

OTHER VIEWS

Christine Flowers



A different perspective for America's critics

During the Bicentennial year of 1976, I was a 15-year-old history geek. To be alive for the 200th birthday of our nation, particularly in Philadelphia, where it all began, was intoxicating.

My mother got into the act by dressing her five kids as Revolutionary characters: I was Betsey Ross, my three younger brothers were a motley Spirit of '76 and my 5-year-old sister was trapped in a large papier-mache version of the Liberty Bell. As memory serves, the bell part of the costume was so wide she couldn't make it through most doorways to ask for candy, so there was at least one first-grader in Delco, who wished the British had won.

The history of this magnificent country is so personal to me that I chose to devote my life to helping create new Americans through my immigration practice. Standing beside someone who was born in another land but has jumped through difficult obstacles to take an oath to this one is a sobering, humbling experience. I'd recommend it if you're suffering from cynicism or worse, anti-Americanism.

In fact, I'd recommend a trip to one of those naturalization ceremonies for many of the people I saw whining on social media about how they didn't feel like celebrating on July 4. You know the ones I'm talking about, men and women who assumed that world-weary attitude about how flawed we were, how much inequity there was, how cruel it was to erase rights (that never existed in the first place, Planned Parenthood) and how ridiculous those brainwashed patriots were. Gun violence, misogyny, racism, xenophobia, transphobia, classism and all of the other ills in Pandora's Tupperware were trotted out to remind the rest of us that we were idiots to raise the flag, place hand on heart and give thanks.

The Constitution gives those whiners the right to dissent, and to communicate their grievances to the masses in whatever way they choose, as long as it doesn't foment violence. There was no point in trying to tell these wizened, bitter folk that the only reason they are able to criticize this country is that they live in it. The only reason they have the liberty to malign the flag or the country's founding documents is they live in a country that is constantly looking in a mirror and acknowledging its flaws.

Many of the men and women who take that oath to protect, preserve, serve and defend this country at those naturalization hearings have come from places where speaking out will get you a cot in a gulag, or a premature grave. That's not to say that we should remain silent in the face of injustice. Expression is the keystone of our liberties, and censorship (including self-censorship) is inimical to freedom. Words, in the right mouths and from the right pens, are powerful things.

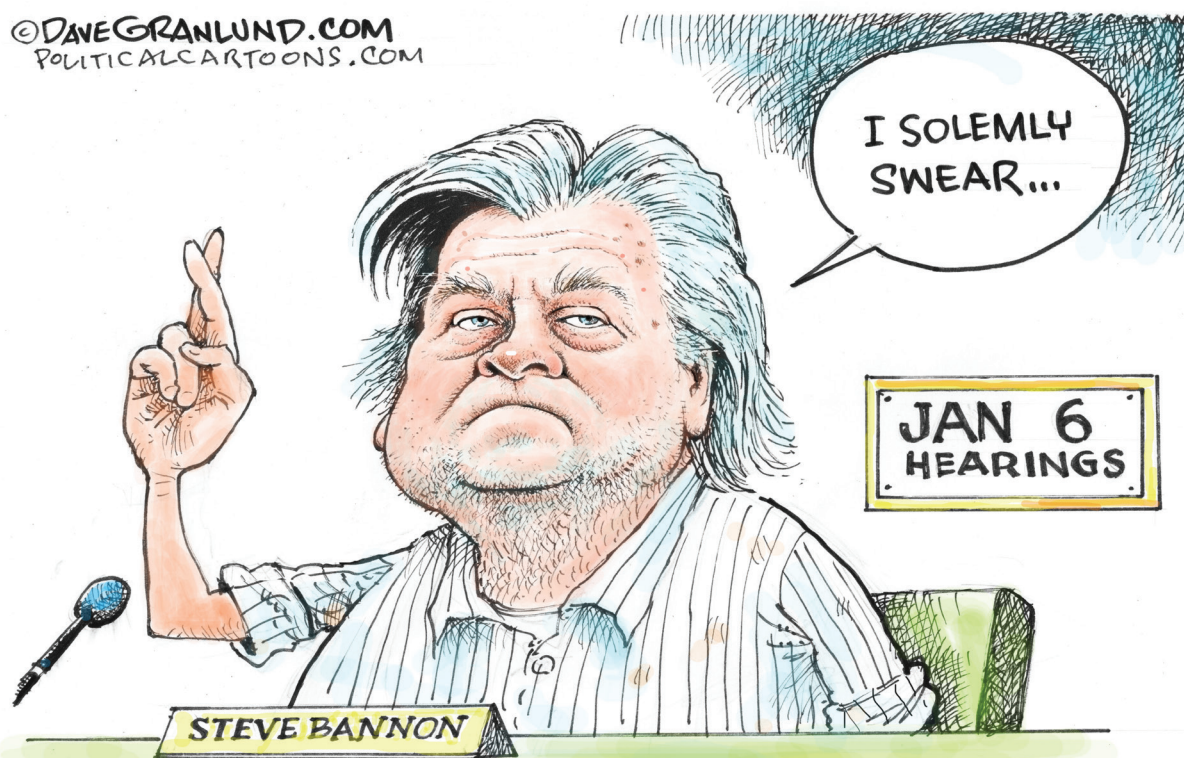
But there is such a thing as context, and a lot of these grievance mongers are tone deaf. Women who lament the fact that they can no longer access abortion rights wherever and whenever they want should look to their sisters in Afghanistan, and choose their words wisely. Gun control advocates who support draconian measures to limit gun ownership should consider what happens when the government determines exactly how we can and should defend ourselves, especially in places like Philadelphia where criminals will always have access to guns. People who accuse Supreme Court justices of imposing their religious beliefs on the "rest of us" should look to China, where the government actually does impose its "nonbelief" on its citizens.

Maybe I've been handling asylum cases for too long. Perhaps my view of this country and its meaning is mired in the sepia-toned photos of Main Street, Norman Rockwell and Frank Capra films.

But maybe I'm the one who's truly representative of the majority of Americans, people who recognize the shortcomings, who aren't blind to the flaws and who still have the ability to understand how very blessed we are.

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Planning the perfect picnic

IT'S ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Ann Bloom



From watermelons to berries — blackberries, raspberries and blueberries — hot dogs and ice cream, July is a month full of tasty food choices that make summer a time for special occasions and celebrations such as family reunions, parties and backyard barbecues. July is also National Picnic Month.

A picnic can be as simple or as ornate, as planned or as spontaneous as a person wants. Either way, safety and organization are important. Believe it or not, there is a way to pack and organize a picnic basket or hamper. In fact, some say there is an art to packing for a picnic outing.

Let's start with organization and packing. Before packing begins, there is some preparation that will help make your picnic a success, starting with some basics such as a blanket (if you are sitting on the ground) or a tablecloth if you opt for a picnic table at a park. Next, consider a hamper or picnic basket, a wine or bottle opener for beverages, wipes to wash hands, cloth or paper napkins, a cutting board, serving spoons, plates, portable condiments, a trash bag, salt and pepper/seasonings, a folding knife for slicing, cutlery and toothpicks to spear those olives or other nibbles. Instead of transporting the original containers of condiments (i.e., mustard and catsup), which take up valuable space, measure them out into smaller containers.

A small first-aid kit is a good idea to bring along; it is hoped you won't need it, but cuts and scrapes do happen, as do bug bites. Also, if anyone in your party is allergic to bee or wasp stings, remember an anaphylaxis kit such as an EpiPen. And don't forget the sunscreen — even for cloudy days.

The destination is another part of planning the successful and fun picnic excursion. Wallowa County has many locations that lend themselves to a picnic including, but not limited to, the state park at the lake. Other locations to check out include the city parks — Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa. Even a pullout by the river, if there is a grassy area far enough away from the road can serve as a picnic spot.

The menu is probably the most fun of all to plan for a picnic. There are so many recipes to choose from, websites to consult and magazines to look through for ideas, it is hard to know where to begin. As with preparation and destination, food runs the gamut from cold fried chicken to a variety of salads (pasta, potato, veggie and fruit), with rolls and desserts rounding out the menu. Of course, there's also deviled eggs, too, and appetizers such as cured olives, cheese plates and vegetable platters with assorted dips. And don't forget the chips. The world of picnic fare is seemingly endless. Beverage choices abound, too. There are now a variety of sodas, iced teas in several summer flavors, juices and flavored waters. For a refreshing summer picnic beverage try adding sliced fruit such as oranges or limes, or cucumbers, to water with ice and taking it along in a thermos jug.

Once you have decided on the menu, next comes the preparation for packing. As with any food-related activity, food safety is important. The rule about keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold also applies to picnics. Hot foods should be kept at a constant temperature at or above 140 degrees Fahrenheit until serving time and cold foods should be kept at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit before serving. Foods should be returned to their respective hot and cold temperatures and containers within two hours of serving to avoid the development of bacteria which causes food-borne illnesses.

The use of cold packs, or ice in bags, in coolers can keep cold foods cold. Foods that need to be kept hot can be placed in insulated thermoses or carriers; this may apply more to picnics in the cooler, fall months than the hotter summer months. Depending on the weather, though, picnics can happen in any season.

Packing a picnic basket or hamper and a cooler is simple and easy. Heavy foods go in first and softer foods go on top. This will keep the softer foods, such as sandwiches or cakes and desserts from being crushed by the heavier foods such as bowls of salads. Using reusable containers helps to protect food, ensuring things arrive intact and can also help maintain appropriate temperature. Reusable containers to pack food, instead of using foil or plastic wrap, also has the advantage that your foods won't leak before arrival.

After a picnic of fun, good food, good friends and beverages, don't forget to be a responsible picnicker and pack out your trash. Often overlooked, a few trash bags will make clean up a fast and easy task. You can use one for garbage, one for dirty dishes and one for recyclables such as cardboard, soda cans and glass.

Not all picnic destinations come with potable water — water that is safe for human use. This is where a supply of disposable wipes or premoistened paper towels from home come in handy to wipe sticky hands, wipe up spills, clean hands before eating and after packing up the garbage before heading for home. A bottle of hand sanitizer is an added benefit.

Wherever your next picnic takes you, and whatever your menu, with a little planning, and following a few simple suggestions, your next picnic will be a sure success and you will be a veteran picnicker in no time.

Ann Bloom lives in Enterprise and has worked for the OSU Extension Service for 15 years as a nutrition educator. She studied journalism and education at Washington State University.

Governor race takes a turn with SCOTUS decisions

OTHER VIEWS

Randy Stapilus



The independent gubernatorial candidacy of Betsy Johnson is predicated on bringing together two dissatisfied groups — Republicans unhappy with the Trumpy side of their party, Democrats unhappy with the Portland-style liberalism in theirs — with independents to form a polyglot plurality.

She took a useful step in that direction with her call for a series of debates around the state in addition to the traditional Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association faceoff, and "if possible, it would be preferable for these debates to be televised, so that more people are able to hear directly from the candidates."

That tactic comes with high risk for Johnson in this season, not because of any lack of skill at the podium, but because of landmine issues.

Three things have happened in the last month or so, two in the last week, that has upset that calculation.

One, purely political, came in the Republican primary election, when Christine Drazan, a former legislator who led her party's House caucus, won her party's nomination. She probably was the most broadly appealing of the many contenders, even winning endorsements from news media like the Oregonian and Bend Bulletin. The part of Johnson's strategy based on breakthrough Republican voters, who might have been more interested in an independent if the nominee were weaker, took a hit with that result.

The other two, more recent, developments were national in origin.

One was the U.S. Supreme Court gun decision overturning a long-standing New

York law on public guns, swiftly following a much-noted mass shooting of school children in Uvalde, Texas. That has put the whole question of gun regulation and rights close up.

That's not a difficult issue for either Drazan, who, with her A rating from the National Rifle Association, is in line with her party, or for the Democratic nominee, Tina Kotek, who like her party favors stricter regulation. (She has called for a debate centered around gun policy.) Support and opposition for both are baked in. Johnson, too, has an A rating from the National Rifle Association, which may hurt her with Democrats.

The third development is abortion, something I noted two months ago, as a "political issue not top of mind for most Oregonians but (which) may get there in coming months." It seems to have arrived.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court's (expected) reversal of Roe v. Wade on June 24, the future of abortion has become the topic of the moment and probably of the weeks to come, and it may affect the upcoming November elections. Abortion battles coast to coast are boiler over already. Oregon's rules on abortion won't change — for now — but will be affected by what other states do. And national Republican political figures (notably former Vice President Mike Pence) have called for a nationwide abortion ban, which they likely would try to pass if they're able after the 2024 election.

The gubernatorial candidates split on this opposite to the way they do on guns. More or less.

Drazan was one of four endorsed governor candidates of Oregon Right to Life, which opposes abortion "from the moment of conception to natural death." She tweeted her praise of the Roe reversal and pledged to follow up on it; we can expect to hear more about where she would try to take Oregon, and whether she'd back a nationwide ban. She may face a tug of war between a base urging her to commit to reversing the state's pro-choice policies, and a broader electorate less accepting of that idea.

Independent Betsy Johnson said clearly, "I am pro-choice. This is a bedrock issue for me and, frankly, for Oregon, a fundamental right."

That could hurt her with Republicans — but it's not all of the story. Within hours of the Supreme Court decision, Kotek released a memo pointing out that Johnson had just welcomed, as chairwoman of Republicans for Johnson, former governor candidate Bridget Barton. She, like Drazan, was a co-endorsee of Oregon Right to Life, and said of abortion, "My efforts as governor will focus on support for all human life, including all of our most vulnerable from conception." That could be enough to make some otherwise tempted Democrats uneasy. (Kotek also tied Drazan to several anti-abortion measures that probably would not sell well with the Oregon electorate.)

It's Kotek, the Democrat with strong pro-choice views (endorsed by Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon, Pro-Choice Oregon and The Mother PAC) who has seized the abortion issue with a parade of statements since the court ruling, and for good reason: Her stance is likely close to that of a majority of Oregon voters.

In 2018 a relatively modest ballot measure which would scale back (but not eliminate) public funding for abortions, was rejected by voters 64% to 36%. Support in Oregon for retaining something like Roe v. Wade may be even more sweeping. Earlier, in 2014 (if national trends are any indication, pro-Roe views were less popular than now) a Pew Research study found 63% of Oregonians thought abortion should be "legal in all/most cases."

Abortion and guns, so often nationally a prescription for conservative wins, could cut the other way in Oregon this November.

Randy Stapilus has researched and written about Northwest politics and issues since 1976 for a long list of newspapers and other publications. A former newspaper reporter and editor, and more recently an author and book publisher, he lives in Carlton.