

Questions to reflect on



SCOTT SMITH
THE EDUCATION CORNER

Over the last several months, we have witnessed history happening in our country that has not happened since the Civil War. It is United States history in the making. Now is a good time to reflect on our U.S. history from when we were in school.

Do you remember your U.S. history classes? In Oregon, U.S. history is usually taught in fifth grade and again in high school. How well do you know the Constitution and amendments, and what they stand for? Yes, there are those who do understand really well and those who think they know them, and those who really don't know. What does the First Amendment really mean?

In many schools dealing with remote learning, especially at the elementary ages, the teaching of social studies has sadly taken a back seat. Understanding the schools are doing their best in these unprecedented

times, now is a great time to review for all of us what our founders felt would make us a leading country. The United States is a network of people and cultures working together for the betterment of the world, and was designed 246 years ago knowing the country would grow and change. Have we taken it for granted?

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This is a great time for us, as adults, to refresh ourselves and bring our children into the discussion of what it means to be a United States citizen. Below are some general questions along with general resources you might consider when locating and fact-checking yourself. There are many ways of using the internet to search and locate information. Engaging with your children on this quest will help them have a

stronger understanding of just how to locate and discuss information about questions that develop during their life.

Our government is built on three areas; the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments. Understanding them and discussing why they were written might provide for a better understanding of just

Amendments: What are amendments? Who and how can you make an amendment? How many amendments are there? You hear people say, “It’s my First Amendment right.” What does that mean?

How do the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the amendments impact our daily lives? Do they really mean what you assumed they did? What are some ways you might be able to support our government? We are a diverse country made of multiple cultures each having its own perspective and understanding. Over the last couple of months, has our government been in jeopardy?

These are all questions we should reflect on as Americans, United States citizens, and how these issues could be peacefully addressed.

Dr. Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in their teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia-OR board as their parent/teacher liaison.

Oregon needs a moratorium on permits for large dairies



EMMA NEWTON
OTHER VIEWS

When Washington-based Easterday Ranches announced it had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on the heels of allegations that it cheated Tyson Foods out of millions of dollars, it had a bizarre yet familiar ring to it here in Oregon. It doesn't take long to figure out why.

Only a few years before, the Lost Valley Farm mega-dairy filed for bankruptcy after more than 200 environmental violations and photographs surfaced showing its manure storage areas (called “lagoons”) overflowing and threatening local groundwater.

The cleanup took 11 months. Soon after Lost Valley was shut down by the state of Oregon, another company swooped in, purchased the property and submitted a permit for a new, 28,000-cow mega-dairy on the same site. That company is Easterday

Dairy, owned by the same Easterday family currently embroiled in the Tyson #cattlegate scandal.

Despite a scandal colored by increasingly outlandish allegations over bills for phantom cows and their phantom food, Oregon's Department of Agriculture has yet to deny or even halt the permit review for the

“ODA SIMPLY CAN'T AFFORD TO IGNORE THE CATASTROPHIC CONSEQUENCES OF LETTING THESE MEGA-DAIRIES RUN AMOK IN A CLIMATE CRISIS AND A GLOBAL PANDEMIC.”

proposed Easterday Farms mega-dairy. The Easterday family has since given up control of the Washington farm in question and its 54,000 cows, now fed with a court-ordered payment from Tyson.

Despite significant public backlash over the initial permitting of Lost Valley, Oregon

officials insisted Lost Valley's proprietor was simply a “bad actor” and his misdeeds unfortunate, but not indicative of a greater trend in the mega-dairy industry. The scandals surrounding Easterday and our records of other large-scale factory farm pollution clearly disprove that theory.

The only solution is to first deny the

adding to the problem. Mega-dairies are notorious for the squalid quarters of their resident cows, but they also disproportionately contribute to the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Because of their intensive water requirements, these facilities drain scarce water resources and frequently leave remaining groundwater polluted.

Aside from the sordid details of Easterday's present fiscal situation, ODA simply can't afford to ignore the catastrophic consequences of letting these mega-dairies run amok in a climate crisis and a global pandemic.

Oregon law gives ODA grounds to deny a permit if the party fails “to disclose fully all relevant facts” or misrepresents “any relevant facts” during the permit process. Between allegedly billing a vendor to feed thousands of fictitious cows and apparently masking a dire financial situation, it seems Easterday Farms left out a few key “relevant facts” in its permit application to the ODA.

Emma Newton is the Oregon organizer with Food & Water Watch and Stand Up to Factory Farms.

Racism won't be solved by acceptance alone



BETTE HUSTED
FROM HERE TO ANYWHERE

A few weeks ago, during Black History Month, I reread James Baldwin's “The Fire Next Time.” “I do not know many Negroes who are eager to be ‘accepted’ by white people, still less to be loved by them,” Baldwin wrote. This was in 1962, the year before I graduated from high school, the year before Martin Luther King Jr. would speak from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, three years before the Voting Rights Act.

“White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this — which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never — the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed.”

How much has changed since 1962?

It has been a year since police burst into Breonna Taylor's apartment looking for drugs that weren't there and shot her to death, and even as I write, people in Louisville are demonstrating, demanding justice. Plenty of others are still finding the idea that Black Lives Matter somehow threatening.

But after the white supremacist march in Charleston and the Confederate flag carried inside the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, we have had some encouraging news. The Biden administration's cabinet nominees are the most diverse in our history — half of the 26 positions are people of color and 46% are women. There are many “firsts” — first women, Blacks, Hispanics, immigrants — to head agencies, including Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, the first LBGT person appointed to a cabinet post.

What I find most exciting of all is the confirmation of Deb Haaland as Secretary of the Interior. Imagine a member of the Laguna Pueblo heading the agency once called upon to help solve the “Indian problem.”

“It's profound to think about the history of this country's policies to exterminate Native Americans and the resilience of our ancestors that gave me a place here today,” Haaland said after her nomination. “I'll be fierce for all of us, our planet, and all of our protected land.”

And we've had wonderful news closer

to home this week, when we learned that Chuck Sams has been appointed to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, the agency responsible for long-term planning for the Columbia Basin's energy and conservation needs. Sams is the only tribally enrolled member of the council.

And then an even bigger announcement: Gov. Kate Brown has recommended Sams to lead the National Park Service. “I envision students — both young and old, tribal and nontribal alike — visiting Yellowstone, Arches, Mesa Verde or Oregon's Crater Lake, and hearing the stories of our past and present, including the important stories of the tribal people who have inhabited these special places,” she wrote.

So two people whose ancestors faced the prospect of extermination or forced assimilation so that immigrants, mainly whites, could take their land may be guiding us toward a healthier relationship to that land.

All this made me think of the title our poet laureate, Muskogee (Creek) Joy Harjo, chose for her recent collection of contemporary Native poetry: “When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through.”

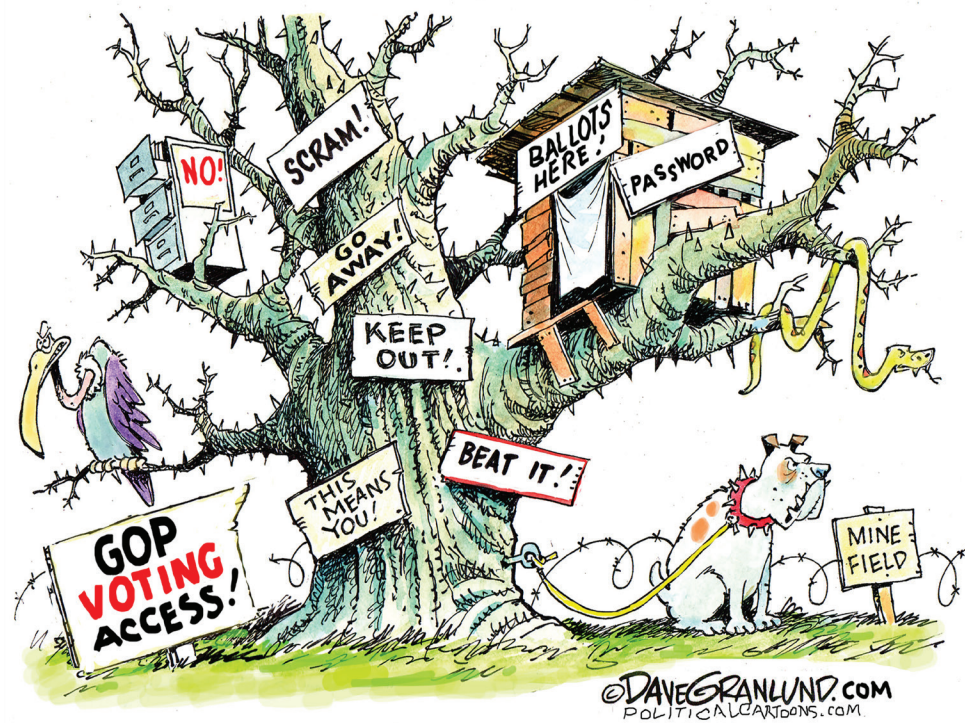
Yet, even now, Asian-Americans are being attacked, and Republican state legislators in 43 states are trying to limit Americans' votes. Arizona state representative John Kavanaugh made headlines last week when he explained that Republicans were happy to create measure that kept people from voting because “everybody shouldn't be voting. ... Quantity is important, but we have to look at the quality of the votes, as well.”

And of course it's primarily brown- and black-skinned people who remain, for those who hold these views, a “problem.” How can we rid America of the belief in white supremacy?

“There is no reason for you to try to become like white men and there is no basis whatsoever for their impertinent assumption that they must accept you,” James Baldwin wrote to his nephew in 1962. “The really terrible thing, old buddy, is that you must accept them ... and accept them with love, for these innocent people have no other hope.”

If a 15-year-old in Harlem could face that challenge, maybe we can rise to ours.

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



Give Oregonians a bright future



KEVIN FRAZIER
OTHER VIEWS

Urban Oregonians are nearly twice as likely than rural residents to say Oregon is headed in the right direction (41% vs. 22%), according to a recent survey by the Oregon Values and Belief Center. That's a difference that should grab headlines, seize our attention and steer our policy.

We need a statewide vision that inspires urban and rural Oregonians alike to see a better future for themselves, their community and the state as a whole.

How you see your future is how you act in the present. When you're optimistic, you make long-term investments, you make long-term plans and you try to improve on the efforts and initiatives that are in place. These are all the sorts of activities that make a strong community even stronger. They result in folks going back to school, launching small businesses and getting involved in their community.

When you're pessimistic, you're not looking forward to tomorrow. In fact, you're likely to be more anxious and stressed, tired and sick. Pessimism is unhealthy. I think we can all agree that we would rather avoid the sort of gloom asso-

ciated with thinking that the best days have come and gone.

It's not surprising rural Oregonians feel less than cheery about the future of Oregon. On the economy, 51% of rural Oregonians think economic conditions in the state are getting worse, compared to just 43% of their urban counterparts. What's more, 25% of rural Oregonians are very worried about their personal finances, whereas just 20% of urban residents feel the same.

A simple goal for all statewide leaders, then, should be to give Oregonians a future to look forward to.

What investments from Salem are going to lead to better tomorrows in Adel and Astoria? What new programs are going to lift up families in Baker City and Bandon? What regulations will be removed or restored to uplift small businesses in Condon and Coos Bay?

A detailed vision that specificity calls out how Oregonians across the state will realize a better tomorrow is what our state deserves and needs. It's no secret that “moonshots” can compel people into action and spark innovation. If Oregonians see a tomorrow worth fighting for, then they'll sacrifice today.

Kevin Frazier was raised in Washington County. He is pursuing a law degree at the University of California, Berkeley School of Law.