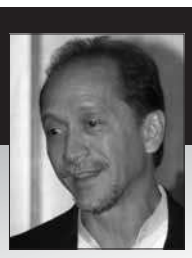
TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ *Polo*

# Dreaming after all that campaigning

Another season of national theater is over. Outside our kitchen window, an Oregon November rain is drumming jazzy blues on orange maple and yellowing elm. A presidential election cycle finishing and another summer ending always leave me at once comforted and anxious.

I'm at our kitchen table. Morning coffee's steaming my cheeks and I'm indulging in weeks of morning papers, neglected except for those intoxicating campaign stories that've captured our limited attention spans this last month. Here's a report about Syria's air force crushing 11 Aleppo families just before dinnertime. Here's one about 3.5 million Nigerian elders and babies stubborn enough to survive Boko Haram warlords, now facing starvation in refugee hovels. A monster sob rises inside me.

Here's an editorial about Russian President Putin having a lot to gain and no love to lose by projecting brazen old-school power into several regions, including cyberspace. Here's one about the arrest of 10 businessmen after 10 years of brutalizing and selling Mexican girls and women across national and state borders. I dash to our kitchen counter to tear off a Brawny, to mop up my face, before my wife comes down.

Our family is made of turmoil like that. Likewise for most of Portland's 1-in-5 foreign-borns. All of us ache in all those places our hearts and bones got broken.

To be clear — because clarity is essential during transitions both settled and New Americans are making now — it's not the WWF-style body slamming of robust democracy that makes us newcomers so blue. Tidak aduh'illaah (OMG no). Not at all. We love the drama, those puffy heroes and campy villains. It's not the approach of another wet Oregon winter. Indeed, it is because of our blessed rain, our swollen Rivers Willamette and Columbia, and the silty shores stewarded by 140 centuries of families living and loving here, that we thrive here.

Tidak djiran djiran manis — no, dear neighbors — what floods our households is the grief of that Arab dad, a working guy like me, arriving for dinner where his home used to be. What overwhelms me is that photo of him digging, fingers bleeding, through concrete chunks. Digging for his pretty wife. Digging for their buried babies.

What paralyzes New Americans — in a nation now as jazzed with newcomers as we were in the early 1900s — is Mexican wives and daughters disappeared on their way to market or to school.

**What all new and Americans need**

Okay. Campaign 2016 is over. Time to get our robust republic back to work, in a world of hurt. And New Americans know exactly what kind of dreams are due for those settled and for those resettling.

For as long as I can remember, our elders have been talking about slim soldierboys named Smitty and Red and Dakota, earnest guapos who smacked the Chrysanthemum Emperor's ferocious army into unconditional surrender. While keeping his dignity intact.

They were regular Joes fighting for American ideals, and our liberty. Yanks, we called them. They treated our wounded women with the gentle manners their moms taught them. They calmed our kids with thick Hershey bars. They built us a sturdy schoolhouse. Then a playground, out of construction leftovers. That done, they quietly went home to their families.

Today, I'm an activist lawyer. For our next months, community mechanicos like me will be explaining to families living here, and to families in our roughly 70 sending countries, what on earth's up with America. Making it upbeat. And smart, like autumn rain on Subaru hoods and Volvo wagons.

To do that we need to hear our new president and new congress say they're up to it too. We need leaders as discerning and deliberate as those Bronx, San Diego, and Badland boys who sent us dreaming not so long ago. American dreaming.

Do that and we'll show up early and leave late every single workday. Saturdays we'll shop and shop so our kids can dress super, to show respect for our dear teachers. From our rather grim parts of Portland we'll engage our city's institutions of education, commerce, and law enforcement, with ridiculous optimism. We'll allow no erosive cynicism.

That done, at no later than 10:00pm, our households will settle down, to dream up some more. Alhamdulillaah.

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***The Asian Reporter's Expanding American Lexicon***

*(Because a robust patois of shared languages serves our cosmopolitan city.)*

**70 sending countries**: Reference to the reality that in our shared city today, newcomers no longer need suffer the total break between how we are here and how we are in our homelands. A thriving economy depends on Portlanders understanding how our precious planet is a now circulating system of people, products, and ideas. And that this is very cool.

**140 centuries**: Reverential reference to how long native families have been living and loving here. And how much we owe them for these generous river matriarchs and our rich soil.

**Alhamdulillaah** (From Arabic, also see: Hebrew *halelluyah*): All our gratitude to God. An expression of our humbled place in an often un-understandable but blessed universe.

**Chrysanthemum Emperor**: Reference to Imperial Japan's Showa Emperor. During his reign, Japan invaded, occupied, and exploited many European colonies including our homeland, the Nederland Oost Indië (later, the Republic of Indonesia).

**Djiran djiran** (Bahasa Indonesia): Neighbors. To make a noun into a plural, just repeat it. Bahasa is Indonesia's national language, in an energetic nation of 700 languages.

**Guapo** (Spanish, Pilipino, and Indo patois): Handsome guy.

**Hearts and bones got broken**: Human migration means discontinuities, often traumatic. Our present generation of newcomers is trying to deal upfront with these losses. Earlier generations simply could not, with enduring public health consequences for families, communities, indeed for our American nation.

**Portland's 1-in-5 foreign-borns**: Based on aggregated data from Portland's several school districts. Public-policy shifts are necessary for immigrant integration by design, rather than by default to very bad historical habits.

**WWF style:** Reference to the World Wrestling Federation, the sporting theater our pop's boys grew up watching. My favs: The Iron Sheik (Persian); Jimmy Snuka (Hawaiian); and of course The Rock (Samoan Dwayne Johnson).

***For our next months, community mechanicos like me will be explaining to families living here, and to families in our roughly 70 sending countries, what on earth's up with America. Making it upbeat.***

## My Turn: What we can do

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Hardesty believes most people want to do better, but they are still learning about and unlearning the racism and bigotry they were brought up with and what they've seen and experienced. There will be plenty of opportunities to practice this, as there have been many instances after the 2016 election of people who have become what Hardesty calls "emboldened" to direct their racism at people of color, Muslims, and members of the LGBTQ community.

For me, it's more important than ever to unify with other marginalized groups and to have honest conversations with those who have different views. It's going to be a struggle, as it always is when change is at stake. Our country is far from perfect, but I still believe America can be a hate-free place where people are able to find equality and opportunity.

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## Japan rubber-mask makers happy to face a Trump presidency

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employee hand-paints details such as blue eyes for a life-like resemblance.

Yagihara said most customers wear the masks for year-end parties and other social gatherings. They cost 2,400 yen ($22) each and are available in Japan at toy and retail stores and on internet shopping sites.

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## After poll failure, expert makes good on promise to eat bug

PRINCETON, N.J. (AP) — A Princeton University polling expert who said he would eat a bug if Donald Trump got more than 240 electoral votes followed through on his promise.

Sam Wang, of the Princeton Election Consortium, made good on his Twitter word on CNN.

He ate from a can of gourmet-style crickets and added in some honey.

He said John the Baptist ate locusts and honey in the wilderness, and he considers himself to be in the wilderness as well.

Wang said on the consortium's website that polls failed, but that his analysis "amplified" that failure. He apologized for "underestimating the possibility" of Trump winning.

Wang is a data scientist and neuroscientist at Princeton.

Mark your calendar!

***The Year of the Rooster begins January 28, 2017.***

Display advertising space reservations for our special Year of the Rooster issue are due ***Monday, January 2 at 5:00pm***.

*The Asian Reporter's Lunar New Year special issue will be published on Monday, January 16, 2017.*

***The staff at The Asian Reporter wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday!***