



Ongoing Discussion

From our Executive Director Kara Steffensen (also known as Eugene's 2018 Slug Queen, Queen Sluggita Incognita)

Fun is sometimes serious business for Slug Queens, so I feel compelled to share with you one of my secrets in winning the crown, which is nothing more than reading a good book. Okay, I also sewed many shiny objects onto some jeans, wore a green boa, sang and danced, while accompanied by talented friends and fantastic, cartwheeling children (so sorry you missed it). But my point here is that this is quite a good book about fun, or to be a bit more precise, about play, joy, comedy and survival—and no one is reading it, *The Comedy of Survival: Literary Ecology and a Play Ethic* by Joseph Meeker.

Please don't be put off by this odd combination of unfashionable terms: play and ethics, or even literary plus ecology. In the book, Joseph Meeker explains how these ideas are

BWNW People



Youth Call for System Change Not Climate Change.

by Kara Steffensen

Collen Swafford, a high school senior at South Eugene, was burning the candles at both ends in March. He was juggling studying for winter-term final exams, scholarship deadlines for college, and organizing his first local protest about climate change. When it was all over, he looked exhausted,

possible, go well together, and can be used to face challenging circumstances in one's daily life.

There are so many such circumstances in my daily life. I do hope his ideas will come in handy across the planet, and for myself in particular.

Mentioning the planet reminds me that I need to wrap this up and face four boxes of recently harvested tomatoes. You may now imagine me moving gracefully towards the exit, turning at the last moment and posing one more question.... Can we use the *Comedy of Survival* to help us deal with the crisis of Climate Change? Meeker writes: "The comic vision is not polarized, but complex: comedy sees many aspects simultaneously, and seeks for a strategy that will resolve problems with a minimum of pain and confrontation. The comic way is not heroic or idealistic; rather, it is a strategy for survival." (p. 15).

This author seems to have ideas about how to deal with polarization that involve a minimal amount of pain and confrontation. Sign me up honey, and please sign up a few key women as well.

Did I say women? If I didn't mean to, Meeker definitely did, "The ways of women have often been comic ways, strategic and clever rather than forceful and invasive. The poor and the enslaved know comic ways of evasive action and misdirection to save their skins and get what they need for survival. Power is the ability to force one's will upon others; comedy is the ability to meet one's needs with wit and imagination." (p. 14).

and I asked, "Was it worth it?" "Yes, definitely," he said. "It was worth it because I was part of the local and global movement to do something about the climate crisis." Collen is a member of South Eugene's Earth Guardians 350. The high school club was successful last year in getting the school district to begin installation of energy efficient windows in their building.

In March, the club responded to Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who called for global school strikes to protect the planet on Friday, March 15, 2019. The Eugene March 15th strike was a collaborative project, organized by Earth Guardians 350, and a new, local chapter of the Sunrise Movement. This group is made up local youth and students at the University of Oregon. This meant that Collen was planning the event with college students, and networking with other high schools and middle schools, to bring youth from Springfield and Eugene to the rally in front of the Federal building. And they all had to skip their Friday classes to be there.

When I asked him what it was like to work with the new Sunrise Movement group, he said, "It felt empowering to work with college students just a few years older than me, and we were working together as peers. And it was fun too, because we painted banners while listening to music. I got a chance to express my artistic side while facing the threat of climate change." He said that the Sunrise Movement has some different strategies for addressing climate change than 350, or Our Children's Trust, two of the other groups he has worked with. It was important to learn more about their movement and their different tactics.

When I asked him what he had learned from the experience, he had quite a list. "I learned how to make a press release, how to use a megaphone, and how to lead the marchers in chants as we walked through the city streets to the rally. It was pretty hard at first, but I think I got it towards the end, and it was cool. I also learned how to contact the police and talked with them about our plans for

What can I say? Not being full of wit when pressured by so many tomatoes, all I can think of are the names of two exceptional women who suddenly come to mind: Dr. Mary Wood and Ms. Julia Olson. They are accompanied by many women, men, girls, boys, and supporters around the world who are all working with Our Children's Trust. They are preparing for the "Trial of the Century," set to begin on October 29th 2018 but postponed. They have much more than 40 lbs. of wit and imagination. They have sound ethical and legal arguments, brilliant scientific analysis, and years of meticulous legal research building this case. They also have singing, dancing, cartwheeling, passionate kids, who have committed themselves to protecting life on the planet.

So finally, off to the tomatoes I must go. But here's one last quote from Joseph W. Meeker. "As the Puritans articulated a work ethic, so now it is our privilege to give voice to a new ethic of play. If we were to write a Playbill of Rights, it might include the following:

All players are equal, or can be made so.
Boundaries are well observed by crossing them.
Novelty is more fun than repetition.
Rules are negotiable from moment to moment.
Risk in pursuit of play is worth it.
The best play is beautiful and elegant.
The purpose for playing is to play, nothing else."

the march. I filled out the forms to get a police escort and talked with them about the route we wanted. I coordinated communication with five other high schools to invite them to march with us using Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, texting, and word of mouth. And at the protest, I helped lead a group activity with the people there. And even though it didn't work as well as we hoped, we got a lot of feedback from the participants that we can use for the next protest."

Collen plans to pursue a degree in Ecological Engineering next year at Oregon State University where he will continue to have to juggle academics and climate activism. Beyond War Northwest is sharing this perspective of a young climate activist because we want to support and learn from the next generation of leaders. We also know that war, particularly the threat of nuclear war, worsens the climate crisis and threatens all life on Earth. We hope that the global peace movement and the international climate movement can work more closely together now to protect the living planet we all depend on, and to bring peace and justice to all of its people.



Good Reading

Drawdown: the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global

(Reprinted from an article printed in
September 2018)

March 16, 2019 – Today's Thoughts

by Rebecca Wolle

Yesterday, students around the
world
left their classes in protest of adults'
treatment of our planet.

An angry shooter killed four dozen
worshippers to protect his world
from people of color: "invaders"!

Miracles occurred, along with
countless
acts of bravery and kindness,
small and large.

We want simple solutions to complex
problems, even while we know
they will not suffice.

We crave for "thoughts and prayers"
to be enough to move the needle —
a bouquet to replace what is lost.

We fear the real price, hoping
it will be paid by "them," not us.
And yet...

Perhaps the answer is not quite so
dire, the cost not so dear.
Could it be love?

warming, Paul Hawken, editor.

by Anne Millhollen

The links between increased global warming
and escalated human conflicts are clear.
Drawdown outlines the ways we can work to
reverse the impending challenges to our
survival. We do that by shifting our
worldview from an emphasis on competition
to one of cooperation and collaboration.

The chapter titled "Reciprocity" by Janine
Benyus provides a framework for changing
our focus. Benyus describes how ecologists
analyzed plant and animal aggregations
from the perspective of competition and
predation for decades. The frame was that
the plants and animals were a random
collection of individuals dispersed by chance
and arranged according to how successfully
they competed. The new outlook is
that there is a "Wood Wide Web" in the
ground under forests with connections
between roots and microbes, a reciprocity
that we have only now come to understand.
The concept of a forest or prairie as a
community is much like the way we would
like to think about our communities, working
together makes the whole survive. Grasses
thrive better when oak trees are there, and
tree intercropping improves the survival of
agricultural plantations (think shade-grown
coffee or cacao for chocolate).

This change, focusing on the whole, the
community, can lead us to solutions. As Bill
McKibben has written, we cannot reverse
global warming as individuals. What
individuals can do is form a movement. Paul
Hawkins writes "We are surfeited with



metaphors of war, such that when we hear the word 'defense,' we think attack....Climate solutions depend on community, collaboration and cooperation” (p. 217). More than 250 individuals contributed to Project Drawdown. If peace groups were to come together with environmental and social justice groups, imagine what we could accomplish.

Good Reading

Outlaw War, Again?

by Mike Rose

Michael Shermer is a science writer and monthly contributor to *Scientific American* (SA) magazine. He takes up many different topics, they often deal with issues of interest to *Beyond War Northwest*. Shermer provides a secular perspective and promotes citizens exercising their critical thinking skills.

A good example is the Michael Shermer essay in *Scientific American*: "Can We Agree to Outlaw War -- Again?" (from December 1 2017). Apparently we outlawed war in 1928. Shermer discusses the

corrupt justification of war, stats on the various causes of war, and offers more effective alternatives to violent responses. When our reps are confronted with these hard issues at Beyond War tabled events, this might make a good handout.

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/can-we-agree-to-outlaw-war-mdash-again/>

For his contribution to the December 1, 2018 SA issue, he wrote about the disturbing trends among children born in the Internet Generation (those born in mid 1990's). These iGeners are now of college age. The essay talks about the Internet, social media and other issues that contribute to polarization. The hazards they face persist:

1. Over-protective parenting
2. "Trust your feelings" as a retreat from critical thinking may contribute to stereotyping others
3. Us/them labeling, its interpretation as categorizing people as good/evil, and consequent polarization

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/kids-today-are-being-socialized-to-think-theyre-fragile-snowflakes/>

Announcement!

Beyond War Northwest will be revitalizing the Beyond War Peace Award this year with a new design. The topic, criteria and nomination process will be presented in a future newsletter. Let us know if you have suggestions!

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