

Summer of Human Suffering

Statesman Journal 2:39 p.m. PDT August 3, 2014

What has become of the world we thought we knew?



(Photo: Associated Press photos)

Oregonians confront the chaos and calamity

What has become of the world we thought we knew?

The globally connected world. The post-Cold War world in which mutual interests would replace sectarian savagery; the world in which human suffering would be lessened, if not eradicated, by advances in technology and human collaboration.

That world, if it existed, has disappeared. Instead, this is the summer in which hemispheres have collided and the boundaries of human hope have collapsed.

Over Ukraine, a passenger plane is shot from the sky for reasons unknown and by groups uncertain. In the Middle East, violence rocks Iraq, Syria, Israel, Gaza and elsewhere. From Africa to the Americas, violence based on religion, ethnicity, economics and politics uproots millions from their homes. Drug cartels run parts of Mexico, and their tentacles sink deep into Central America, Africa and the U.S. Parents seeking hope and a better life for their children send them on a covert, uncertain journey to the U.S. Ebola, a catastrophic disease with an exotic name, rages in Africa.

It is as if "Lord of the Flies" has come to life.

And against this backdrop we are reminded that World War I started 100 years ago this summer — this very week, according to some historians. It was the war that bred fascism, communism and Nazism; the war that collapsed empires and laid the seeds for today's Israeli-Palestinian crises; the war that claimed 16 million lives and ended the hopes of millions more.

It was the Great War, or the War to End All Wars.

Except it didn't.

And in its aftermath, and the aftermath of many other wars, named and unnamed, this is the summer in which we fear we are again approaching the abyss.

Yet hope reigns. Human decency endures. An Ebola-stricken U.S. doctor insists that the last of the vital treatment drugs be administered to a fellow patient instead of himself. An Oregon-based relief agency, Mercy Corps, defies danger to distribute aid in Gaza, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, South Sudan and elsewhere. In Salem and Keizer, so many groups are devoted to improving children's lives that the new school superintendent is amazed by their cumulative efforts.

Oregonians Answer The Questions:

We asked Oregonians to answer two questions regarding the issues surrounding the Summer of Human Suffering

Summer of Human Suffering: Oregonians confront the chaos and calamity

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/editorials/2014/08/03/summer-of-human-suffering/13510387/>)

What should our response be to the global suffering?

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2014/08/03/response-global-suffering/13511167/>)

What can we do as individuals this week?

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/news/2014/08/03/can-individuals-week/13511405/>)

Rapid Responders answer both questions

(<http://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2014/08/03/short-takes-two-big-questions/13496413/>)

Yes, we are disheartened, and we are uncertain.

But we do not turn our backs.

We dare not turn our backs.

Whether out of compassion or from our own eventual self-interests, we have come to realize that we do exist in an interconnected world, whether for good or for ill. Left unresolved, the strife and suffering from other regions will somehow and someday touch us.

So we wonder, What can we do?

The answers are individual, and inside today's Statesman Journal we share a number of them.

And we encourage you — we implore you — to find the right answers for you. To act. Today. Now.

It is one world. It is our world.

See answers from various members of the community here:

[What can we do as individuals this week? \(http://\)](#)

[What should our response be to global suffering? \(http://\)](#)

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Rapid Response: Short takes on two big questions

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Aug. 2, 2014, 9:34 p.m.