

Allowing women their bodies

Poet Penelope Scambly Schott was the featured writer at last month's First Draft Writers' Series, this time bringing her new chapbook "Serpent Love." The poems were about a difficult subject: a mother's strained relationship with a troubled adult daughter.

"Can you write about such things?" Penelope asked us. But she had — a whole chapbook of poems about how much she loved this daughter and how her attempt to rescue her had made things worse rather than better.

Maybe, one of the poems suggested, she should rename the daughter. Call her Dahlia, a word that "lies on the tongue / like darling daughter," "because if I called her Dahlia maybe we could start again."

"I want to be named Dahlia and start again," the daughter wrote back. Her essay is included in the book. The mother-daughter relationship is better, Penelope told us — partly because writing about a difficult subject helped each of them focus and articulate their feelings, but mostly because, Penelope said, it also helped her realize that though she deeply loved her daughter, she hadn't respected her. Now, she said, if the daughter calls to talk about a problem, she does the same thing she would do for any friend. She listens.

Respect. It's what all of us want, isn't it?

Every woman I know has experienced sexual harassment.

Respect for our autonomy, our lives. But it's not a given, even between people who love each other. Respect requires conscious intent.

And lately, the news has been filled with stories of deliberate disrespect — for others' religion, for their ethnicity or sexual orientation, their financial constraints. And of course, disrespect for the bodies of others, especially vulnerable children.

And women. Can we talk about this difficult subject? Suddenly we are. Big names are in the news, some fallen and disgraced, some stubbornly defended. And there's the #MeToo movement of women (and men) acknowledging that they have been sexually harassed or assaulted, a movement spreading world-wide.

How common is it, this lack of respect? Every woman I know — every woman, period, I suspect — has experienced sexual harassment and behavior that pushes right up against the boundary of sexual assault.

When the Access Hollywood tape was aired during the U.S. 2016 presidential campaign, I was shocked not by what was on the tape, but by the fact that it didn't matter — even, according to the people who would soon be measuring these things, to 53 percent of white women. It was just "locker room talk."

I felt as if I'd been kicked in the stomach. Despite the progress made in my lifetime — Title IX, the fact that women are now admitted to Harvard (no, Virginia, this was not always so) and are no longer barred from competing in the Boston Marathon, our bodies still did not belong to us. They were quite literally up for grabs.

In our shock and grief, my friends and I began to tell each other what had happened to us, stories we had long suppressed. Maybe they were our fault, our younger selves had whispered. They had happened, after all, because we existed.

Not every woman has been raped. But every woman has to live with the threat of rape. We have to carry it with us, an invisible barrier between us and every decision we make about what we can do, where we can walk in the world.

When I was 14, my friend Ann and I planned an overnight horseback trip to the lookout tower on Huckleberry Butte. It had seemed like a magical place to us, a small white momentary glow in every sunset of our childhoods. Imagine sleeping in a lookout tower, watching the sun rise!

No, my parents said. Because we were girls, and they didn't trust two men who lived on the road up to the tower. The world should have been opening for us, but instead it was closing. I felt as if a cage was settling over me.

Aretha Franklin spelled it out for all of us: R-E-S-P-E-C-T, letters I saw again on a sign in the Pendleton Women's March. My small

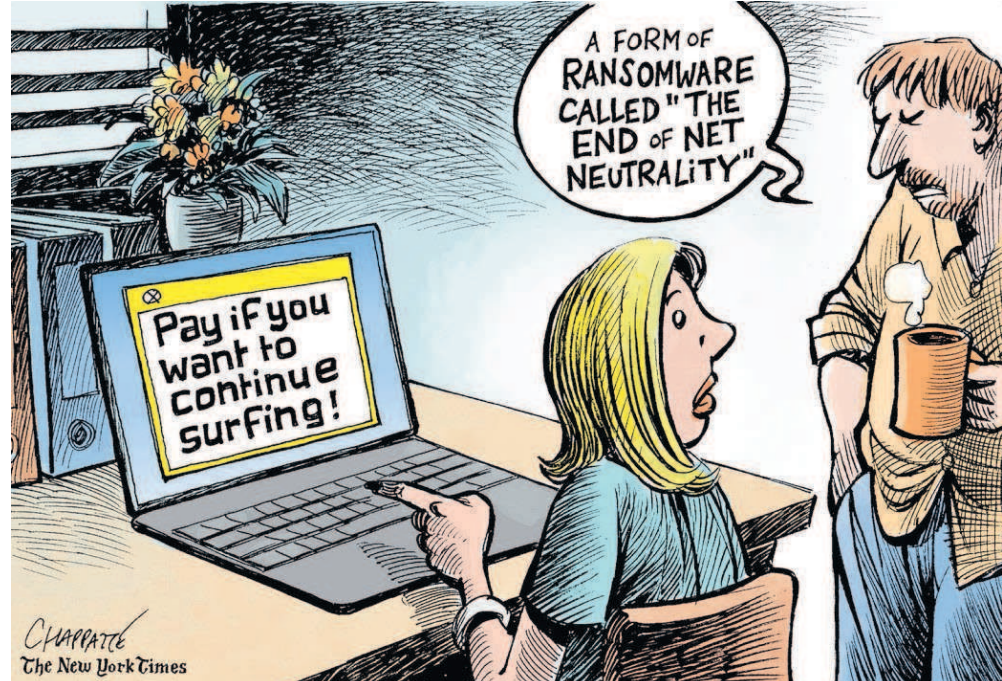


BETTE HUSTED FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

brown-skinned granddaughter held my hand, taking it all in.

Imagine it, I thought. A world where she could walk anywhere she wants.

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



Quick takes

Report details mistreatment of youth inmates at NORCOR

It's jail. Not summer camp. They broke the law to get in there and have to follow the jail's rules.

— Rob Schaefer

You get more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. You call a kid stupid and worthless and treat them like that, what do you have? Angry, angry adolescents.

— Paula Heinrich

I wish they would reopen our detention center here in Pendleton. Our troubled youth are getting out of control. And are left with no consequences to bad behavior.

— Jacqui Futter

(I see) zero empathy for young people who have had the odds against them from the day they were born. But let's make sure they pay for their crimes. Sheesh.

— Wendy Woods Bill

Umatilla County will board up Rodeo City Inn

Since it had been so terribly trashed per earlier reporting by the EO let the reality of the probable toxic issues to rehab this place stand... it needs demoed. My opinion.

— Peggy Carlson

Boarding it up isn't going to stop people from squatting in it. That's just more money down the drain.

— Lisa Day

Why waste the wood? Just bulldoze it!

Heather Lin Eston Astbury-Campbell

One of the great lessons of the Twitter age is that much can be summed up in just a few words. Here are some of this week's takes. Tweet yours @Tim_Trainor or email editor@eastoregonian.com, and keep them to 140 characters.

Firefighters, your next mission might be local

The devastating Eagle Creek Fire in the Columbia Gorge had been burning for weeks when I came upon a vehicle parked illegally within the fire-closure area. A middle-aged woman stood alone at the overlook's railing.

As a wildland firefighter assigned to educate the public while keeping them out of the fire closure, I stopped to talk. I began the conversation by offering some general information: The 48,000-acre blaze was largely beneficial to the land, I said, leaving a healthy mosaic of low-intensity burn patterns. And though it had not been sparked naturally, the fire would improve the long-term health of the gorge.

I was optimistic, a veteran firefighter desensitized to ashfall and overblown news reports. So I smiled and waited. It was her turn to acknowledge that she was inside a closed area, apologize and drive away. Instead, she looked out at the blackened canyon and said: "I just never thought this could happen. It looks terrible."

Only then did she tell me that it was her home we were looking at in the canyon below. Remarkably, the fire had spared it, but now it was surrounded by a monochrome moonscape. Her horses had been returned to their pasture, but on the first day of the fire, this woman had bravely loaded them into a trailer as embers drifted around them, the advancing flames threatening to block her escape.

Now, as she drove away from the overlook, it occurred to me that this conversation should never have happened. How was it that a homeowner in the urban interface had never considered wildfire a possibility?

This kind of naiveté is dangerous. It leads many homeowners to fail at undertaking responsible preventative maintenance. But I, too, had been thoughtless in my insistence on the inherent



LORENA WILLIAMS Comment

good of fire, which both ignored the human factor and obscured more accurate truths. Fire may be a sign of rebirth, but it is also a bringer of ruin. Wildfire throughout much of the West is overdue, but when it finally comes, its magnitude often exceeds the adaptive limits of an ecosystem. Species depend on fire, but they also go extinct because of it.

What if this homeowner and I had discussed fire in her neighborhood before the inevitable happened? Educational efforts like the Firewise Communities Program effectively help people build safer neighborhoods in vulnerable areas by developing community action plans and providing free online tools. But they can't reach everybody. This puts the onus of education on neighborhood locals who have the knowledge and tools to help make a community fire-wise. That means wildland firefighters themselves — people like me.

Most wildland firefighters don't engage with the public that often, and we tend to be tight-lipped about our jobs. We see communities burn, policies and tactics fall short, and we wrestle with our own guilty love of wildfire. We are either criticized for lack of success or action, or placed on pedestals as heroes. This kind of attention is overwhelming for thousands of folks who'd rather just disappear into the woods and do their jobs.

We must resist our desire to blend into the trees, however, and take responsibility to help the family whose cedar shake roof is matted with pine litter, or to clear brush around the elderly couple's porch. You could even argue that firefighters are morally obligated to take such voluntary actions.

Perhaps more important than physically

helping our neighbors, we firefighters must talk about fire and even begin a community discussion (like this one). The agencies that employ us will never reach an audience oblivious to the risk of wildfire, and Firewise Communities Programs still don't exist in many places. But when a neighboring firefighter clearly explains to the resident whose beautiful home is tucked deep inside a forested canyon that fire will find him sooner or later, that homeowner is more likely to respond and create defensible space.

A friendly discussion at a neighborhood picnic might have better prepared that woman in Oregon for the possibility of a devastating wildfire. Not every neighborhood or even town can be spared, as we recently witnessed in California's tragic wildfires, yet we can improve our odds through action.

Firefighters need not become champions of the Firewise Communities Program or get embroiled in their friends' defensible space issues in order to make a difference. Simply providing the web link to the "Firewise Tips Checklist

for Homeowners" can give your neighbors a starting point. Explaining the dangers of stacking a woodpile against the house or allowing gutters to fill with debris just might be enough to save someone's home.

In turn, homeowners living in the forest must consider fire a probability, much the way folks building houses on the seaside have to reckon with hurricanes. Wildland-urban interface dwellers don't have the luxury of assuming that a natural disaster will not affect them. Forests evolved with fire; now, homeowners must make an effort to do the same.

Lorena Williams is a contributor to Writers on the Range, the opinion service of High Country News.

How can you never consider wildfire a possibility?

Don't forget Cultural Trust during the season of giving

As we celebrate the season of giving, we at the Oregon Cultural Trust hope you will support a cultural organization that makes a difference in your world. Oregon's famous quality of life is due, in large part, to the 1,400-plus arts, heritage and humanities organizations that call our great state home.



CHUCK SAMS Comment

That is why the Oregon legislature established the cultural tax credit to reward Oregonians who donate to cultural nonprofit organizations. Just donate to one

or more of the libraries, arts organizations or museums you care about, then make a matching gift to the Oregon Cultural Trust at culturaltrust.org by Dec. 31.

When you file your 2017 state taxes, the donation you made to the Cultural Trust will come back to you via the cultural tax credit. That's right, you double the impact of your donation for free!

A very unique benefit for Oregonians.

This year generous donors lifted Oregon Cultural Trust fundraising to a new high, resulting in a record

\$2.94 million in awards to 136 cultural nonprofits last fiscal year. The awards include a total of \$735,887 to the Cultural Trust's five statewide partners (Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Heritage Commission, Oregon Humanities, Oregon Historical Society and the State Historic Preservation Office); \$735,887 to 45 county and tribal cultural coalitions — for regranteeing in their communities; and \$1,471,774 in competitive cultural development grants to 86 cultural organizations across the state.

In Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties, the Cultural Trust awarded \$14,697 to the Umatilla

County Cultural Coalition, \$6,631 to the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, \$9,165 to the Union County Cultural Coalition, \$21,842 to the Joseph Center for Arts & Culture, \$27,657 to the Wallowa Band Nez Perce Trail Interpretive Center, \$7,063 to the Wallowa County Cultural Coalition and \$8,542 to the Wallowa Valley Music Alliance.

The grants to the cultural coalitions will be used to award more local grants for projects that matter to your community.

The Cultural Trust envisions an Oregon that champions and invests

in creative expression and cultural exchange, driving innovation and opportunity for all. Our mission is to lead Oregon in cultivating, growing and valuing culture as an integral part of our communities.

Please help us double the love for Oregon culture by taking advantage of the cultural tax credit this year. We are deeply grateful for your support. You'll find a complete list of eligible cultural nonprofits and grantees at culturaltrust.org

Charles F. "Chuck" Sams III is the vice chair of the Oregon Cultural Trust.