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OUR VIEW

Tip of the Hat,

kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to revisionist historians who rely on the public’s poor understanding of the past to try to score political points. And an equal kick to those in power who gobble up the misinformation and repeat it, regardless of whether or not they know they’re spreading falsehoods.

We’re not sure which camp state Sen. Dennis Linthicum, R-Klamath Falls, falls into, but he reminded us this week that some people are content to rearrange history to fit their particular narrative.

For instance, that the Three-Fifths Compromise was a power grab by northern states.

Linthicum, a former Klamath County commissioner and 2014 candidate for the 2nd Congressional District who ran on the platform that he was a “true Conservative,” made the preposterous claim during a Senate floor debate about changing the way Oregon directs its electoral votes in the presidential election.

The history books are written by the victors, as they say, and there’s room for

interpretation about the motivations and outcomes of the past. But Linthicum’s assertion is ludicrous and dangerous.

The Three-Fifths Compromise was a response to Southern states’ intent to count African-American slaves as people when it came to adding representation in Congress, but as property when it came to everything else, including voting and constitutional rights. Meeting in the middle, they decided every five African-American slaves were to be counted as three people for the purpose of the census.

It’s appalling to our sense of justice 230 years later, and the ongoing dehumanization likely further stalled emancipation. But it was a compromise that gave Southern states — soon to become Confederate states — outsized power of representation without requiring just treatment of its citizens.

Linthicum’s theory is a piece of the pro-Confederate narrative, where slavery is a minor piece of the story rather than a

defining evil that our country is still grappling with.

A kick in the pants to the tax scammers taking advantage of vulnerable Americans trying to do their civic duty.

Paying taxes is like casting a ballot or showing up for jury duty — it can be a chore, but it’s for the greater good of society. So as tax day (quickly) approaches, we’re especially angered by those who pose as the IRS or charitable organizations to bilk people out of their money.

It’s worth remembering all year long, but if you receive unsolicited contact from someone claiming to be from the IRS or other federal agency, be extremely wary. Don’t click on email links or give personal information over the phone. Contact a professional for guidance if you’re unsure.

Identity theft remains a rampant problem, and grifters look for any opportunity to gather personal information for nefarious use. Don’t fall for it.

OTHER VIEWS

Hungry and desperate, but

away from a country in chaos

ON THE VENEZUELA-COLOMBIA BORDER — She is 15 years old, pregnant, hungry and alone. Deisimar sat on a bench in a park in Maicao, just inside Colombia, and wept as she told her story — the story of Venezuela.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
COMMENT

Deisimar was born in an oil-rich, middle-class Venezuela. Then everything began to collapse at a pace reminiscent of Weimar Germany or Syria during the civil war.

In the oil hub of Maracaibo, Deisimar’s family lost electricity, reliable

running water, health care and, finally, food. Venezuela’s inflation may reach 10 million percent this year, the International Monetary Fund says, and some people root through garbage or eat rats to survive.

“We had no money to buy food, so I came here,” Deisimar explained. Complicating the situation, she had become pregnant by her equally impoverished 18-year-old boyfriend. Contraception has become unavailable or unaffordable: A single condom now costs as much as a couple of pounds of rice and more than a tank of gas.

“I don’t have enough to eat, so how could I pay for birth control?” Deisimar asked me.

She walks about selling medicines from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day. She eats at a soup kitchen when she can, but there are long lines because there are so many desperate Venezuelans here, with hundreds sleeping in the park each night.

Deisimar hasn’t been to a clinic for any prenatal care, and she doesn’t know what will happen to her. “Nobody in my family knows I’m pregnant,” she said.

After traveling along the border with Mercy Corps, an aid group helping Venezuelans in this border region, I ache with stories from so many people like Deisimar. More than 3.4 million Venezuelans have fled their country so far, according to the United Nations, and millions more are expected to follow this year.

American liberals sometimes sympathize with the Venezuelan president, Nicolás Maduro, out of instinctive resistance to President Donald Trump. Don’t. Maduro has been a catastrophe for Venezuelans, and Trump is right to join Canada and more than 50 other countries in recognizing the head of the National Assembly, Juan Guaidó, as the legitimate leader of Venezuela.

The problem is that Trump’s saber-rattling backfires, helping Maduro by playing into a narrative of Yankee imperialism, and his politicization



AP Photo/Fernando Vergara
A Venezuelan migrant waits for traffic to come to a standstill on April 4 so that she can ask drivers for spare change in Bogotá, Colombia.

of humanitarian aid makes it less likely that starving people will actually be fed.

Here’s a three-part strategy that some other countries are already moving toward: Nudge Mexico (which has refused to back Guaidó) to play a more constructive role; work with Canada, Peru and Colombia to coax and coerce Venezuela’s generals away from Maduro; and offer Maduro a comfortable retirement abroad if he steps down, versus a prison cell if he remains.

“SOMETIMES WE
WENT TWO OR THREE
DAYS WITHOUT
EATING ANYTHING.”

Anyi Coromoto, 25-year-old mother

Venezuelans overwhelmingly told me that they want tougher international action to dislodge Maduro. “I lost my jobs because of sanctions,” said Claritza Rojas, who used to work for PDVSA, the state oil company, and now is homeless in Maicao. “They affect us, but pressure on Maduro is still good.”

Conditions may get worse, for the economy and health system are virtually in free fall. A university survey found that two-thirds of Venezuelans had lost weight — an average of 25 pounds in a single year.

“Sometimes we went two or three days without eating anything,” a mother, Anyi Coromoto, 25, told me, a day after arriving from Maracaibo with her son, Dylan. Coromoto is stick-like and weighs just 93 pounds. Dylan, 1 year old, weighs 11 pounds and was immediately hospitalized to save his life.

In a world that has mostly treated migrants wretchedly, Colombia is playing a heroic role in providing such care. The country has admitted perhaps 2 million Venezuelans — often allowing them to work, attend school and receive free health care. And ordinary Colombians routinely give food to hungry Venezuelans on the street; the world has much to learn from warmhearted Colombians.

Still, the bureaucracy often doesn’t work at the grassroots, and I found many Venezuelan children whom local schools refused to admit because they were already too crowded. In the city of Riohacha, I met a large extended family living in a parking lot, and the kids have not been able to attend school.

One girl’s great-grandmother had been illiterate; the grandmother had gone to primary school and learned to read; and the mother had been to ninth grade. But because of the crisis in Venezuela and the difficulty attending school in Colombia, the girl, 12-year-old Yanethzy Sánchez, has not been to school for three years and can’t read even simple words.

Her 18-year-old sister died last year from pneumonia, and Yanethzy, once outgoing, is fearful and withdrawn. “She never leaves the parking lot,” her mom fretted. It seems that she may never get an education, like others in Venezuela’s lost generation.

I asked Yanethzy if she could write her name. She couldn’t. I asked her what three times four was; she looked blank. I tried another: What is four plus six?

She looked at her feet and there was a long silence. Finally, embarrassed, she suggested in Spanish, “16?”

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Nicholas Kristof, who grew up on a sheep farm in Yamhill County, is a columnist for the New York Times.

YOUR VIEWS

Radie understands Port impact on Morrow County

I am endorsing Debbie Radie for the Port of Morrow commissioner position in the upcoming election.

Debbie is a long-time Morrow County resident, having lived in Boardman, Ione, and now Irrigon. She is capable of representing the entire county and understanding the impact the Port of Morrow has on our region.

For eight years, she and her family lived in Ione and I saw first-hand her dedication to our community. She has continued to graciously volunteer her time and resources to support communities in all parts of this county.

Debbie is currently vice president of operations at Boardman Foods and has spent over 27 years serving our communities through her work at Boardman Foods. Each year all teachers and staff in the county are treated by Boardman Foods to fruit boxes and chocolates during the holiday season. The children of employees at Boardman Foods can participate in after-school programs at the plant until their parents get off work. Onsite doctors for employees and families are available each month, as well as college scholarships and after-school and summer work for high school students.

Debbie sees the impact the Port of Morrow has on our region on a daily basis. She brings a wide variety of skills and experiences at the local and state level that will make her an effective Port commissioner. She has volunteered her time to the Ione and Morrow County school boards, Kiwanis Club, Umatilla/Morrow Travel Shed Committee, Eastern Oregon Workforce Investment Board, Oregon State Workforce and Talent Board, and is currently the chair of Food Northwest Association Board.

I encourage you to vote Debbie Radie for Port of Morrow commissioner.

Donna Rietmann
Ione

Mail patrons have a choice of delivery options

I’m a fan of the U.S. Postal Service. Even during all that endless ice of February, our faithful letter carrier showed up at our mailbox.

But change is coming, I thought. Cluster boxes have been appearing all over town, and across the nation. This isn’t a new thing. Cluster boxes have been going up in new additions and housing developments for the past several decades. They have their advantages — less danger of dog bites for those folks in blue, and they lock, so if you leave home for a day or two you don’t have to worry about stopping your mail — but on those February days I was especially glad I didn’t have to walk or even drive to the middle or the end of my block.

From doing some research, I’m relieved to learn that even if a cluster box comes to my neighborhood, I can continue to get mail delivered to my door. According to the Postal Operations Manual, apartment complex managers and homeowners association managers control their method of mail delivery, but if individual property owners get a letter inviting us to change, we don’t have to sign the form and pick up our mailbox key; they actually (according to their manual) cannot change our delivery unless they have approval in writing by the customer. Unless we want this method of delivery, all we have to do is watch for the mail.

Change is part of life. But isn’t it nice when good things don’t change?

Bette Husted
Pendleton