we've all been asked to look straight on at the pain of the racism so deeply embedded in our culture.

So what do I see when I look in the mirror?

I see a person who was taught from early childhood that racism is wrong, but who was also taught by everything in my school, on my family's television, even in the Sears catalog we welcomed with such joy as back-to-school time neared, that "white" was the default human being. Others were to be treated with courtesy, like company.

Many white Americans are beginning to realize that seeing white as the default human being is indeed "deep practice, very old." Like Layli Long Soldier, we are trying to face the sources of our country's pain. And like the people waiting in this clinic — where the server's back at last — we hope for some relief.

What can we do? We can listen to each other's stories, learn to understand each other. That's why the First Draft Writers' Series invites Northwest writers of as many

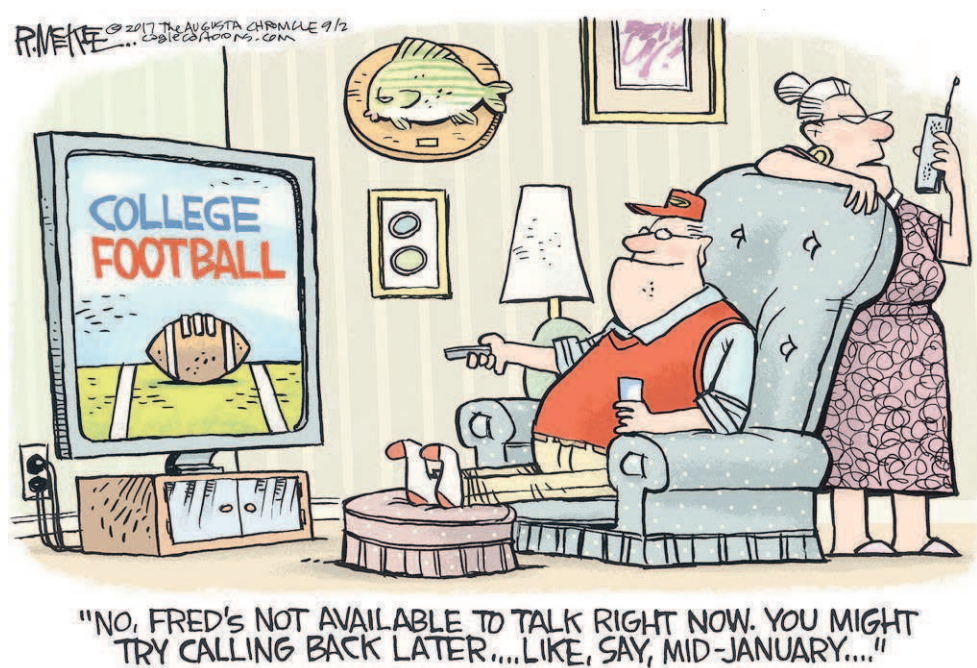
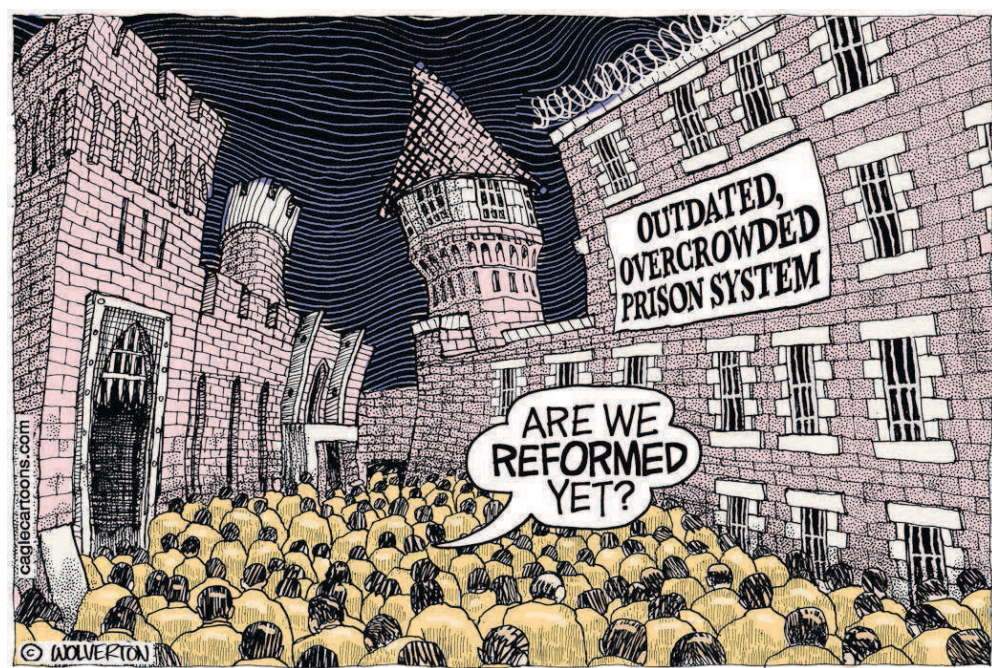
So what do I see when I look in the mirror?



BETTE HUSTED FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

styles and backgrounds as we can. The next reading is on October 19 at 7 p.m. at Pendleton Center for the Arts. It's free. I hope you'll come.

Bette Husted is a writer and a student of T'ai Chi and the natural world. She lives in Pendleton.



Preparing ourselves for wildfire

By DAVID POWELL

Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition

Western forests are destined to burn. Before Euro-American emigrants arrived, Blue Mountain forests burned every five to 20 years when lightning or Native Americans ignited fires.

These fires moved swiftly across the forest floor, conserving the large trees while consuming needles, twigs, downed wood, and small seedlings. After settlement, we began putting fires out. We did this job quite well for decades, and forests are now choked with woody debris and a flammable layer of small trees.

Now, fires burn hotter, faster and get bigger than ever before. Since 2000, about 100 million acres of forest and range in the West have burned. As a result, Oregon and other western states set new records for their largest forest fire (Oregon's record is the 2002 Biscuit Fire, which totaled about half a million acres). Large burns like the Biscuit Fire are called megafires.

Paul Hessburg, a research ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service in Wenatchee, Washington, will visit Pendleton on Sept. 20 to present a multimedia program called "Era of Megafires." Hessburg explains that the program addresses how we got here, what's at stake, and what each of us can do.

Hessburg has been publishing scientific work in leading journals for more than 30 years. Recently, after large fires ravaged favorite forests near his home in central Washington, he felt a need to take his findings directly to the public. The Carlton Complex megafire burned 256,000 acres in 2014 (largest fire in Washington history), and the Sleepy Hollow Fire a year later consumed 30 homes in his hometown of Wenatchee.

"It is heart wrenching when you know people who lost their homes in these fires," Hessburg said. "Especially when you know the loss is avoidable."

Hessburg also notes that "modeling indicates we can expect a doubling or tripling of annual area burned by mid-century." This estimate is supported by a just-completed national climate assessment — it found that average temperatures in the United States have risen dramatically since 1980, and recent decades have been the warmest of the past 1,500 years. Fire seasons clearly reflect recent temperature changes, as they now stretch 4 to 8 weeks longer than just 50 years ago.

What will be, they say, will be. But this is not true when it comes to fire risk.

"We have tools that can reverse the trend," said Hessburg. Thinning, prescribed fire, and managed wildfire are effective tools for mitigating fire risk.

Thinning mimics historical processes by removing the small trees that fire would have killed. It reduces "ladder fuel" — small understory trees that carry fire from the ground

Era of Megafires

September 20, 6:30 p.m.
Vert Auditorium, Pendleton
Free, but please register at
www.eom2017pdt.eventbrite.com

up to the treetops, where it races from one tree to another.

After thinning, prescribed fire is used in spring or fall when it is safe to do so. Prescribed fire reduces fine fuels (needles, twigs, downed wood) for 10 years or more, providing a safer environment for both the forest and firefighters.

Modeling forecasts 2 or 3 times more wildfire in the future than now, so we could choose to let some fires burn as a "managed wildfire" strategy.

Often used for large tracts of public land, managed wildfire is seldom practical for small, private-land parcels. It is a reasonable approach when weather and fuel conditions are ideal, particularly for wilderness and roadless areas where wildfires can be

"herded" away from human developments.

Any use of prescribed fire or managed wildfire inevitably raises concerns about smoke. Smoke is a big issue, especially for those with asthma or respiratory difficulties. During this past summer, Pendleton and most of the interior Northwest dealt with many days of smoky conditions caused by wildfires in British Columbia and Montana.

When compared to this summer's wildfire smoke from western Canada, prescribed fire smoke is short-lived and affects limited areas. In August 2016, the Weigh Station Fire burned near Interstate 84 between Pendleton and La Grande. It closed the interstate for a time and threatened many structures. And a year earlier in August 2015, the Canyon Creek Fire near John Day destroyed 43 homes and nearly 100 other structures, while burning 110,000 acres of land. 300 people were evacuated because of this megafire.

During the presentation, Hessburg describes how Blue Mountain residents can use FireWise concepts (firewise.org) to prepare their cabins, homes, and properties for an event like the Weigh Station or Canyon Creek fire. The Era of Megafires program uses compelling videos prepared by a documentary film company to cover these and many other topics. Hessburg skillfully weaves the multimedia elements together, crafting both a cautionary tale and a call to action.

Yes, western forests are destined to burn. We can't prevent summer thunderstorms and lightning-caused fires. But we can learn to live with wildfires in a better way. As the Era of Megafires program rightly notes, the choice is ours.

David C. Powell is vice chair of the Eastern Oregon Climate Change Coalition, a co-sponsor of the "Era of Megafires" showing in Pendleton.

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— Paul Hessburg, U.S. Forest Service ecologist

The best is yet to come for the Pendleton Class of '58

In early August, my wife Ginny and I made our way to Pendleton for what was billed as the last ever class reunion.

My parents had moved from Portland to Pendleton in time for me to join the ninth grade class at the old junior high school, then located in what is now the Pendleton library and city hall. Maybe because we moved enough in Portland or maybe because the high school years are so important, Pendleton seems like home to me.

Living as I do inside the Washington Beltway (still often described as ten square miles surrounded by reality), Pendleton reminds me that there is an America that is not obsessed with the complexities of congressional procedure or speculation on the presidential candidates in 2020.

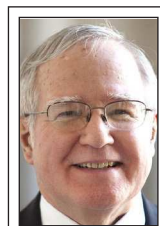
When back in Pendleton, I always take a memory tour. We started with my home on N.W. Third and then followed my paper route starting near Main Street and ending after crossing the Lee Street Bridge. The trailer park was still there.

Next, we headed for Washington Elementary, where I practiced football and ran in track meets. On past visits to Pendleton, I made sure to run a ritual half mile. But the track had been replaced by a new, considerably larger school. We drove on to the Pendleton Woolen Mills to admire the latest designs.

Then we went up the hill to visit the old high school, now known as the John Murray building. It was open so we could wander a bit through much of the building. It was new territory for Ginny. For me there were memories of classes, teachers, sometimes a noon dance and the physical fitness tests encouraged by President Eisenhower.

We had heard that the John Murray building was due to be auctioned on the following day, August 10. Taped to the main door was a notice informing us that the auction would be held the next day at 10 a.m. at the sheriff's office. The next morning, we decided to go.

We arrived at the sheriff's building with time to spare. Almost everyone there was with the McClintock group, the senior creditor. We met and talked with Pat McClintock explaining that we were not bidding on the building but were in town for a class reunion.



KENT HUGHES
Comment

One of my classmates only half-jokingly had suggested buying the old high school as a retirement home for the Class of '58. The process went quickly and the building passed back into McClintock hands.

After the auction, we followed a rainbow — not hoping for a pot of gold. Instead, we each found a single, large, delicious pancake at the Main Street's Rainbow Café. Main Street had memories of its own. In the 1950s, Saturday nights were often spent

"dragging Main" before heading for a hamburger.

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The heart of the reunion revolved around the Red Lion and a hospitality suite. For those who had grown up in Pendleton, there were scrapbooks that took them back as far back as the first grade. There were many shared memories, talk of children and grandchildren, and the pleasure of being back

in Pendleton. The first night a large group had dinner at the Hamley Steakhouse. No one can say you cannot eat well in Pendleton. We also enjoyed great sandwiches at the Hamley Café and at the Great Pacific Wine and Coffee Company. On Friday night the class had a delicious dinner at the Sundown Grill and Bar-B-Q. Over dinner we talked about having a future gathering, even if not a full reunion. At the Sundown it became clear that the sun was not ready to set on the Class of '58.

The formal reunion closed with the class dinner at the Red Lion. Our master of ceremonies asked the class how they felt about this "last reunion."

Did the class see it as the "end of the road" a "victory lap," or as "the best is yet to come?"

Finally he called on the class to vote. Showing typical Buckaroo optimism, the class overwhelmingly voted for "the best is yet to come."

The sheriff may have auctioned off the old high school, but the Class of '58 is not yet ready for the auction block.

Kent Hughes is a public policy fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. He is a 1958 graduate of Pendleton High School.

He will write dispatches from Washington for Eastern Oregon readers, which will appear in this space.