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YOUR COMMUNITY YOUR VOICE

Dalton gun incident is a warning shot

The incident in Dalton proves arming anybody, let alone teachers, is a bad idea with potentially tragic consequences. Anybody with a gun is a potential mass murderer. Life is about percentages. The teacher involved, the “voice” of the Catamounts, should be the clarion call for gun control and should speak loud and clear to the people of Dalton who seem to hold their weapons so closely. Or will they lay their children on the shrine to the NRA — mere Topheth (Jeremiah 7:3 0-34).

David Bean
Chatsworth, Ga.

Shooting is harvest of moral decline

The murder of 17 people in Florida has elicited responses from us all.

On Feb. 16, your Times editorial headline was “Evil doesn’t kill people, people with guns do.”

Consider a more realistic headline: “People with evil intent can kill, sometimes with guns.”

If there are multiple victims or just one, murder is heinous. People make choices based on what rules their innermost being.

Spiritual darkness can cause someone to kill with a gun, knife, bat, hammer, ax, poison, chainsaw, device strapped on a suicide bomber, pair of hands choking a neck, vehicle in control of someone plowing into an unsuspecting crowd or whatever killing tool is used by someone harboring evil in the heart. Hence, the cruel harvest of moral decline.

The traditional family unit has been compromised, aberrant behavior has been glamorized and nurtured, the sports and entertainment worlds rarely produce wholesome heroes anymore, the sanctity of life has been brutalized in the womb and out of it.

Youth who have no roots in the faith that grounded America’s beginnings are directionless and searching for attention in the wrong places.

So, the battle in our culture continues until God’s light resides in our hearts.

Janet Reeve

Important to fund Head Start agencies

As executive director of Family Resource Agency in Cleveland, I attended the National Head Start Association Winter Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C., with more than 500 Head Start families, alumni and staff from almost all 50 states.

While meeting with the offices of our elected representatives, I discussed the need for robust funding for Head Start programs in Bradley, McMinn, Meigs and Polk counties.

As I spoke about the impact Head Start has on families, I kept the story of Tony, a Head Start child, close to mind. Tony’s teacher suggested the mother seek counseling for Tony’s disruptive behavior and gave her the name of a local agency.

Many years later, that teacher ran into Tony’s mother, who gave her a big hug. The mother had taken the teacher’s advice, and Tony, after 10 years of counseling, was a successful high schooler: playing on the football team, earning excellent grades and planning to attend college. Tony’s mother said none of this would have happened without Head Start.

Our children are too important for our leaders to be tightfisted. It’s time for them to step up on behalf of our most vulnerable early learners.

James E. Anderson

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EDITORIAL

SIZING UP TEACHERS FOR GUN DUTY

President Donald Trump wasn’t the first to suggest that teachers be armed against potential shooters, but he has made the suggestion a part of the national conversation this week in considering what steps might be taken against such threats.

It made us try to remember if there were good candidates to go packing among the teachers, coaches and administrators who populated the schools of our youth.

The only possible one we can imagine from our elementary schools days was the principal. Tall and imposing and the only adult male administrator or teacher for most of our years there, he could effect a stern look and stop an unruly fourth-grader from carrying out the mischief he had in mind.

His very entrance in the cafeteria drew whispers of “LBJ” (Lyndon Baines Johnson, the United States president at the time) and brought immediate quiet to the joint. The principal shared a last name with the then-president and the respect of his presence, but not his initials.

However, he was a kind man personally, a family man and probably not one who’d want to wear a shoulder holster with a gun.

The young music teacher was not the type Trump had in mind, either. Her anger was too volatile. She once saw a classmate leaning back in his folding chair, walked over to him and said, “I hope you fall,” then pushed him over. On another occasion, she shoved the same guy into lockers in the hall, causing his ear to bleed. Once, to get our attention, she hurled a music book from her piano across students’ head and into a set of lockers. Without a doubt, the sound it made got our attention.

Most of the others, with their gray hair, granny shoes and matronly bodies, probably weren’t candidates, though.

Junior high school had a few more men. One of the physical education teachers had a fierce reputation, could pass for a hardened detective on a television series and didn’t mind insulting you if you didn’t raise your legs high enough while doing leg lifts. Maybe he would have volunteered.

But it definitely wouldn’t have been the young, male social studies teacher. The word was, in trying to break up a fight

involving a tall, broad seventh-grade girl in a classroom next door to ours, he got the worst of it.

High school probably would have produced more students volunteering for gun duty than teachers. Again, there were a couple of physical education teachers whose tough reputations preceded them — spending part of the period in push-up formation if you forgot your gym uniform, for instance — but nothing we knew then, or later, made us believe they’d raise their hand to carry a gun.

And it definitely wouldn’t have been the milquetoast-y biology teacher, who once told us the only thing he did behind his wife’s back was zip the zipper of her dress. The same man once went through an entire period unaware a leaking, red ink pen had started out as a tiny spot on his pocket and grown to a large spot that covered his entire pocket and made it appear he’d been shot. Naturally, we didn’t tell him until the end of the period.

Today’s teachers may be tougher. They certainly have more paperwork to do, more technology to adapt to and more concerns to keep in mind about individual students. But fitting gun training and firing range experience into evenings and weekends when they still have papers to grade, lesson plans to write and classroom supplies to buy — not to mention a personal life — seems to be asking a lot.

Now, we think allowing student resource officers (SROs) — all of whom should already have firearms training — to carry guns is worth considering, and we’d even entertain the thought of teachers who’d had similar police or military training, and volunteered, to be allowed to have a gun.

But it should not become incumbent on teachers to have to protect their students with firearms. There are other ways involving adding more SROs, altering the way visitors enter schools and installing devices that detect weapons. All are expensive, but none involve scenarios such as six or eight reluctant, lightly trained teachers crossfiring guns across halls in an effort to subdue a shooter.

So, in general, while we don’t favor the concept of arming teachers with guns or sharp-edged music books, there are other strategies worthy of some consideration.

COMMENTARY

CNN’S MANY MINUTES OF SECOND AMENDMENT HATE

CNN’s recent town hall political takedown of the Bill of Rights and the Second Amendment — in response to the



John Kass

tragic murders at a Florida school — has been wrongly described by some conservatives as an Orwellian Two Minutes Hate.

So, those who called it CNN’s Two Minutes Hate should publicly admit how wrong they were.

Because it went on for much longer than two minutes, didn’t it?

It went on and on and on, and from the earliest moments it became clear that this wasn’t a reasonable discussion about complicated policy and the Bill of Rights.

This was all about confrontation, drama and exhorting a crowd that wants politicians to “do something” about guns. This was about stoking politics, anger, frustration and fear.

A student likened Sen. Marco Rubio, the Florida Republican, to mass murder suspect Nikolas Cruz for accepting campaign donations from the National Rifle Association. The crowd jeered at Rubio.

And another star of the show was Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel, in full uniform.

Israel is a politician, a Dem-

ocrat who runs for election, and he received a roar from the crowd when he lashed out at NRA spokeswoman Dana Loesch.

What bothered him was the NRA bringing up the aggravating fact that there had been repeated and well-documented failures of law enforcement — from the FBI to the locals — that could have stopped Cruz.

“You just told this group of people that you’re standing up for them,” he said. “You are not standing up for them until you say, ‘I want less weapons.’”

The crowd cheered.

“You will get this done,” Sheriff Israel told them. “Vote in people who feel the same way you do.”

What the public didn’t know at the time of Israel’s speechifying was that on the day of the shooting, a Broward deputy sheriff was stationed at the school.

When the shooting began, Israel’s armed deputy hid outside in safety and remained there.

The CNN event was compelling TV. But raw emotion is always compelling on the screen.

What TV can’t handle is context, or complicated, layered arguments. And explaining how policy works its way through a republic, and how the system is designed to restrain passion, to diffuse it — all that is death to TV.

Irritated TV news executives would roll their eyes and

sigh, and mouth the word “boring” if asked to spend equal time explaining to civics-deprived Americans how their republic was set up years ago.

It was set up to restrain the passions of its people, and was made inefficient by design in order to protect individual liberty.

Our system wasn’t designed to “do something” quickly. But those who won’t “do something” quickly with the Second Amendment are cast as agents of evil in all this.

TV isn’t about restraint. It’s all about the immediate. It’s all about passion, emotion, drama, anger, frustration and tears, because that is what TV does well, selling it all, triggering it all, tears especially, and selling some more.

TV does this all exceedingly well with dramatic serial fiction, and through sports like the Winter Olympics, and that CNN event.

The grief of the survivors is legitimate. What could be more legitimately emotional than a gathering of students and their parents after 17 people were shot down by a madman with an AR-15 rifle?

There are things that can be done, including hardening the soft targets of suburban schools and using state legislative measures, including temporary gun violence restraining orders to take guns away from threats like Nikolas Cruz. Yet even that takes time.

As far as TV goes, CNN’s

many minutes of hate on the Second Amendment was dramatic. It pushed the right Democratic political buttons. But it will also echo throughout the red states, and Democratic officeholders in those states may face blowback at the polls.

A day after the CNN event, an amazing thing happened. The news broke about how that armed deputy stationed at the school had failed to act, and later news sources suggested three other deputies at the school did not enter during the shooting. Sheriff Israel had to say something.

“I’m devastated. Sick to my stomach. There are no words,” he said of the deputy who avoided danger that day.

No words, sir? No words? Of course not. Yet you had plenty of words at that CNN event, where you played the demagogue in front of a crowd of grieving Americans.

The framers of the Constitution were worried about people just like you. It’s why the Bill of Rights is there.

The Chicago Tribune

BIBLE WISDOM

Colossians 3:23-24 ESV:

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

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COMMENTARY

TRUMP’S STEEL AND ALUMINUM TARIFFS

There are a couple of important economic lessons that the American people should learn. I’m going to title one “the seen and unseen” and the other “narrow, well-defined large benefits versus widely dispersed small costs.” These lessons are applicable to a wide range of government behavior, but let’s look at just two examples.

President Donald Trump recently enacted high tariffs on imports of steel and aluminum. Why in the world would the U.S. steel and aluminum industries press the president to levy heavy tariffs? The answer is simple. Reducing the amounts of steel and aluminum that hit our shores enables American producers to charge higher prices. Thus, U.S. steel and aluminum producers will earn higher profits, hire more workers and pay them higher wages. They are the visible beneficiaries of Trump’s tariffs.

But when the government creates a benefit for one American, it is a virtual guarantee that it will come at the expense of another

American. The victims of steel and aluminum tariffs are the companies that use steel and aluminum. Faced with higher input costs, they become less competitive on the world market. For example, companies such as John Deere may respond to higher steel prices by purchasing their parts in the international market rather than in the U.S. To become more competitive in the world market, some firms may move their production facilities to foreign countries that do not have tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum.

Politicians love having “seen” beneficiaries and “unseen” victims. The reason is quite simple. In the cases of the steel and aluminum industries, company executives will know whom to give political campaign contributions. Workers in those industries will know for whom to cast their votes. The people in the steel- and aluminum-using industries may not know whom to blame for declining profits, lack of competitiveness and job loss. There’s no better scenario for politicians.

Then there’s the phenomenon of narrow, well-defined large benefits versus widely dispersed small costs.

A good example can be found in the sugar industry. Sugar producers lobby Congress to place restrictions on the importation of foreign sugar through tariffs and quotas. Those import restrictions force Americans to pay up to three times the world price for sugar. A report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office estimated that Americans pay an extra \$2 billion a year because of sugar tariffs and quotas. Plus, taxpayers will be forced to pay more than \$2 billion over the next 10 years to buy and store excess sugar produced because of higher prices. Another way to look at the cost side is that tens of millions of American families are forced to pay a little bit more, maybe \$20, for the sugar we use every year.

You might wonder how this consumer rip-off sustains itself. After all, the people in the sugar industry are only a tiny percentage of the U.S. population. Here’s how it works. It pays for workers and owners in the sugar industry to come up with millions of dollars to lobby congressmen to impose tariffs and quotas on foreign sugar. It means higher profits and higher wages. Also, it’s easy to organize the relatively small number of people in the sugar industry. The costs are borne by tens of millions of Americans forced to pay more for the sugar they use. Even if the people knew what the politicians are doing, it wouldn’t be worth the cost of trying to unseat a legislator whose vote cost them \$20 a year. Politicians know that they won’t bear a cost from sugar consumers. But they would pay a political cost from the sugar industry if they didn’t vote for tariffs. So they put it to consumers — but what else is new?

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EDITORIAL

LEGISLATORS, VOTE FOR TUITION BREAK THIS TIME

It’s time Tennessee legislators did the right thing about tuition at public colleges and universities for the children of illegal immigrant parents who brought them to this country.

A bill in the General Assembly asks only that such students who spent at least three years in a Tennessee high school immediately before graduation or graduated from a state high school, obtained a GED in the state or completed high school in a Tennessee home school program be allowed to pay in-state tuition at state colleges and universities.

That’s it.

It does not grant them free tuition, reduced in-state tuition or treat them any differently from your next-door neighbor’s children, who also have lived in the state most of their lives and also graduated from high school here. Indeed, if it did, if it gave them elevated status, we would be the first to oppose it.

The bill passed the House Education Administration and Planning Subcommittee on a voice vote Tuesday. As of Wednesday, it hadn’t been scheduled on the House Education Committee, and the Senate had yet to hold meetings on the measure.

No matter what we think about the proliferation of illegal immigrants into the country — and we’re certainly appreciative of the Trump administration’s effort to stem that tide — the children in question are already here. They pump gas next to you at the quickie mart, they’re in front of you in line at the movies and their church meets in the afternoon where yours does on Sunday morning.

They’re here, and the administration has no immediate plans to deport them. Its priority, as spokespersons have said repeatedly, is to deport illegal immigrants who have committed serious crimes (besides the crime of coming into the country illegally).

So why not treat them like other longstanding Tennessee residents? After all, it was not their fault they were brought to the country.

Even if the legislation, sponsored by state Sen. Todd Gardenhire, R-Chattanooga, and state Rep. Mark White, R-Memphis, passes this session, consider this:

» The students still have to qualify to enroll at the school of their choice. At the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, according to statistics compiled by College Simply, students would need an SAT score of 1120-1310, an ACT score of 24-30 and a grade-point-average of 3.85 to have about a 66 percent

chance of being accepted for enrollment.

» The students, and/or their parents, still have to pay for their education. At the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, according to information compiled by the National Association for College Admission Counseling, in-state tuition for a year is \$12,970. Room and board, books and supplies, and other expenses bring the total to \$29,266.

Those numbers are hard enough to swallow for those who have saved for college since their child was born, much less illegal immigrant parents who are likely to be shut out of most high-paying jobs.

Out-of-state tuition at UT would be an additional \$18,000-plus.

The bill’s summary doesn’t indicate how many students would likely enroll because of the legislation, but its fiscal note indicates state revenue would be increased an estimated \$1,479,800 from enrollment at University of Tennessee system schools during the 2018-2019 school year if the bill passes, \$1,334,500 from enrollment at locally governed institutions and \$267,400 from enrollment in the state community college system.

The only “no” vote from the subcommittee Tuesday came from state Rep. Dawn White, R-Murfreesboro, who said she opposed tax dollars “going to provide subsidies for those who are illegal in our country.”

The irony about those “subsidies” is that, without the tuition breaks, the amount of revenue the state would receive from out-of-state tuition paid by the few illegal immigrant students would be minimal. But if the bill passes, state revenue would be greatly increased by the larger number of undocumented students paying in-state tuition.

The way we see it, if they are here and were brought here as children, if they qualify to attend a public school or university, if they can pay the steep freight at the higher education institution in question, why shouldn’t the students get the in-state tuition rate?

For many families, the additional cost of out-of-state tuition would slam the door on college, would increase the chances of the child working only minimum-wage or cash-only jobs, and would decrease the opportunities for the child to add to the state’s economy by paying sales tax for the items they’re able to buy.

Why would we deny those pluses for the state?

COMMENTARY

DEM PUNDIT: ‘PAYING OFF A PORN STAR IS PRESIDENTIAL?’

When it comes to the issue of porn star Stormy Daniels, we should welcome the media



Larry Elder

and the Democrats’ new-found interest in the treatment — and mistreatment — of women by powerful political figures.

Never mind that whatever relationship Daniels had with President Donald Trump was consensual and ended a decade ago. Nor that there doesn’t appear to be any evidence that Trump broke any campaign law regarding the apparent \$130K “keep quiet” settlement reached only days before the election. Poor Ms. Daniels — the value of salacious stuff about Trump has skyrocketed now that he is president, so Daniels wants out of the nondisclosure agreement that she willingly signed. She sold cheap, and now wants more.

Even if no laws were broken, the Dems and the media insist that, well, it’s the optics. This just looks bad. As one CNN pundit/Democratic strategist put it, “Paying off a porn star is presidential?”

Democrats rate President John F. Kennedy one of the country’s best presidents. Kennedy’s popularity remains despite the revelations of his reckless and dangerous sexual misbehavior during his presidency. The Democratic icon partied with hookers at the White House and bedded a mobster’s girlfriend. The Chicago Tribune’s Joan Beck, in a column, discussed “The Dark Side of Camelot,” a Jack Kennedy expose by former New York Times investigative reporter Seymour Hersh. Beck wrote:

“Many of the charges in ‘The Dark Side of Camelot’ are now familiar: Joseph Kennedy stole the 1960 election for his son. JFK used the Secret Service to sneak women into the White House when Jackie was away. He botched the invasion of Cuba, leaving brave men to die while he played games of political expediency. He repeatedly tried to have Fidel Castro assassinated. He took huge doses of amphetamines regularly from a feel-good doctor who later lost his license.

“In private, Kennedy was consumed with almost daily sexual liaisons and libertine partying, to a degree that shocked many members of

his personal Secret Service detail,” writes Hersh. “The sheer number of Kennedy’s sexual partners and the recklessness of his use of them, escalated throughout his presidency.”

About Bobby Kennedy, his friend Richard Goodwin said it was a “Kennedy family tradition” to philander, but that Bobby was “much more selective and limited” compared to older brother John.

What about another Democrat icon, Ted Kennedy, hailed in death as the Lion of the Senate, even with the long record of his reckless sexual misconduct?

This is from a 1990 GQ article called “Ted Kennedy on the Rocks”: “A former mid-level Kennedy staffer, bitterly disillusioned, recalls with disgust one (now ex-) high-ranking aide as ‘a pimp ... whose real position was to procure women for Kennedy.’ The fellow did have a legitimate job, she says, but also openly bragged of his prowess at getting attractive and beddable dates for his boss.”

As to President Bill Clinton, the late British left-wing writer Christopher Hitchens, in “No One Left to Lie To,” claimed that three women have made “plausible” allega-

tions of rape by Bill Clinton.

Juanita Broaddrick, on “Dateline NBC,” claimed that Clinton, then-Arkansas attorney general and gubernatorial candidate, raped her. She further alleges that Hillary Clinton, shortly after the alleged rape, verbally intimidated her, implying that Broaddrick better keep her mouth shut — or else. At a political event two weeks later, Broaddrick claims that Hillary approached her: “She came over to me, took ahold of my hand and said, ‘I’ve heard so much about you and I’ve been dying to meet you. ... I just want you to know how much that Bill and I appreciate what you do for him.’ ... (Hillary Clinton) took ahold of my hand and squeezed it and said, ‘Do you understand? Everything that you do.’”

To paraphrase, rape is presidential?

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BIBLE WISDOM

Philippians 4:12 ESV: I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

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COMMENTARY

SHEER LUNACY ON CAMPUS

Parents, taxpayers and donors have little idea of the levels of lunacy, evil and lawlessness that have become features of many of today's institutions of higher learning. Parents, taxpayers and donors who ignore or are too lazy to find out what goes on in the name of higher education are nearly as complicit as the professors and administrators who promote or sanction the lunacy, evil and lawlessness. Let's look at a tiny sample of academic lunacy.

During a campus debate, Purdue University professor David Sanders argued that a logical extension of pro-lifers' belief that fetuses are human beings is that pictures of "a butt-naked body of a child" are child pornography. Clemson University's chief diversity officer, Lee Gill, who's paid \$185,000 a year to promote inclusion, provided a lesson claiming that to expect certain people to be on time is racist.

To reduce angst among snowflakes in its student body, the University of California, Hastings College of the Law has added a "Chill Zone." The Chill Zone, located in its library, has, just as most nursery schools have, mats for naps and beanbag chairs. Before or after a snooze, students can also use the space to do a bit of yoga or meditate. The University of Michigan Law School helped its students weather their Trump derangement syndrome — a condition resulting from Donald Trump's election — by enlisting the services of an "embedded psychologist" in a room full of bubbles and play dough. To reduce pressure on law students, Joshua M. Silverstein, a law professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, thinks that "every American law school ought to substantially eliminate C grades and set its good academic standing grade point average at the B- level."

Today's academic climate might be described as a mixture of infantilism, kindergarten and totalitarianism. The radicals, draft dodgers and hippies of the 1960s who are now college administrators and professors are responsible for today's academic climate. The infantilism should not be tolerated, but more important for the future of our nation are the totalitarianism and the hate-America lessons being taught at many of the nation's colleges. For example, led by its student government leader, the University of California, Irvine's student body voted for a motion, which the faculty approved, directing that the American flag not be on display because it makes some students uncomfortable and creates an unsafe, hostile environment. The flag is a symbol of hate speech, according to the student government leader. He said that the U.S. flag is just as offensive as Nazi and Islamic State flags and that the U.S. is the world's most evil nation.

In a recent New York Times op-ed, New York University provost Ulrich Baer argued: "The idea of freedom of speech does not mean a blanket permission to say anything anybody thinks. It means balancing the inherent value of a given view with the obligation to ensure that other members of a given community can participate in discourse as fully recognized members of that community." That's a vision that is increasingly being adopted on college campuses, and it's leaking down to our primary and secondary levels of education. Baer's vision is totalitarian nonsense. The true test of one's commitment to free speech comes when he permits people to be free to say and write those things he finds deeply offensive.

Americans who see themselves as either liberal or conservative should rise up against this totalitarian trend on America's college campuses. I believe the most effective way to do so is to hit these campus tyrants where it hurts the most — in the pocketbook. Lawmakers should slash budgets and donors should keep their money in their pockets.



EDITORIAL

GRADUATING INTO A BIG WORLD

We attended a graduation ceremony for University of Tennessee at Chattanooga students recently. It was filled with the kind of pomp and ceremony one might expect at any graduation.

Musicians played in the graduates-to-be, who marched onto the floor of McKenzie Arena in their blue gowns and took their place, row by row, in two sections of chairs that covered what is normally the school basketball team's playing surface.

Creative students decorated their mortar boards both to display their individualism and to let Mom and Dad in Section 238 know which one was their graduate, the one for whom they'd paid four, five or six years of higher education.

The chancellor spoke words of welcome, words perhaps earnestly written but words that went in one ear of all attendees and out the other. An invited speaker challenged the students to do their best, live their dreams and strive their hardest, but even he admitted no one will remember his words because that is not why they were there. They were there either to graduate — to move their tassels from the right to the left once they received their pretend diplomas (the real ones come in the mail) — or to support the graduate and perhaps shed a tear in the doing.

After all students crossed the stage, each name duly announced, the school alma mater was played and dismissal announced.

UTC segregates its graduations these days out of physical necessity. On one day, a graduation was held for those receiving master's, specialist and doctoral degrees. On the next, in the morning, a ceremony honored graduates picking up bachelor's degrees in the College of Arts & Sciences and the College of Engineering and Computer Science. In the early afternoon, a graduation was held for students who earned bachelor's degrees in the College of Business and the College of Health, Education and Professional Studies.

In the ceremony we attended, the last of the three, the arena was nearly full, more full than it has been for a UTC basketball game in many, many years. To have put the degrees together — 253 graduate students and 1,166 undergraduate students and their supporters — would have required an arena at least twice the size of McKenzie.

Columbia University also segregates its ceremonies. While the school offers a main commencement, students also have the option of attending individual ceremonies for black, Latino, LGBTQ, Native American and Asian students. This year, for the first time, the school also had a ceremony for students who were the first in their families to earn a degree.

Since the ceremonies are so specialized, we wonder how much purity is demanded. For example, must Native Americans be 100 percent, or would someone like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass.

(who listed herself as a minority in an Association of American Law Schools directory and who a genealogist has said could be as much as 1/32 Native American) be welcome?

Where would a student with a Latina mother and a black father fit? Are those who are first in their family to earn a degree the first in their immediate family or the first in their lineage? Must they present their genealogy to a fact-checker to be admitted?

The various segregated ceremonies at Columbia are organized, according to Campus Reform, through a collaboration among various student groups and the school's Office of Multicultural Affairs, which is said to exist to promote diversity, inclusion and social justice among students.

So, yes, it might be said the segregated ceremonies are staged to promote inclusion.

Confusing, isn't it? The Human Rights Campaign says schools that offer separate graduation ceremonies for LGBTQ students — and they will occur on at least 124 college campuses this spring — do so to "provide a sense of community for minority students who often experience tremendous shock at their impersonalized institutions."

Impersonalized institutions? Colleges and universities are so customized these days practically any student who wants to be special has a niche.

At UTC, for instance, there are organizations for blacks, Hispanics, international students, Saudi students, LGBTQQIA students, students who love Japanese cartoons, film fans, women who like computer science, League of Legends players, pro-life students, students who love gaming and students who enjoy fly fishing, just to name a few of the more than 120.

We wonder how this cleaving of people into races, sexual orientations and other designations will help the graduates once they join the working world. Will it make them believe that world should be so divided? Will it make them claim they can only work with people like themselves? Will it make them feel they should be treated differently because of their separateness?

Life is not like that, though. Black surgeons do not operate only on black patients. Asian lawyers do not represent only Asian clients. First-in-their-family graduates will be hard-pressed to be entrepreneurs whose start-ups serve only first-in-the-family graduates.

Following the UTC graduation we attended, we spoke specifically to three students who were there to celebrate a milestone reached, a job well done. It didn't occur to us until later that one student was white, one black and the third Muslim.

The sooner we come to grips with our homogenous world, the better off we'll be.

COMMENTARY

BEFORE IMPEACHING TRUMP, TAKE A FEW STEPS BACK

Are you ready for President Mike Pence?

There's enough out there now about President Donald Trump that mentioning a President Pence isn't all that unreasonable.



John Kass

There's a drumbeat now, sending tingles up and down Democratic legs — and Republican Never-Trumpers — and other sensations through America's turgid Twitter thumbs.

The New York Times is all but accusing Trump of obstruction of justice in the FBI investigation of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, with Democrats calling for impeachment proceedings.

The Washington Post has tagged Trump at best a bumbler, impulsively dishing out classified information on ISIS to the Russians. Trump's credibility is in tatters just as he plans to make his first foreign trip, and now Washington is a hot mess, amplified by the social media echo chamber and the ravenous appetites of cable news.

Given Trump's animosity toward the Washington establishment, and its absolute loathing of Trump and his working-class voters, there's also the smell of blood on the floor.

But with all the shrieking and screaming, and partisan dancing, I'd like to suggest something:

Take a few steps back, America. That's right. Take a few steps back. Get yourself a pocket copy of the Constitution and hold on.

It might be comforting to blow it all off as partisan politics, or run with your partisan pack and howl at the orange moon. Politics is at play, yes, and agendas are everywhere, and hypocrisy is the water of life in Washington, but these are serious stories that are draped across Trump's neck.

Allegations of obstruction of justice are serious, and compulsively giving up classified intelligence is also quite serious. And they deserve your serious consideration.

But whether you voted for him or you hate him, and tens of millions of Americans did one or the other in November, remember this about the president.

Trump won't be hanged by the morning. He might even make it to next week.

Still, The New York Times story about former FBI Director James Comey and Trump is the kind of thing that bleeds an administration dry.

The Times, through sources, reports on a memo Comey apparently wrote before Trump fired him, about a conversation he had with the president in the Oval Office in February.

It was about Michael Flynn,

Trump's former national security adviser, who is under investigation by the FBI.

"I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go," Trump told Comey, according to the Times story on the memo. "He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go."

There's only one thing wrong with the story, far as I can tell. The New York Times didn't print a copy of the Comey memo.

It has sources who read the memo. These could be other FBI agents or Comey himself, or his lawyers. And given it comes out of Washington, is it possible there could be a political agenda here?

We really don't know what Comey said or wrote or thought. We know the Trump White House denies it all. But that's today.

You can make the beginnings of an obstruction of justice case with that one. Trump helped the Democratic narrative with his recent interview with NBC about his decision to fire Comey.

"Regardless of recommendation I was going to fire Comey, knowing, there was no good time to do it," Trump told NBC. "And in fact when I decided to just do it, I said to myself, I said you know, this Russia thing with Trump and Russia is a made-up story. It's an excuse by the Democrats for having lost an election that they should have won."

The Russians didn't cost Hillary Clinton the election. Hillary

was doomed months before any alleged Russian interference or hacking of Democratic email. She was the establishment candidate in the year of insurgency, and the Democrats, the party of the state, still can't deal with it.

Memos are a Washington thing, something that clerks and lawyers do to cover their flanks. And apparently, Comey's flanks are covered, but until we actually read the memo, until Comey testifies under oath as to the nature of their conversation, we just don't know.

"There's a reason why newspaper articles are not admissible in any courtroom in the United States," Republican U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy said on Fox News. "I'm not knocking the reporter ... But we're a long ways from a conviction, the fact that we simply have a headline in The New York Times."

Comey should testify before Congress. And every American should be able to read the memo and hear his testimony.

But headlines do have a way of driving a herd, don't they?

The Chicago Tribune

BIBLE WISDOM

2 Timothy 2:24 ESV: And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil.

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COMMENTARY

TRADE IGNORANCE
AND DEMAGOGUERY

When we discuss international trade and balance of payments, there are two types of accounts. There is the current account, which includes goods and services imported and exported and receives the most political attention. In 2016, the American people imported \$479 billion worth of goods and services from Chinese producers, and we sold \$170 billion worth of goods and services to Chinese customers. That made for a \$309 billion current account deficit. In other words, we purchase more goods and services from Chinese producers than Chinese consumers purchase from American producers.

How much of a problem is it when there is a deficit, or a negative imbalance, on current accounts? Let's look at it.

I buy more from my grocer than he buys from me. Our Department of Defense buys more from General Dynamics than General Dynamics buys from our Department of Defense. With just a bit of thought, one could come up with thousands of examples in which one party buys more from another than that party buys from it — creating deficits in current accounts. But a current account deficit is always offset by a surplus somewhere else.

That somewhere else is known as the capital, or financial, account. That account consists of direct foreign investment, such as the purchase or construction of machinery, buildings or whole manufacturing plants. The capital account also consists of portfolio investment, such as purchases of stocks and bonds. In our capital account, the U.S. has a huge surplus with China. That means money is flowing into our country from China. In other words, Chinese people are investing more money into the U.S. — in the forms of home and factory purchases, stocks, and bonds — than Americans are investing in China. Of necessity, the deficit that we have with China on our current account, ignoring timing issues, must equal the surplus we have with China on our capital account.

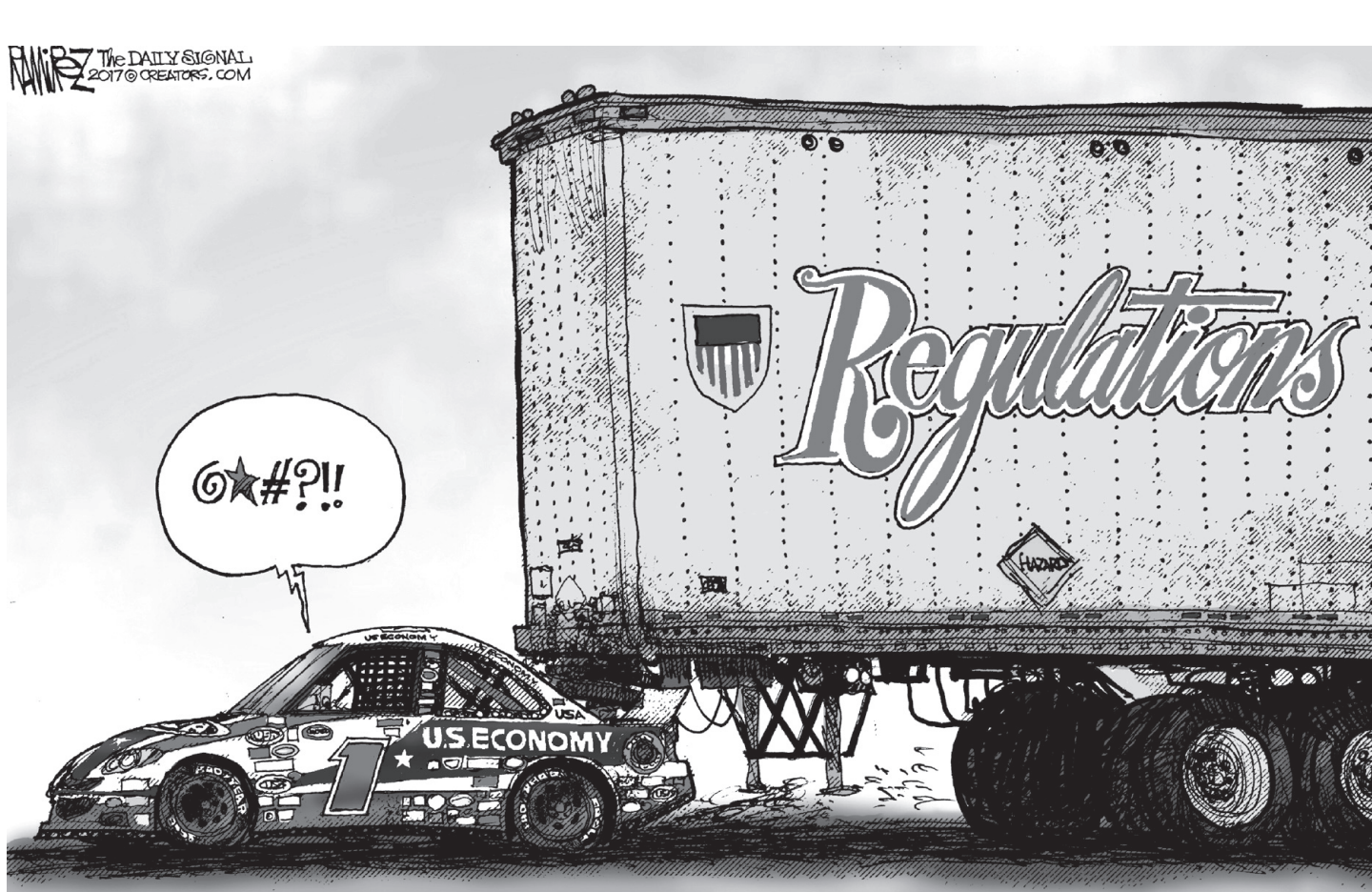
It turns out that foreigners own \$30 trillion worth of U.S. assets, such as stocks, Treasury bonds, manufacturing plants and real estate. One of the reasons that foreigners hold so much U.S. capital is that our country is one of the world's most attractive places to invest. Secondly, our capital markets, unlike our goods markets, are open to foreigners. Foreigners can buy and sell any U.S. asset in any quantity, except in cases in which national security is an issue. One of the troubling aspects of foreign confidence in America is that foreigners invest so much in U.S. Treasury bonds. That in turn gives the U.S. Congress greater latitude to engage in profligate spending. Japan owns \$1.1 trillion worth of U.S. Treasury bonds, and China owns \$1 trillion.

What about President Donald Trump's call to reduce our current account trade deficit? (By the way, we know that we're being deceived when a politician talks only about the current account deficit, without a word about the capital account surplus.) If foreigners sell us fewer goods, they will earn fewer dollars. With fewer dollars, they will be able to make fewer investments in America. But that's fine with politicians. The beneficiaries of trade restrictions are visible. Tariffs on tires, clothing and electronics will mean more profits and jobs and more votes for politicians. The victims of trade restrictions, such as people in the real estate market and other areas where foreigners are investing, are less visible.

Let's put trade deficits into historical perspective. If trade deficits were something for a president to fret about, every U.S. president from 1790 to today ought to have been fretting. For most of our history, we have had current account deficits. I should say every president except Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose administrations ushered in the Great Depression. Nine out of the 10 years of the economic downturn of the 1930s, our nation had a current account trade surplus. Should we reproduce the economic policies of that era and re-create the "wonderful" trade surplus?



Walter Williams



EDITORIAL

SCHOOL BOARD ISN'T TRANSPARENT

Even if — if — a technicality saved the Hamilton County Board of Education from violating the law in the method in which members whittled their list of superintendent candidates by email last week, the process the board used appeared to be deliberately non-transparent.

Although state law is clear that any deliberation done by the board must be public, school board attorney Scott Bennett said the winnowing was not “deliberation because board members are not meeting together to discuss their opinions and working toward a consensus.”

However, cutting down a list from 14 to 10 candidates members may want to interview was clearly working toward a consensus, which is simply defined as “general agreement.” In fact, school board members precisely are attempting to come to a general agreement on a superintendent.

The law itself states, “All votes of any such governmental body shall be by public vote or public ballot or public roll call. No secret votes, or secret ballots, or secret roll calls shall be allowed.”

Nevertheless, Bennett said “the board ... could have done this whole thing in an open meeting” but did it “by email for expediency.”

Well, expediency — especially after the district has been without a permanent superintendent for nearly 14 months — is no trade-off for transparency.

As egregious as the secretive balloting was, according to board member Rhonda Thurman, the board was not consulted on how the balloting would be carried out, who choose the rules for the balloting and by what criteria the final list of candidates was determined.

“When you’re running for office, you run on transparency ... and then all of a sudden when you get elected you think you’re smarter than the people who elected you and they shouldn’t get the information,” Thurman told Times Free Press education reporter Kendi Rainwater. “... It’s just wrong.”

Deborah Fisher, executive director for the Tennessee Coalition for Open Government, also wondered why the board felt it needed to hide its process from the public.

“Allowing back-room dealing as a way to choose the next director of schools is not transparent government,” she said. “... The candidates’ names are already public. And citizens have a right to know the choices of their school board members on the matter.”

The results of the secret balloting were tabulated by school board chairman Steve Highlander, who is a former

Hamilton County Schools teacher, the school board secretary, who works closely with interim Superintendent Dr. Kirk Kelly, and a representative of the search firm hired to find candidates. Based on that balloting, Highlander and Ken Carrick, president of the search firm Coleman Lew and Associates, then determined how many candidates would be interviewed and which candidates those would be. The list was released Thursday.

Complicating the process is that one of the 14 candidates is Kelly, whose name Carrick said more than two months ago would be on the original list of finalists because he didn’t believe it was the firm’s job to judge the merits of a local candidate.

Before approving a search firm last fall, several members of the board had said they’d prefer to name Kelly to the permanent position. But Kelly ultimately asked the board to conduct a search, to which he submitted his name.

Highlander, in discussing with Rainwater when the names would be interviewed, did not elaborate on the transparency of the process. The school board chairman had been upset when the Times Free Press published the original list of 14 names several weeks ago. But when running for his seat in 2014, Highlander told a District 9 forum “ownership” of the school board belonged to the people.

“I’m for total transparency,” he said. “I work for you.”

Kathy Lennon, who won her District 2 school board seat by 98 votes last August and had run on a similar platform of transparency and keeping the public abreast of board activities, said she trusts the process the board chairman used and hopes the community will have input when the list of superintendent candidates is narrowed to about three finalists.

“I feel like we’re being transparent,” she said.

In no way, though, was the process transparent, from the private way in which the balloting was conducted to the methodology with which finalists were selected. Behind closed doors, without parameters known by all, anything could happen.

At a time when the Hamilton County Schools district desperately needs to turn a corner in academic improvement and perception, this sordid chapter serves to further convince a skeptical public the board which oversees the schools is unable to do the right and honorable thing. And if the board can’t do that in the superintendent search, what confidence does the public have the board can do right by their children?

COMMENTARY

TRUMP: ‘NORMALIZED’ BUT STILL SCARY

WASHINGTON — With near unanimity, my never-Trump friends confess a sense of relief. It could have been worse. They thought it would be worse. A deep apprehension still endures but the international order remains intact, the republic still stands, and no “enemy of the people” has (yet) been arrested.

Admittedly, this is a low bar. And this is not to deny the insanity, incoherence and sheer weirdness emanating daily from the White House, with which we’ve all come up with our own coping technique. Here’s mine: I simply view President Trump as the Wizard of Oz.

Loud and bombastic. A charlatan. Nothing behind the screen — other than the institutional chaos that defines his White House and the psychic chaos that governs his ever-changing mind. What to do? Ignore what’s behind the curtain. Deal with what comes out in front: the policy, the pronouncements, the actions.

And so far they hang together enough — Neil Gorsuch, Keystone XL, NATO reassurances, Syria strike, Cabinet appointments — that one can begin to



Charles Krauthammer

talk plausibly about the normalization of this presidency.

Hence the relief. But there are limitations to the Wizard of Oz approach. Some things do extrude from behind the curtain that are hard to ignore. And here I am not counting the gratuitous idiocies that can, despite their entertainment value, be safely ignored — for example, Trump’s puzzlement as to why the Civil War was not avoided and how Andrew Jackson, who’d been dead 16 years, was so upset by its outbreak.

These are embarrassments, but they don’t materially affect the course of his presidency or of the country. Some weirdnesses, however, do.

Such as, Trump’s late-April pronouncements on South Korea. Being less entertaining, they were vastly underreported. Here’s the context:

Trump is orchestrating a worldwide campaign to pressure North Korea on its nukes and missiles. He dispatches (finally) the USS Carl Vinson strike group to Korean waters and raises the possibility of a “major, major conflict” with Pyongyang. Meanwhile, we are working furiously to complete a THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea to intercept North Korean rockets.

At which point, out of the blue, Trump tells Reuters that Seoul will have to pay for the

THAAD system. And by the way, that 5-year-old U.S.-South Korea free trade agreement is a disaster and needs to be torn up.

Now, South Korea is in the middle of a highly charged presidential campaign. The pro-American president was recently impeached and is now under indictment. The opposition party is ahead. It is wary of the U.S., accommodating to North Korea and highly negative about installing that THAAD system on its soil.

We had agreed with Seoul that it would provide the land and the infrastructure, and we would pay the \$1 billion cost. Without warning, Trump reneges on the deal, saying South Korea will have to foot the bill. This stirs anti-American feeling and gives opposition candidate Moon Jae-in the perfect campaign issue.

What is it with this president insisting that other people pay for things we want? And for what? In a \$4 trillion budget, \$1 billion is a rounding error.

So self-defeating was the idea that within three days, national security adviser H.R. McMaster had to walk it all back, assuring the South Koreans that we would indeed honor our agreement and send no \$1 billion invoice.

But the damage was done. Moon’s campaign feasted. The pro-American party was thrown on its heels. And the very future

of THAAD — and a continued united front against Pyongyang under a likely Moon administration — is in doubt.

As for the trade deal, the installation of THAAD has so angered China that it has already initiated an economic squeeze on South Korea. To which Trump would add a trade rupture with the United States.

The South Korean blunder reinforces lingering fears about Trump. Especially because it was an unforced error. What happens in an externally caused crisis? Then, there is no hiding, no guardrails, no cushioning. It’s the wisdom and understanding of one man versus whatever the world has thrown up against us. However normalized this presidency may be day to day, in such a moment all bets are off.

What happens when the red phone rings at 3 in the morning? I’d say: Let it ring. Let the wizard sleep. Forward the call to Defense Secretary Mattis.

Washington Post Writers Group

BIBLE WISDOM
Colossians 3:12 ESV: Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.

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YOUR COMMUNITY YOUR VOICE

Plenty of blame for toxic discourse

On Thursday, Chattanooga Times editorial page editor Sohn wondered whether the attack on GOP congressmen might change the tone of political discourse.

But let's go back 24 hours to see how Ms. Sohn contributes to the poisonous fog.

I am not a Trump supporter, but even I was dismayed to read Sohn's Wednesday editorial, in which she cites all the ways Trump is "destroying America." I truthfully remember thinking such over-the-top hysteria is going to lead to violence. And then I turned on CNN to see the breaking news from Alexandria.

Sohn's editorial primarily focused on a list of Trump actions that reversed policies of the Obama administration, such as overtime rules for hourly workers and restrictions on investment counselors. Whatever your position on these things, they hardly rise to the level of destruction. America was alive before Obama wielded his pen, and it endures despite Trump's Sharpie.

The greater threat of destruction comes from those who will say anything and do anything to reverse the results of last November.

Bill Stiles

Ball field shooting should motivate lawmakers

Might now be the time for Congress to rethink discussion of laws on gun control?

And why do the media and public seem more shocked that voluntarily elected, adult public representatives are not more secure on a ball field than little children under our care in a classroom? Sandy Hook and other tragedies should have awakened our lawmakers. Perhaps Wednesday's unfortunate incident will get their "up close and personal" attention at last, a sad fact in itself.

Rebecca Raymond
Hixson

Act now to build successful schools

I live in Highland Park and am a small business owner. I try to influence and interact with the kids in my neighborhood through sports, tutoring and employment.

I'm writing you out of great concern for the kids in Hamilton County and the education system in which they are subjected. The Hamilton County school system has several glaring needs. Those needs include: deficiencies in literacy and mathematics education, social support programs and English language skills.

To our elected representatives: How do we correct these issues? Is the answer increased funding or improved management? Can we look to more successful education systems to build a model to repair our system? Regardless of the method we choose, we must act now. Our kids should be leaving school fully prepared for further education and life in general. We need to focus more on life skills and job training as well as basic character development. We need programs that teach sewing, driving, welding, etc.; skills that are needed to be functioning members of society. We owe it to our kids to provide the highest quality education possible.

Rachel Collins

Submit Letters

Keep them topical, short (200 words or fewer), legible and not more often than one every 30 days. Letters chosen for publication may be edited and should not previously have been published.

Must be signed with name, address and telephone number.

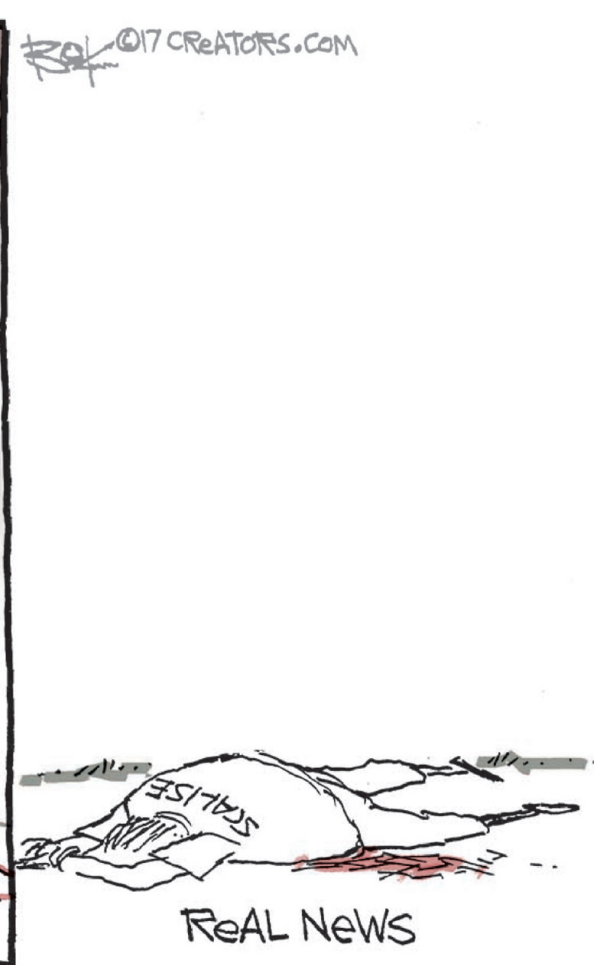
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EDITORIAL

THE CHALLENGE FOR JOHNSON

The hiring of Dr. Bryan Johnson to be the superintendent of Hamilton County Schools won't turn around one test score. It won't settle one lawsuit. It won't prepare one student for higher education or the workforce.

What it will do, we hope, is signal a new day for the district's 43,000-plus students, a day in which the we've-always-done-it-this-way approach is swept away, a day in which ineffective programs are scrapped, a day in which every dollar is accounted for, a day in which transparency and openness become administration hallmarks.

Those items are in the purview of Johnson, and if he attends to those we believe the district in time can surge.

The current chief academic officer of Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools was elected superintendent by the Hamilton County Board of Education Thursday night in a 5-4 vote over interim Superintendent Dr. Kirk Kelly.

As we have often said, Kelly is a kind and gracious man but not the leader we believe is necessary to lead the district at this critical time. Before becoming interim superintendent 14 months ago in a controversial vote, he had been an assistant superintendent only a year and before that had been the district's director of accountability and testing.

The months before the interim superintendent being named in 2016 had been among the lowest in the district in memory. Not only had test scores in the county's lowest performing schools not improved, but the district had had its schools improvement plan rebuked and was suffering from the aftereffects of the pool cue rape of an Ooltewah basketball player and the subsequent communications breakdown that led to the resignation of Superintendent Rick Smith.

By that time, the community movement Chattanooga 2.0 had sprung up to determine why the schools were not preparing students for higher education and the workforce. Rumbling had begun about several county municipalities creating their own school systems. And business leaders, parents and concerned citizens were beginning to demand significant change.

We believe Kelly and his chief academic officer, Jill Levine, attempted to stop the district slide this past school year by introducing new emphases on the likes of literacy and college/career preparation, and we hope those efforts will show quantifiable results.

Now we want Johnson, who was the best of the traditional candidates who were finalists for superintendent, to build on that start. The Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools have been recognized across the state for posting significant aca-

demic growth the past two years, according to standardized testing, and we hope Johnson can bring some of that success here.

He also was the youngest of the candidates the school board considered, so we hope that youthfulness will offer enthusiasm, flexibility and a willingness to innovate.

Johnson, to his credit, also gave in his local interview a more realistic answer than some candidates to a question about the partnership district that has been suggested by the state for some of the county's struggling schools. Instead of insisting he would change the state's mind about what will happen or deriding the state's plan, he said he would examine data, talk to the leaders of the schools that will be affected and work with the board to look at the state's proposal.

"We have to move forward," he said.

That's a better attitude than some on the board, who seem oblivious to the schools' more than decade-long achievement problem and believe Band-Aids will continue to suffice.

Johnson, similarly, answered with more realism a question about charter schools and vouchers. Instead of pretending there is no need for them — and the many private schools that already are here — he said the school district must offer a learning environment for every student. By that, he meant from privileged to impoverished.

"I never want a [student] to go to a private school for lack of performance in the public schools," he said. "We need to make it harder for charters and vouchers."

That is, after all, how charter schools and the desire for vouchers came to be — because parents sensed the public schools no longer served their children well.

In truth, we don't envy Johnson. Some will expect him to perform miracles. Some will expect him to fail. District administration, some principals and some teachers — plus almost half of the school board — wanted Kelly because he was less likely to rock the boat. They may make the start of Johnson's tenure difficult. Instead, we hope principles above personalities can be practiced.

Meanwhile, many business leaders, elected officials and others who believe the district needs significant change wanted anybody but Kelly. We hope they aren't expecting his replacement to walk on water until at least the end of his first semester.

Ultimately, we hope Johnson will understand the challenge, embrace the opportunity and become the change agent the county school system needs.



Dr. Bryan Johnson

COMMENTARY

THE DOUBLE STANDARD OF DEATH AMONG MEDIA

What's the worst part about horrific, murderous violence in America? Well, except for the death, the ruined lives, the pain and the fear and the rush to pass laws that wouldn't have prevented it, I think it has to be the media criticism.

The challenge, at least for conservatives, is that the media's double standard is so profoundly obvious and at the same time so passionately denied that bringing it up feels like an exercise in gaslighting.

If a former Ted Cruz volunteer tried to murder a bunch of Democratic congressmen at a baseball practice, the instant conventional wisdom from the mainstream media would be to blame Donald Trump, Republican rhetoric and conservatism generally. We know this because that is what always happens, even when the villain isn't a conservative.

When then-Congresswoman Gabby Giffords was shot by Jared Lee Loughner in 2011, the media went into paroxysms of finger-pointing sanctimony, insisting that a map Sarah Palin had posted on Facebook was

to blame because it had cross-hairs drawn over certain targeted districts. It turned out that Loughner was a largely apolitical paranoid schizophrenic and drug abuser prone to extreme delusions and hallucinations. Not only did Loughner believe the government carried out the 9/11 attacks, he thought the conspiracy went much deeper: The government was using mind control through its manipulations of grammar.

And yet, some cherished myths die hard. As news came out that the "Ballfield Shooter," James Hodgkinson, was a passionate progressive and Bernie Sanders supporter, was a member of a Facebook group called "Terminate The Republican Party" and had deliberately targeted Republicans because they were Republicans, The New York Times posted an editorial that resurrected the utterly debunked "link" between Palin's map and Loughner, while casting the link between political rhetoric and this week's shooter as more debatable. (In the face of intense criticism, the Times issued a correction the next day.)

This is not to say that conservatives always color themselves with glory in the wake of these horrors either. In the cases when a murderer is clearly of some kind of right-wing bent, many

conservatives rush to insist that right-wing rhetoric either played no role or should not be blamed. That's defensible in and of itself, but if your position is that political speech should never be indicted when a right-winger commits a crime, you probably shouldn't let your understandable desire for payback seduce you into insisting that left-wing rhetoric is to blame when the shooter is a left-winger.

What is remarkable about this fixation with political rhetoric is how shallow it is. I think political rhetoric, on the right and the left, does play a role in violence, though perhaps not in the case of Loughner or the equally deranged Sandy Hook shooter who murdered all those children.

But not every murderer of this fixation with political rhetoric is how shallow it is. I think political rhetoric, on the right and the left, does play a role in violence, though perhaps not in the case of Loughner or the equally deranged Sandy Hook shooter who murdered all those children.

Where does that come from? I think one contributor to this dire predicament is obvious: the size and scope of government.

For decades we've invested in the federal government's ever-greater powers while at the

same time raising the expectations for what government can do even higher. The rhetoric of the last three presidents has been wildly outlandish about what can be accomplished if we just elect the right political savior. George W. Bush insisted that "when somebody hurts, government has to move." Barack Obama promised the total transformation of America in palpably messianic terms. Donald Trump vowed that electing him would solve all of our problems and usher in an era of never-ending greatness and winning.

When you believe — as Hodgkinson clearly did — that all of our problems can be solved by flicking a few switches in the Oval Office, it's a short trip to believing that those who stand in the way are willfully evil enemies bent on barring the way to salvation. That belief won't turn everyone into a murderer, but it shouldn't be that shocking that it would turn someone into one.

Tribune Content Agency

BIBLE WISDOM

Joshua 23:10: One of your men puts to flight a thousand, for the Lord your God is he who fights for you, just as he promised you.

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COMMENTARY

THAT’S THE TIMES’ STORY, AND IT’S STICKING TO IT

The New York Times recently did a piece on a conservative activist spreading snippets of false news boosting President Donald Trump. Some got picked up by internet sites and even by Fox News and radio host Rush Limbaugh. Here’s the question. When is the Times going to worry about its own incessant liberal bias and a major story of its making that was “almost entirely wrong?”

The quoted phrase comes from testimony by former FBI Director James Comey before the Senate Intelligence Committee. He was testifying under oath about a Times article based on four anonymous sources crucifying Trump’s campaign team on a cross of what now seem to have been errors.

The Times said intercepted phone calls showed “Trump associates had repeated contacts with Russian intelligence officials” in 2015. Relying on sources who were or had been government officials and could still be guilty of felonies for leaking classified information, the story played a fundamentally important role in giving credence to the idea that the Trump campaign worked secretly with Russians in the hacking of Hillary Clinton campaign computers with the intent of throwing the election to Trump.

The story did get one thing right. It said no evidence of conspiracy had been found. Among the many things it got wrong was repeating the phony tale that Trump once said he hoped the Russians had stolen Clinton’s emails.

He did say that if they had them, they should share them. But he did this in the context of the hacking only transpiring because President Barack Obama was a weak leader. He was not talking about campaign emails but emails on a personal server when Clinton was secretary of state. They could have shown Clinton guilty of obstruction of justice even though she said they were just about such things as yoga and grandkids.

The Times is sticking by its story as well as with its overreaching enthusiasm for anonymous sources and printing classified information. It’s hard to imagine Comey lying under oath or being wrong in basic understandings. Anonymous sources, while sometimes necessary, cost news outlets credibility because their reliability is less sure than when going on the record. Printing classified information abets crime and can put individuals and the public good at risk, but the Times

frequently puts its own judgment ahead of officials more in the know, sometimes maybe being right. And sometimes not. Concerning the whole collusion idea, you could say the Times colluded with Russia by printing the stories it passed on to WikiLeaks during the election campaign. If the paper did not do so for the purpose of sales through sensationalism, it did so because the stories appeared to be truthful and to serve the public interest. The Russian meddling is hardly welcome but likely made next to no difference in the election outcome, while today’s exaggerated, Trump-directed fury about Russia has more to do with wanting to get rid of him no matter what than wanting to preserve democratic norms.

The Times’ own culpability, which includes writing straight news stories as if they were editorials, was made evident on its front page the day after Comey’s testimony. The paper then treated something perfectly legal as surely the end of Trump’s world. Comey testified that Trump said he hoped the FBI would quit investigating his national security advisor, viewing his request as improper. But presidents have the authority to begin and end investigations and have done so repeatedly, sometimes using their authority in various ways to the advantage of friends.

The Times actually went so far in a front-page story as to ponder the possibility of a criminal prosecution against Trump. The unchallengeable Times remains a good newspaper in some respects, but it has abandoned the greatness of its past.

The unchallengeable Times remains a good newspaper in some respects, but it has abandoned the greatness of its past.

PHILIP Z
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EDITORIAL

CLASS RANKINGS A LIFE PREVIEW?

Another effort to shield American youth from the real world is alive and growing.

About half of the high schools across the country no longer report class rank, the National Association of Secondary School Principals has reported.

In other words, in many schools, Amber’s just-passing “D” average is no worse than Deadrick’s “A” average in advanced placement classes. It’s the unhealthy competition, you see, that’s the problem. If Deadrick is recognized as having the top rank in the class, Amber and her “D”-list student friends will worry and fret that Deadrick is somehow better than them, battering their self-esteem into the school’s mint green tile floors.

Truth be told, Amber has a lot more to worry about than Deadrick, if she even knows who he is. Her trajectory was set many semesters ago when she gave up homework for nights out, when she had to abandon studying because she had to take care of her younger brothers and sisters while Mom was carousing, or when she began cutting classes to get high.

Unless high school has changed dramatically, most students are oblivious to their class ranking. They may hear it sometime in their senior year if the determination about who would speak at graduation is on the line. Otherwise, if they’re college-bound, they’re trying to shore up their grade in English on the Beowulf exam or hoping to maintain their math average by improving their trigonometry. If they’re not college-bound, they’re either playing out the string or concentrating on their technical or vocational field.

Undoubtedly, class ranking doesn’t make the student. Participation, ability, and willingness to study and improve join grades as metrics on which a student might be viewed by high school teachers. Extra-curricular activities, college entrance exam scores and rigor of classes are added to grades and class rank in how a college might view a potential freshman.

In post-college life, degrees, certifications and training are important, but so are aptitude, communication and soft skills. Like it or not, we are always being measured. Dropping class rankings to avoid hurt feelings or unhealthy competition is only delaying that real-world reality.

In a recent Associated Press article on valedictorians and class rankings, National Association of Secondary School Principals Bob Farrace said administrators view rankings as obsolete in an era of high expectations for every student.

Let’s stop right there for a moment.

When did administrators not have high expectations for every student? What changed, when and why? For which students did they have high expectations and for which did they not? Was it remotely possible for a student for which an administrator had low expectations to succeed and one for which an administrator had high expectations to fail?

If Farrace’s statement is true, has having high expectations for every student improved public education in the United States today? Since most would agree that public education for the masses has not improved, what does that say about high expectations?

We hope newly elected Hamilton County Schools Superintendent Dr. Bryan Johnson — once on the job — finds that all his principals and administrators have high expectations for every student. But the reality is some students will perform brilliantly in school, the great majority will do reasonably good or acceptable work, and some students will not — or cannot — do well. But school personnel should always have high expectations for them.

If they can’t move from point A to point E, can they move to point B? Is something fixable holding them back? If administrators don’t have high expectations, how can the students have high expectations for themselves?

Some administrators believe schools should switch from a class ranking to college-style Latin honors of summa cum laude, magna cum laude and cum laude. In other words, if you reach a certain grade threshold, you have achieved one of the honors.

In Rutherford County, Tenn., this year, its highly ranked Central Magnet School set its threshold at a 4.0 grade-point-average and 12 honors courses. About a fourth of its students hit the mark, so the school had 48 valedictorians.

If 48 valedictory speeches were to be delivered, graduation may still be going on.

Instead of worrying about a student’s feelings as to whether he or she is ranked 10th or 11th in the class, though, we would prefer teachers, principals and administrators concentrate on setting high expectations, assessing the students where they are and helping move them as far as they can go.

That would help the students not only better manage their high school careers but would be a more realistic preview of their post-secondary school life.

YOUR COMMUNITY › YOUR VOICE

Wilson was visionary who will be missed

We want to add to the many heartfelt messages expressed about the recent passing of Tom Edd Wilson.

While he made his mark on many local organizations, Tom Edd will always hold a special place in the hearts of those who worked closely with him at Erlanger. We benefited greatly from his steady guidance, leadership and business experience during his four years of service on our board, and co-chairman of our Believe fundraising campaign for a new Children’s Hospital.

Tom Edd was passionate about Chattanooga having a new children’s hospital and worked tirelessly on garnering support for this community asset. He knew this would represent the largest philanthropic effort in Erlanger’s history but forged ahead with Grady Williams to make our vision a reality.

Although we join his family and this community in mourning his loss, we are grateful Tom Edd was able to play a key role — and be publicly recognized — at our Children’s Hospital groundbreaking ceremony.

We look forward to honoring Tom Edd’s legacy and selfless contributions to Erlanger in a way that will inspire others for genera-

tions to come.

Kevin M. Spiegel
President and CEO
Erlanger Health System

Jack Studer
Chairman of the Board
Erlanger Health System

Jasper ordinance violates rights

The city of Jasper, Tenn., where I have called home my entire life, unanimously passed Ordinance 376, which will eliminate in time all pit bull type dogs.

As a responsible owner who realizes any dog can be dangerous, I am still at a loss as to how the city feels this ordinance will do anything to improve public safety as stated was their focus. I urge anyone who does not understand the ordinance to read it in its entirety. I am still trying to comprehend how the citizens’ voices were not heard and our questions not answered.

The city of Jasper has put financial requirements on many people unable to meet them. If you are able to meet the requirements, your home will be open to inspection at any time by local enforcement. I fail to see how that does not violate our Constitutional rights. If I do not comply with it, I will be considered a harbinger of a prohibited breed type, will be con-

sidered to be committing a criminal offense, and face having my dog/family member immediately seized when they have committed no crime and do not put anyone’s safety at risk.

Jessica Huggins
Jasper, Tenn.

Beware the GOP ‘anti-people’ agenda

Republican lawmakers think “We the People” can be hoodwinked into letting them destroy our health care safety net. Doing their dirty decision-making hurriedly in secret without public knowledge or input is bound to lead to sepsis of our body politic.

Passage of Obamacare was lengthy and transparent. Contrary to Republican hype, it will not collapse unless it is actively sabotaged, according to experts.

Trumpcare plans to end Medicaid for 14 million people, pre-existing conditions are not guaranteed protection, and many of us between 50 and 64 will pay higher premiums. All of this points to fewer people without health insurance.

People die from sepsis, whether it is brought on by bacteria or Republicans with an “anti-people” agenda. Don’t be fooled by the cankerous plans of Mitch McConnell.

Judith Pedersen-Benn

Submit Letters

Keep them topical, short (200 words or fewer), legible and not more often than one every 30 days. Letters chosen for publication may be edited and should not previously have been published.

Must be signed with name, address and telephone number.

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BIBLE WISDOM

Ephesians 5:25-26 NKJV:
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.