

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

CHRISTOPHER RUSH
PublisherKATHRYN B. BROWN
OwnerDANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing EditorTIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

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OUR VIEW

Immunization opt-out carries a risk for all of us

Public health is one of America's great accomplishments. It is difficult in 2018 to imagine a time when cities and towns commonly had open sewers. Or a time when diseases such as whooping cough, measles, tuberculosis, influenza and polio cut broad swaths through the U.S. population.

Americans broadly think little of public health these days. If anything, we demean public health through the budget process.

Too many Americans have also forgotten the effects of childhood vaccinations — another of public health's great accomplishments. Paris Achen of our Capital Bureau recently reported that the percent of Oregon parents declining vaccination for their children has ticked upward. This is in the face of the 2013 Oregon Legislature, which made the process of opting out of childhood vaccination more difficult. The new law requires an education process prior to opting out.

But, as Achen reported, "...education efforts face a daunting popular culture belief that immunizations can cause autism and other problems." A 1998 article in the British medical journal *The Lancet* became the touchstone for those

with fear of childhood vaccinations. It asserted that vaccination was linked to an incidence of autism.

Though that research was debunked 12 years later by considerable peer review, the power of social media keeps the bogus theory alive.

Some parents also maintain an illusion that their children have "good immunity" and thus do not need protection from disease. In fact children, pregnant women and older adults have a less robust immune response to any infectious agent.

With more unvaccinated children and adults in the population, there have been outbreaks of measles and even whooping cough. Achen noted that "More than a dozen students in Lane County, including two at the University of Oregon in Eugene, contracted whooping cough earlier this spring. In December, about a dozen cases of the disease were reported at schools in Clark County, Washington."

The Center for Disease Control reports that "2012 was the record year with more the 48,000 cases of whooping cough, the most cases that CDC has seen in the past 60 years. Prior to vaccinations the U.S. had 200,000 cases per year."



EO file photo

A registered nurse gives a dose of a meningitis vaccination to a student in February at the Umatilla County Health Department office in Hermiston.

The CDC notes that most of the deaths each year are in babies younger than 3 months of age. Even healthy babies can be very ill because of an immature immune system that is still developing. It is important that pregnant women get the whooping cough vaccine during each pregnancy, so that the mother transfers the greatest amount of protective antibodies to her child.

It is important to note, states the CDC, that babies with whooping cough don't cough at all. Instead it causes them to stop breathing and turn blue. Other complications include violent, uncontrolled shaking, life-threatening pauses in breathing, and brain disease.

It is useful to remember the past. For instance, it is common in pioneer

cemeteries to see a row of headstones marking children's deaths in one winter from chicken pox and whooping cough.

The scientific philosophy of immunizing most of the population is to keep the incidence of disease at a minimum. That is because there always are people in the population with poor immune systems to fight off bacteria and viruses that cause communicable diseases. Those include babies, children, pregnant women and older adults as well as people with chronic diseases and cancer. Health care workers are immunized to help ensure that they do not pass communicable diseases to patients who are often in compromised health status.

Thus vaccines were developed to save lives. We are fools to forget that.

OTHER VIEWS

The great pop culture war

The last time I wrote about Samantha Bee it was the summer of 2016, Hillary Clinton seemed likely to be the next president of the United States, and liberals were very angry at Bee's fellow late-night host, Jimmy Fallon, for normalizing Donald Trump with a relatively friendly interview.

In response, I suggested that Bee and her fellow late-night liberal shouters were actually doing more for the Republican nominee than was Fallon, because Trump's appeal was in part a reaction to a pervasive late-Obama-era politicization of pop culture — which was encouraging Republican voting as a form of cultural protest, and Trump voting as an act of transgressive rebellion.

Many times since the 2016 election, but in the last few weeks especially, I feel like I've been cursed to live inside an exaggerated version of my own analysis. I thought I was just describing how trends in pop culture can shape politics, but the Trump presidency has demonstrated that when the unemployment rate is low enough and the ruling party's policy cupboard bare enough, entertainment can simply become politics and vice versa. Forget about culture war; this is the age of pop culture war, a version of "We Didn't Start the Fire" with all the Cold War substance taken out.

Kanye's red-pilled, Kim's with Trump, D'Souza's pardoned, Bee's not dumped, Roseanne's tweets and football wars, I can't take it any more ...

In part that's because Trump himself is entirely a creature of the celebrity-entertainment complex; this is the game he's always played and he has no interest in playing any other. Past Republican politicians exploited the gulf between Hollywood and Middle America in order to pursue specific policy agendas, or fought with celebrities over specific issues — Vietnam with Jane Fonda, out-of-wedlock births with "Murphy Brown." But for Trump, fighting with late-night hosts and pro athletes is an end unto itself; people in his administration have substantive goals, but to the president ratings and faves and cancellations and boycotts are the real way that you keep score.

But it's too simple to blame Trump when so many of his supporters clearly love this style. Having lost so many cultural battles, the right has developed a desperate

attraction to celebrity ephemera, confusing an epiphenomenon of progressivism's cultural advantage — the fact that most famous artists and actors are left-wing — with the institutional advantage itself.

So conservatives stupidly place hopes in a right-wing Kanye or a Trump-friendly Roseanne Barr. They convince themselves that celebrity provocateurs will make America's campuses more conservative. They

make a cynical, race-baiting, adulterous campaign-finance fraudster like Dinesh D'Souza a rich man after he abandons an intellectual career for a Michael Moore-imitating grift — and then cheer when Trump pardons D'Souza because it owns the libs.

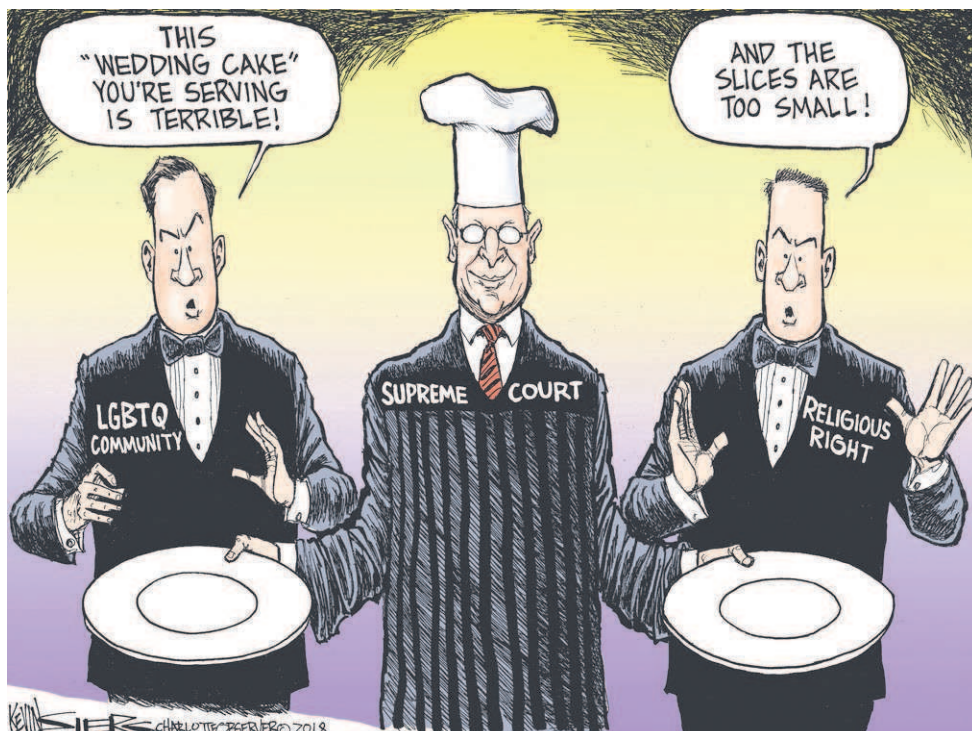
All of this reflects a deep confusion about how liberal cultural power actually works. It's the steady circulation of ideas and money and people through cultural institutions that really matter, not the famous faces popping off on Oscar telecasts.

But the same confusion is on display among liberal culture makers themselves, who have reacted to Trump's defeat by leaning into their most self-defeating instincts. Cultural liberalism wins battles when its omnipresence just seems like the natural air we breathe. But direct political hectoring plays against that strength; instead of the subtle nudge of a sitcom's implicit values it's just a rich and famous person yelling at you, in a way designed to maximize ratings among progressives looking for catharsis.

And the fact that the business model runs on those ratings means that even if Samantha Bee wanted to preach to someone other than her choir, her imperatives as an entertainer require constant milder variations on calling Ivanka Trump the C-word ... because for her viewers that's what makes it entertainment.

Which, for ratings purposes, is fine. (Although the economics work less well when you start insisting that lousy-but-woke movies are actually good because online right-wingers hate them ... sorry, I digress.) But all the entertainers "owning" Trump are playing the same game that carried him to power, and that might keep him there despite all the reasons he deserves to fall.

Ross Douthat joined The New York Times as an Op-Ed columnist in April 2009. Previously, he was a senior editor at The Atlantic.



YOUR VIEWS

Violence can be stopped with better social media vigilance

I wanted to talk about the gun issue and people's reaction to the school shootings.

I grew up around guns. My dad had several. We were taught at a young age how to shoot a gun and the dangers of and harm guns can do.

Every year before Thanksgiving, Dad would enter in a target shooting contest and he would always take one of us kids with him. He would usually bring a shotgun, a black powder rifle and one or two other guns. If you won an event with a gun it was retired (you couldn't use it again). He would bring home two to three turkeys he won every year and that was our Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner for the year. It was a highlight of the year for him.

I also know several people that hunt; if you take away guns you take away hunting.

From what I see it isn't really about guns with the school shootings, it is about mental health and mental illness. There are clear warning signs. A example is their Facebook pages and what they post. People need to watch the kids' Facebook pages and what is posted there: what are they wearing to school, their friends, and if they seem to have issues. Get them help!

The other thing I see is courthouses have a guard and metal detectors, and so does the airport. Why not do that at the high schools and middle schools? The other thing is phones; when you go in the courthouse they tell you leave your phone

at home. Kids do not need their phones in school either.

Lenore Moody
Milton-Freewater

Election loss doesn't mean end of service

Dear friends:

As you all know, I ran for the city council position in Hermiston, Ward 1. Sadly, I came in third. However, it was an awesome experience. I loved meeting many of you and sharing my vision as a possible council member. I want to thank *Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian* for their support. I want to thank all those who supported me and cast their vote for me.

I am going to continue to work behind the scenes to help Hermiston to become even a greater town to live in. I am on the budget committee and I plan on attending city council meeting and other meetings at the ground floor level of development to ensure that the community voice is heard.

At this time, I like to announce that I am supporting Lori Davis for city council. I've met with her and discussed her vision for Hermiston. She has a humble spirit and a listening ear. She will be a fine city council member and representative of Ward 1.

Once again, a million thanks to you.
Love,

Jackie Linton
Hermiston

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