

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 2022

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

## OUR VIEW

# A tip of the hat to the area's graduates

We salute the host of area college and high school graduates who strolled across the stage this month, clutching their diplomas.

While graduation is certainly a recognized rite of passage, it is also a time of reflection and hope. Now, more than ever, we need every area graduate.

Lofty goals and sentiments are often legion during graduation — as they should be — but the basic fact remains that the nation, the state and the local community needs every one of those graduates to step out into the adult world with a goal to make a difference.

It may appear easy to dismiss the notion that a single person can make an impact but the truth is each young man and woman who walks off the graduation stage this month can make a difference.

And we need those who want and can make a difference.

At a time when the nation is rife with division, where discord is consumed like an energy drink, America, Oregon, Umatilla and Morrow counties need young people who still retain the determination of their youth. People who are ready and eager to step up and seek change.

Our greatest resource as a nation is our youth.

Our prospects, our opportunities for success as a county, state and nation, rest on the hopes and desires of our young people.

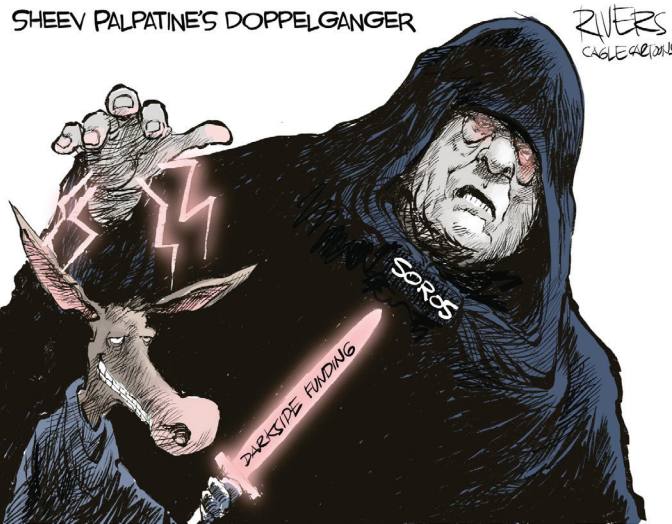
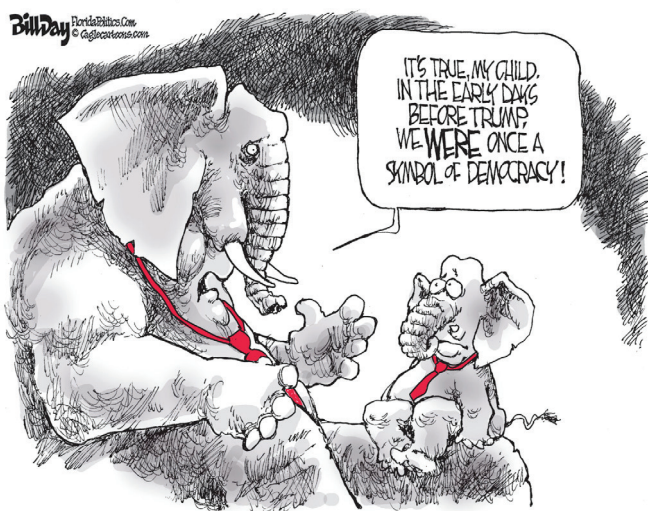
Our young are the agents of our future and the potential they represent is as valuable as any new policy, law or idea.

Granted, we remain the greatest nation on earth in terms of goals and values, and at no time in our shared history has chances of a happy life for our youth been more acute than now.

Yet challenges, risks, also remain for our youth. There is no way to deny the challenges the nation — and the state — face are significant. The perceived problems stack up easily, solutions often are fleeting.

That is why the views and ambitions of those who have just graduated are so important to our collective prosperity. We need every one of the new graduates to feel they can make a difference, that they can help their community, their state and even their nation.

We salute every single graduate from Blue Mountain Community College and all of our area high schools but we hope that they will be able to move ahead in life with a calm but steady resolve to give back to their community and spark change for the good of all.



## Standing with and helping world's refugees



BARBARA CLARK  
A SLICE OF LIFE

How did you observe United Nations World Refugee Day, celebrated on June 20 since 2001? How have I missed it until now and I'm wondering if the word "celebrate" is an appropriate word to use in connection with being a refugee?

I've discovered it is dedicated to honor the courage and resilience of refugees around the world and I like the word "dedicated" better than "celebrated." World Refugee Day was first held globally to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. Now the global refugee crisis is reported worse than it has ever been, with more than 100 million refugees on the move.

Watching evening news, I see Ukrainians fleeing that war and I struggle to see "celebration." The Ukrainian situation eclipsed the Afghan flight from the Taliban takeover, which then eclipsed the Syrian/Lebanon upheaval — all happening to people on the move to escape violence, poverty, civil war, famine, injustice, and then becoming refugees from places like Yemen, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, the Caribbean, Central America and more.

From the time I was young I wanted to see and experience how the rest of the world lived. During my life I've had the opportunity to spend time enjoying hospitality in many countries includ-

ing Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Lebanon, Syria and Central America. After my Peace Corps stint in East Africa and my Middle East travels overland in local transport during the 1960s, I concluded that most people the world over have much in common, more in common than in differences, and it's the different ways we express what we have in common that makes life fascinating.

Refugees have survived a variety of circumstances — war, poverty, floods, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis — many different situations. And in most cases they have lost everything. From my experiences I feel that hospitality, compassion and empathy must be guiding principles in our response.

To understand the issues of refugees and immigration during this past decade, I've joined study groups to a number of the nations involved. During a visit to a United Nations Refugee Camp in northeastern Syria bordering Iraq and Turkey, I heard a horrific story of women and children who had been captured. Their ISIS captors killed the children and forced their mothers and grandmothers to drink their children's blood.

Hearing that, I understood why people leave everything behind to survive, escape the unbelievable, find a place to heal and hopefully find peace.

In El Salvador, two young women whose goal was to leave behind a future of destitution and gang warfare shared their experiences. Their hope was to come to the United States to live the "American Dream." They made it through Guatemala to Mexico and had enough money to hire a "coyote" to take them to the U.S. border. Instead, he took them in the dark of night to a garage

where he raped and trapped them in with another woman he had hidden there. The other woman complained, he killed her, locked the garage and left.

Days passed, a person nearby heard their screams and was able to open the door. They fled and journeyed back to El Salvador. One soon discovered she was pregnant. Her first thought was to get an abortion, she wasn't able, and as she spoke her toddler was playing by her side. Both women cried as they told their stories and explained that they felt forced to live, as difficult and violent as it might be, in their home country.

The question for me now is there a way to stand with the world's 100-plus million people who are on the move seeking safety, security, a better life and peace?

During the past month members and friends of several local churches in Pendleton and Hermiston joined together in both person and on Facebook. Their goal is to examine ways we, as communities in Eastern Oregon, can become involved to welcome, stand with and respond to the needs of refugees and immigrants. There have been three meetings with more questions than answers, that ended on a positive hope that organizations, churches and individuals over the next few months might come together to reach out with a response.

Then, perhaps we can "celebrate" World Refugee Day.

Barbara Clark is a teacher with a broad variety of experience internationally and domestically at primary and secondary levels, Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

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