

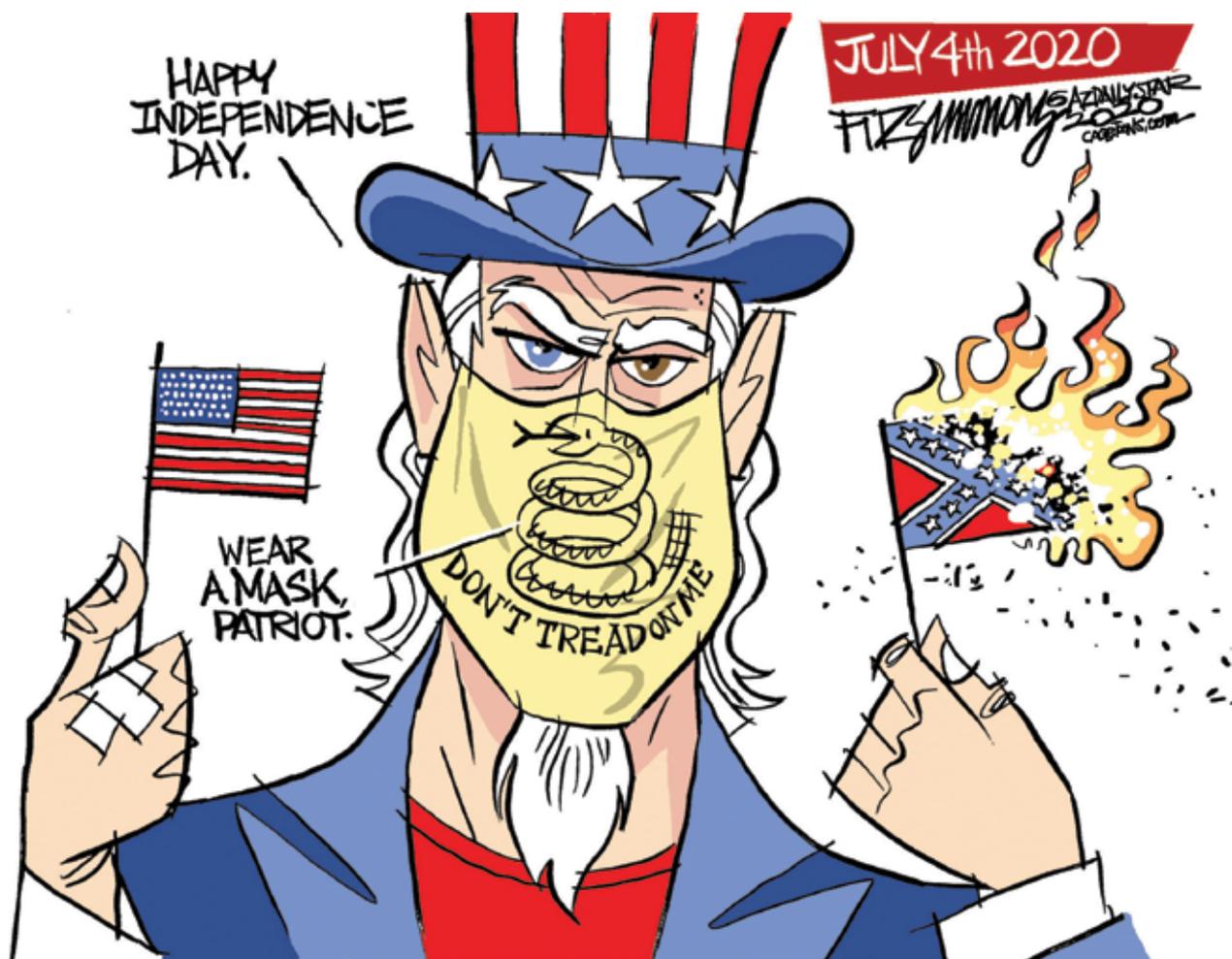
THE OKLAHOMA Observer

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TWILIGHT ZONE?

America At 244: Still A Republic, If You Can Keep It



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Medicaid Expansion By An Eyelash
Four Legislative Incumbents Ousted
June 30 primary coverage page 11

VOLUME 52, NO. 7

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OUR MOTTO

To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable.

OUR CREDO

So then to all their chance, to all their shining golden opportunity. To all the right to love, to live, to work, to be themselves, and to become whatever thing their vision and humanity can combine to make them. This seeker, is the promise of America.

- Adapted from Thomas Wolfe

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Observations

Losers

Donald Trump's sparsely attended Tulsa rally wasn't just disastrous for his re-election launch. Gov. Kevin Stitt and Tulsa Mayor G.T. Bynum took major hits, too.

All three bungled the presidential visit from the get-go.

Ever the bulls---er extraordinaire, Trump committed a cardinal political sin by overselling what he could deliver.

"[W]e expect to have, you know, it's like a record-setting crowd," Trump told reporters. "We've never had an empty seat – and we certainly won't in Oklahoma."

The prediction couldn't have been more off. There were 12,800 or so empty *blue* seats in the BOK Center. Poetic justice?

The feeble, red state turnout also splattered Stitt, who just days earlier sat in the White House cabinet room alongside Trump as the president hyped the rally.

For his part, the governor hailed the "success" of Oklahoma's re-opening – even though COVID-19 cases already were spiking – and claimed credit for the presidential visit.

Stitt then suggested Trump tour North Tulsa's Greenwood District. Really? A race-baiting president, visiting the site of America's worst race massacre, on Juneteenth weekend, amid worldwide street protests for racial justice and against police brutality?

Thankfully, someone with a brain quickly nipped that nonsense, but the fact the governor proposed it publicly illustrates his cluelessness.

Then, at the rally, came the topper: TV cameras captured a mask-less Stitt yawning during the president's one-hour, 43-minute grievance fest.

And Mayor Bynum? In March and April, he was widely heralded for his COVID-19 response – a smart, gifted young leader who seemed destined for higher office. By mid-June, his seemingly bright political future melted faster than a double-dip cone on a sultry summer day.

First, in an interview broadcast nationally by CBS Sunday Morning, By-

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THE OKLAHOMA
Observer

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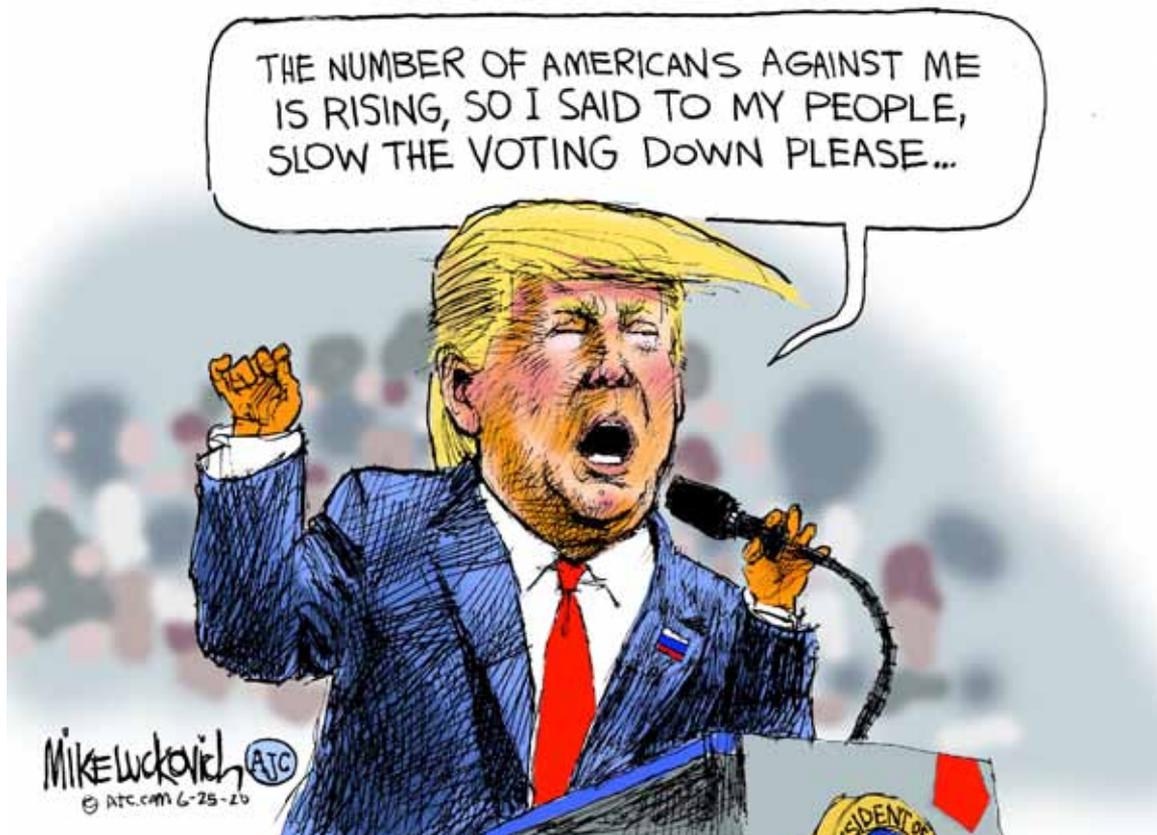
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Wow! As of June 29, the Observer family generously provided subscriptions for 74 of 110 budget-strapped libraries across the state. To support our Adopt-A-Library campaign, send \$40 per sub to Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation, PO Box 14275, OKC 73113.

Laurel: To Oklahoma A&M regents for yanking former Gov. William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray’s name off two Stillwater campus buildings. He was a world-class racist and misogynist.

If we’d known 5th Congressional District Republicans intended to devote their campaigns to kissing President Trump’s ass, we’d have invested in Chapstick.

Dart: To feckless former Gov. Frank Keating, serving as the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs’ Charlie McCarthy against Medicaid expansion. How did we know Keating was lying? His lips were moving.

Speaking of the rightwing Kochheads at OCPA, is there anything more oxymoronic than their web address: ocpathink.com?

Mark your calendars! We tentatively set our Newsmakers relaunch for Aug. 13, 6-7 p.m., at OKC’s Full Circle Books. Stay tuned at okobserver.org for details. In the interim, listen to Observercast for newsmaker interviews. See back cover for details.

Laurel: To U.S. Sen. James Lankford, sticking his nose out of the GOP fox hole just enough to criticize Trump’s Bible-waving St. John’s Episcopal Church photop. Baby steps?

Yes, the Club for Growth ads against 5th District GOP candidate Stephanie Bice were despicable. But it’s hard to be sympathetic given her fealty to misogynist-in-chief Donald Trump and her redneck ads painting incumbent Kendra Horn as a tool of – *gasp!* – Speaker Nancy Pelosi and AOC.

Dart: To knuckle-dragging Canadian County Sheriff Chris West, announcing plans for a volunteer posse to assist deputies in “safeguarding lives and property.” This is bald-faced vigilantism.

If the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission under new director Shelley Zumwalt truly cleared its claims backlog, why are so many unemployed desperately still lining up in the middle of the night for help?

Laurel: To Paycom founder and CEO Chad Richison, donating \$1 million to the Oklahoma City National Memorial Foundation to bolster its endowment and assist the museum’s safe reopening.

Gov. Kevin Stitt won a Pyrrhic victory when the feds OK’d casino compacts with the Comanche and Otoe-Missouria tribes. The state’s other gaming nations won’t soon forget Stitt’s bullying.

Letters

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Editor, The Observer:

If I kneel at a church altar, it is considered an expression of faith supported by the First Amendment. If I kneel in protest during the national anthem, I become a traitor to my nation. I guess the First Amendment only protects approved speech.

Ron Marlett
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

I am concerned that so many areas of our state never hear about other ideas. Our students need to hear about something other than what the Republicans are spewing forth. I don't know how The Observer is used in your library, but it is a worthy tool for research papers and alternative ways of thinking. Please use it!

Carolyn Deatherage
Norman

Editor's Note: Carolyn's letter included a donation for our Adopt-A-Library campaign, ensuring two western Oklahoma libraries can keep The Observer on their period-

ical shelves. At press time, 38 libraries remained unsupported. To help, send a check [\$40 per library subscription] to the Oklahoma Observer Democracy Foundation, PO Box 14275, Oklahoma City, OK 73113.

Editor, The Observer:

We are seeing a real-time demonstration as to why the Articles of Confederation, even the Confederacy itself, was doomed to failure. Both institutions were based on the idea that states' sovereignty and rights trumped [no pun intended] those of the national government.

Cheeto has tried to shift the burden of responding to the pandemic away from the White House on to the states and local governments, mainly so he can dodge responsibility for any failures and claim any credit for successes. His actions mirrored the confederate idea. His tactic has resulted in a chaotic response to a national crisis that calls for a nation-wide response.

Some governors have acted on

the "confederate" model. Some have claimed that their states are not like other states [i.e. "We aren't like New York or New Jersey."] The weakness of their argument is that their citizens ARE like all other citizens in those states because they are Americans, and even more important, they are human. This pandemic has needed a coordinated, national response rather than disorganized confederate response.

Lynn Green
The Village

Editor, The Observer:

I'm an openly gay man, Don was an openly gay man, we lived together for 37 years with the greatest pleasure in each other's company – we were two pieces in a very simple jigsaw puzzle.

However, we were *not* queer. There was nothing unusual about either of us: we had qualities, faults, aspirations, dreams, and disappointments as most other people have.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45



Finally Reckoning With Alfalfa Bill's Racism, Misogyny

*February made me shiver
With every paper I'd deliver
Bad news on the doorstep
I couldn't take one more step*

In this season of our discontent, when we oft seem stuck in an *American Pie* world, it is only natural we seek silver linings – glimmers of hope and progress amidst a deadly pandemic, economic upheaval, and civil unrest.

For me, one such moment occurred the third week in June, when the Oklahoma A&M Board of Regents finally – finally! – voted to remove former Gov. William “Alfalfa Bill” Murray’s name from two Oklahoma State University buildings, Murray Hall and North Murray Hall.

Though state history books primarily describe Murray as a “colorful,” early Oklahoma character, the fact is he was a world-class racist who promoted segregation, Jim Crow laws, eugenics and the deportation of American Jews to Madagascar.

Murray also “believed in the subordination of women and in a hierarchical, unequal society generally, with white Anglo-Saxon men like himself at the apex, and all other races ranked beneath them,” Robert Dorman wrote in the 2018 biography *Alfalfa Bill: A Life in Politics*.

For those aware of the unvarnished, as opposed to mythological “Alfalfa Bill,” it was long a sore point that Murray’s name was honored on a campus devoted to higher education and scholarship and serving a multi-cultural student body preparing for careers in an increasingly global society.

As now-retired regents professor of political science Bob Darcy once wrote, “He legislated school segregation. He held African Americans had no place in public life, especially voting. He opposed the New Deal and saw a Nazi victory in Europe as Oklahoma’s opportunity.”

Indeed, Darcy noted, the only reason then-Oklahoma A&M so honored Murray was because he “wreaked havoc” on the Stillwater campus, attempting not only to control textbooks but also to thwart

the teaching of liberal arts.

“When some New Deal money became available to build a dorm Gov. Murray blocked it,” Darcy wrote. “OAMC successfully appealed to his vanity by offering to name one of the nation’s largest residence halls for him.”

With the fight for racial justice spilling into the streets worldwide after the death of George Floyd, a reckoning is underway. At OSU that means Murray’s name no longer will adorn any facilities – a demand the university’s Student Government Association made last fall.

“For many in the OSU family,” OSU President Burns Hargis noted, “the building’s name has invoked reminders of this painful past.

“Oklahoma State is committed to eliminating systemic racism and embracing our responsibility as a university to support solutions to the inequality and injustice our country and community faces.”

It also means students, student-athletes, faculty and loyal-and-true alums are seizing the moment to demand progress – real racial justice – not just lip service.

Even before the regents’ voted, more than 5,000 signed a petition at Change.org demanding Murray’s name be removed. And Black campus leaders presented regents with an 11-step blueprint aimed promoting diversity and inclusion, including racial bias training for incoming students and enhanced institutional support for minority students.

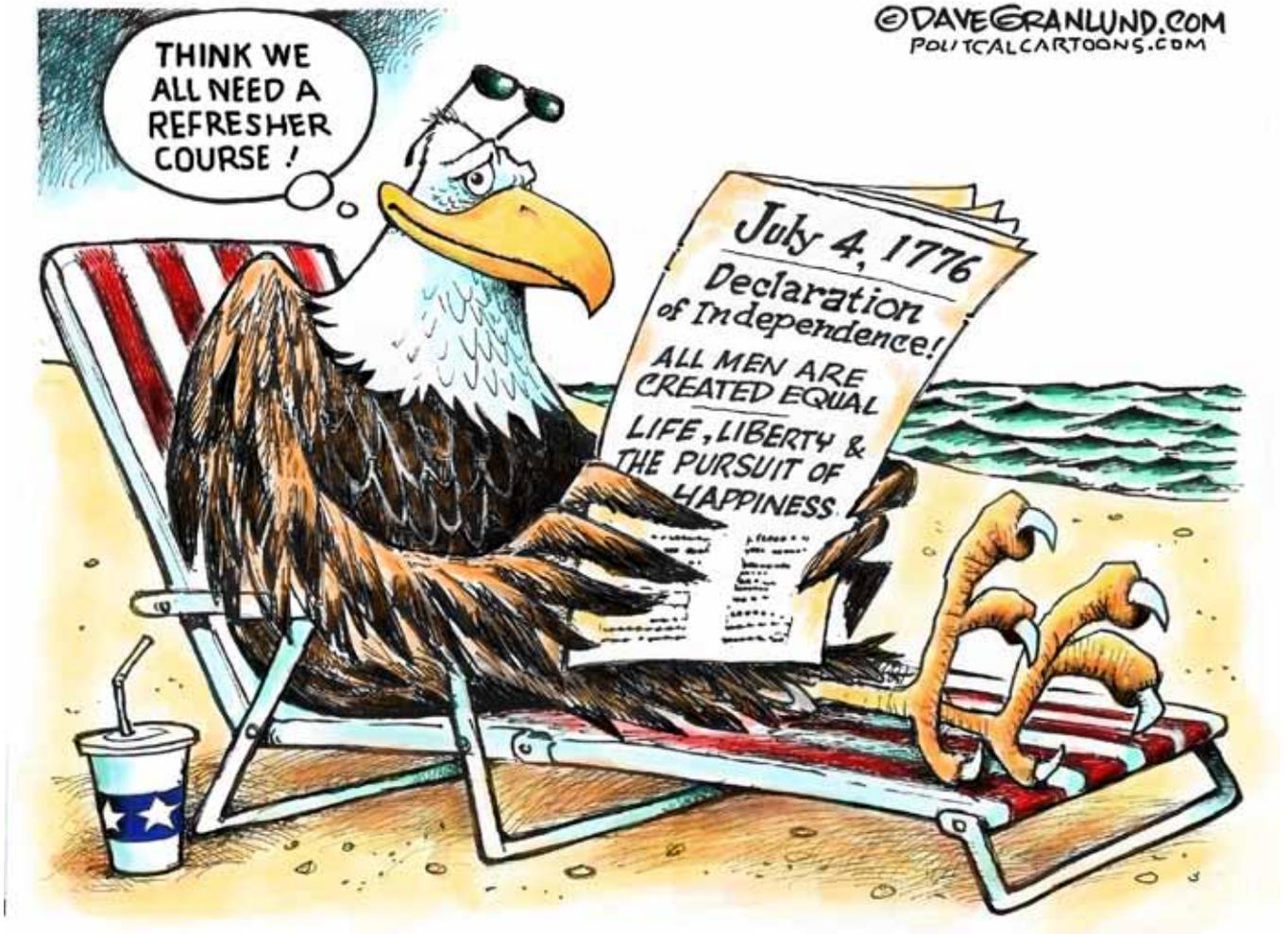
“Today is the day,” OSU senior Destinee Adams told regents, as they prepared to vote, “you have the power and the opportunity to show that you consider me your equal.”

The regents’ long overdue action should not be dismissed as an attempt to erase history. Or a sign of political correctness run amok.

Rather, it represents meaningful progress toward a fairer, most just society – the ongoing pursuit of the American ideal. It also helps put the mythologized “Alfalfa Bill” in a more accurate context.

A win-win.

A Republic, If You Can Keep It



Common Sense, The Declaration Of Independence, And Police Reform

BY JAN NEW

In 1951 a young man graduated from Crozer Seminary in Philadelphia with a Bachelor's in Divinity, having earlier completed an undergraduate degree in Sociology. Destined to one day win a Nobel prize, this same man completed his doctoral studies at Boston University and began his career in the ministry in 1955. Over the next 13 years he became the most articulate and visible spokesman for American civil rights.

Before his death, this clergyman left us with a renewed vision of the Declaration of Independence, concentrating his life's energy, it seems on one sentence, "That whenever any Form of Government be-

comes destructive of these ends [Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness], it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish and institute a new Government ... as shall seem likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

He had thoroughly studied the rights of man and understood the difference between just and unjust laws – as did Henry David Thoreau a century earlier – jailed for civil disobedience for failure to pay a poll tax that he considered unjust and immoral in its support of slavery.

This Right of the People, promised by the Declaration, a hallmark of natural law and expanded dur-

On Independence Day 2020, Still Seeking A More Perfect Union

BY BOB BEARDEN

Soon this nation will become a nation where no race, color or creed will be of a majority. We will then begin to live out the American Dream, what has been emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty for over 100 years, a nation where diversity is normal, and no one is a majority.

Our founders, as flawed as they were, set in motion a nation and principles that intended and envisioned a nation of free citizens. Although many of those founders were steeped in enslaving a large number of one race and eliminating a large number of another race under the guise of Manifest Destiny, they wrote a Constitution that set in motion the idea that all were created equal.

Out of that one document has come, albeit slowly at times and with many back steps over the years, a dream that has been lodged in the hearts of men and women of all colors, religions, races, creeds, sexual orientations and genders. It is a dream of a free society where no one individual is less than any other individual.

It has been a remarkable journey in which many in our society have tried to quell, end, and destroy the very idea that our founders set in motion.

The thing that is remarkable is that despite many attempts by one group or another to stop our forward progress towards a more perfect union, the ideas placed in our most sacred document have lingered and are still relevant today. We as a people and a society remain engaged in a quest that this nation can some day live up to those ideas put forth by a group of men who had a grand vision of what we as a nation and as a people could be and could someday live up to their thoughts on rights, freedoms and the pursuit of happiness.

We still have a long way to go to become a nation where each individual is no less than any other individual. But what we are seeing happening in our nation today is a direct product of what our founders set in motion. Because of the Rule of Law and the idea that we are one nation of equal individuals

has led to a common purpose and a common reality of what our Constitution and our Declaration of Independence spelled out for we the people.

We are undergoing a fundamental change in determining whether this nation or any nation so dedicated and so conceived can and will endure.

It is time that we live up to what our founders envisioned for us as a people and as a nation. And even if they were not totally set for us to be a nation of one, they laid out a blueprint that we could follow in making this nation the most free and diverse nation that has ever been conceived.

But we can only do that by addressing our past in all its flaws, making things right and fixing the flaws that we have allowed to fester in our national psyche for over the 244 years of our existence as a people and a nation. The time has long past for a reckoning with our past.

It is time that we begin to make systemic changes by addressing all the ugly parts of our past that we have for far too long tried to pretend did not matter. It is time we address the systemic racism that has run rampant and make fundamental changes in the way we police and view each other.

We need to own up to the bigotry and hate that we have long allowed to fester. Whatever that requires us to do, we must do it. We must find a way to make the needed course corrections that we have for so long failed acknowledge or address.

It is time we look to our better natures and admit that we are not a perfect union. Because of what our founders laid out for us in our Constitution, we can strive to become a more perfect union. We can do that by dealing with those things we have long tried to sweep under the rug.

There is a lot to be fixed, but there is no better time than now to begin to right the wrongs that have been visited upon members of our society. *Bob Bearden is chair of the Board of Trustees of the Central Oklahoma Labor Federation and a member of Mayflower Congregational Church UCC of OKC.*

ing the Age of Reason and Enlightenment, was contemplated by political philosophers from Plato in 4th century B.C. to Thomas Paine in 18th century America as he penned *Common Sense*, the pamphlet that helped ignite the American Revolution and inspire the Declaration.

Every age and each generation must rediscover and reaffirm the truths that “all men are created equal

and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.”

Today, we are again faced with enormous challenges – not only a global pandemic but also the amplified differences between white America and it minorities in coping with its devastating effects.

Following the brutal death of George Floyd, we are

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



‘What Do You Have To Lose?’

BY CAL HOBSON

On multiple occasions our President Donald J. Trump has posited the above question to diverse groups.

For Blacks in America, it was about the upcoming fall election as Trump solicited their support. For those seeking a quick cure to the current coronavirus pandemic, the same phrase was uttered urging folks to consider taking the experimental medication hydroxychloroquine.

Of course, in the second example, what folks have to lose is only possibly their lives but hey ...

Every four years pundits, politicians and even preachers will proclaim the upcoming presidential election is the most important in history; that the very existence of civilization depends on it; that World War III, a debilitating depression and/or massive trade wars of epic proportions will break out depending on who wins or loses in November.

In this election cycle such fears may actually may be right. The choice comes down to another four years of a 74-year-old white, male incumbent or a

78-year-old white, male challenger. This, in America, where our racial makeup is moving rapidly away from that once and almost always dominant demographic category with the exception of the exceptional Barack Obama.

So regardless of who you are, dear readers, this article will attempt to answer the compelling question of what each of us has to lose, or maybe gain, come midnight Nov. 3, 2020. It is not, I hope you will agree, an irrelevant conversation. Here are some of the issues hanging in the balance:

In 2020 the ideological direction of the Supreme Court and lower courts will be decided for perhaps the next generation or even longer. Most big decisions among The Supremes are now resolved 5-4 with Chief Justice John Roberts often the tiebreaker. He’s young at 60 so he’ll continue to be around for a while.

However, no matter how long her supporters think liberal Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg can survive multiple life-threatening diseases she is now 87 and

increasingly vulnerable. Regardless of whoever is the next president one thing for sure about a possible Ginsburg successor is that he/she will be a graduate of either Yale or Harvard Law.

Current makeup of the nine members of our highest court is five from Harvard, four from Yale so that narrows down the nominees considerably. Then also screen for only white, male editors of the two university law reviews who happen to also sit on only one of a couple courts of appeals and you've got your next Supreme. See that wasn't so hard.

2 This year's general election will also greatly impact who controls most of the often grubby hands reaching out for and receiving all kinds of campaign money. Since the landmark ruling of Citizens United v. the Federal Election Commission in 2010, money spigots continue to explode in number and productivity.

Incumbency, of course, at all levels certainly is a huge advantage. From the presidency down to a local council race dollars drive winners and deflate losers. Truthfully neither party seems genuinely interested in reeling in the giving, although the Democrats use Citizens United as a handy club to pound the Republicans. Joe Biden actually raised more money in May than did the president. Mother's milk seems plenti-

ful for both sides and an endless number of special interest and single issue groups continue to flourish as well.

3 Our racial divide is literally killing some of us. This is the toughest nut to crack because it is not just an economic dilemma or social chasm, but both, and so much more.

Racism is wrapped in 400 years of overt and covert behavior both taught and inherited generation after generation. Yes it is "better" than it was in the 1960s but how could it not be?

Surely laws, customs and causes change over decades so there are no more white and black water fountains or toilets but still horrible thoughts and deeds are recorded daily. They range from an eight-minute murder video in Minneapolis to a woman in Central Park making up a story for the police about a very mild mannered black bird watcher.

More locally and recently in progressive Norman the all-white City Council listened to 11 hours of emotional, sometimes vulgar, but always intense testimony from dozens of citizens who mostly claimed abuse from police. Blacks were in the majority as speakers but there were also a score or more of young white women with similar allegations.

Endemic, systemic racism was the most common

STAR TRIBUNE
SACK



theme sprinkled with tearful stories spanning several decades of violence both physical and mental. At the end of the marathon meeting a 3% cut in the police budget [about \$800,000] was unanimously approved and transferred to unnamed social or community investments.

4 Next up a promising future – who has it, who wants it and how did it get this way. The economic imbalance is now much more than just about measuring family income.

Even with \$4 trillion of federal largesse already dispensed in the form of loans, grants, incentives, cash payments, debt write offs and other safety nets, things are getting worse not better.

For far too many the American dream is more of a myth than an achievable goal, even if you try to keep up with three jobs. Many of the problems of the 1960s that led to riots and protests, as well as the deaths of both prominent and common citizens, have been replicated this round only names have changed. George Floyd for Martin Luther King Jr., for example. About the only thing they may have had in common was time in jail, Floyd many times while King prominently in Birmingham.

While assassinations of King and Bobby Kennedy 50 years ago brought mostly angry black youth into the streets, this time around the protesters AND rioters seem more multi-racial – black, white, Asian, Hispanic. Also young women now are enthusiastic participants, including one white woman identified as the arsonist that torched Wendy's in Atlanta following the shooting there of Rayshard Brooks. It seems many are all in for better or worse.

Deborah Astley

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5 The courts, campaign money, racial division, massive economically different living standards – what else could possibly be impacted by the elections this year? How about the worst worldwide pandemic in over 100 years?

[By the way, during the Spanish flu of 1917-18, when at least 50 million died worldwide, doctors recommended that people wear masks, socially separate and above all don't mingle in large crowds inside buildings. I'm not making this up].

So now, on the one hand, President Trump has said, and continues to believe, that the worst of our current nightmare is behind us; that the World Health Organization should be defunded and abolished; that less testing, not more would be appropriate; that he does not need to wear a mask; that he can and will hold large rallies where distance and masking are not mandatory; and finally, that he knows more about the virus and its cures than his medical advisors, including Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Conversely, Democrats ranging from former Vice President Joe Biden down to and including many mayors of cities both large and small view COVID-19 as the greatest social, economic and health challenge they have ever or will ever confront.

Polling data confirms this political divide in that almost two-thirds of Republicans agree with Trump's approach while 81% of Democrats do not. Can anyone today of a certain age remotely believe that the United States was similarly divided in the 1950s when the cure of polio was discovered by Dr. Jonas Salk? Having been there, it wasn't.

Elections matter and I first paid attention to a presidential race in 1952 when I was seven. Gen. Dwight Eisenhower clobbered Illinois Gov. Adlai Stevenson in that one, and I tell you of my political weirdness to underscore the following: Any one of the five crises enumerated above would normally be plenty of grist for an election, but five?

All we are missing is a world-ending nuclear exchange with some adversary, a possibility seemingly impossible just a few months ago.

Iran, North Korea, deranged individuals or fringe groups all seem credible candidates to trigger a conflagration and our own president's tendencies range from sharing love letters with Kim Jong Un to calling him Little Rocket Man and threatening to incinerate him and his citizens.

So now, suddenly, we're up to five intractable complexities that must be addressed, to one degree or another, once we have a new president ... and I trust we will.

And if we don't? At a minimum we'll have a sixth and that means we don't have a chance to fix the first five.

On that cheery note have a nice summer.
Cal Hobson, a Lexington Democrat, served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 1978-2006, including one term as Senate President Pro Tempore.

Medicaid In, Four Incumbents Out

BY ARNOLD HAMILTON

A win is a win is a win.

That adage certainly applies to SQ 802, the Medicaid expansion proposal that narrowly won voter approval in the June 30 primary – 6,518 votes out of 674,040 cast statewide.

But margin doesn't matter when it involves passage of what is arguably the important voter-determined policy question since 1992 when SQ 640 made it all but impossible to raise taxes for vital state services.

What truly counts is that 200,000 more working poor will gain access to health care in a state that far too long has languished at the bottom of national health indices.

SQ 802's approval was more sigh of relief than surprise in an election full of surprises. Three key take-aways:

MEDICAID EXPANSION

Once again voters were forced to take matters into their own hands. A Republican-dominated Legislature fought Medicaid expansion for a decade – mostly because it was a key element of Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act.

To the very end, Gov. Kevin Stitt and the stink tank known as the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs pursued a figures lie and liar's figure strategy in claiming the state cannot afford its share of the 9-1 federal-state match.

Reality check: Oklahoma could no longer afford to pass up a return on investment that not even Warren Buffett could generate in his wildest dreams. What made the opposition even more bizarre was the federal match represents Oklahoma tax dollars already sent to Washington – but currently underwriting health care in 36 other states that already expanded Medicaid.

Sadly, far too many rural voters – those whose health care access is most in jeopardy – swallowed the malarkey. All eight counties that have lost hospitals since 2010 resoundingly voted against SQ 802. [See Rep. David Perryman's analysis]

Only seven of Oklahoma's 77 counties approved the measure, but the pro-802 counties included the state's largest population centers: Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Lawton. Rural Oklahoma continues to vote against its self-interest.

Thankfully, as Perryman's research shows, at least 3,678 of the 6,518 votes [56.4%] that propelled SQ 802 to victory were Republican votes cast in the eight counties whose hospitals cratered under the weight of uncompensated care.

Medicaid expansion now is enshrined in the state

Constitution. It will take effect July 1, 2021.

INTRA-PARTY WARFARE

Three statehouse Republicans and one Democrat were bounced in their party's primaries, reflecting a growing hyper-partisanship empowered by Oklahoma's gerrymandered legislative districts.

In all four cases, incumbents were deemed out-of-step with their party's activists – on the political left, OKC Democrat Jason Dunnington, and on the right, Grove Sen. Wayne Shaw, Bartlesville Rep. Derrel Fincher and Poteau Rep. Lundy Kiger.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Eight Counties, Eight Baffling Losses

How did SQ 802 fare in eight Oklahoma counties where hospitals closed since 2010? Outgoing state Rep. David Perryman ran the numbers:

Epic Medical Center [Eufaula/McIntosh] – Failed: 1,959 yes, 2,188 no.

Latimer County General Hospital [Wilburton/Latimer] – Failed: 1,130 yes, 1,383 no.

Memorial Hospital & Physician Group [Frederick/Tillman] – Failed: 622 yes votes, 704 no.

Mercy Hospital [El Reno/Canadian] – Failed: 10,059 yes, 13,492 no.

Muskogee Community Hospital [Muskogee/Muskogee] – Failed: 5,983 yes, 6,552 no.

Pauls Valley General Hospital [Pauls Valley/Garvin] – Failed: 1,849 yes, 3,249 no.

Sayre Community Hospital [Sayre/Beckham] – Failed: 1,275 yes, 2,210 no.

Haskell County Community Hospital [Stigler/Haskell] – Failed: 1,127 yes, 1,829 no.

At least 3,678 of the 6,518 votes [56.4%] that allowed SQ 802 to pass were Republican votes cast in these eight counties.

In the four counties east of I-35, of the 11,472 Democrats voting in the U.S. Senate primary, at least 1,273 [11.1% or more than one in 10] Democrats voted against SQ 802.

In the four counties west of I-35 [including Garvin County], of the 22,110 Republicans voting in the U.S. Senate primary, at least 3,678 [16.6% or one in six] Republicans voted for SQ 802.

Are We 'Comfortably Numb' To The Virus Stalking Us?

BY JOHN WOOD

The melodious words flowed from my phone's Spotify Coronavirus Playlist app.

Now I've got that feeling once again

I can't explain, you would not understand

This is not how I am

I have become comfortably numb

I have become comfortably numb.

The Pink Floyd's words resonated with me. I wondered, have we all become comfortably numb? Maybe so, as Riley Fitzgerald, a reporter for Press magazine wrote a piece headlined: "‘Comfortably Numb’ Goes Viral Following Coronavirus Outbreak." Dion Curry, Swansea University political science professor told me though the "comfortably numb" feeling is "not necessarily unhealthy, at least at the moment as we enter survival mode."

All the while, America is largely "opened up." A Dallas friend, Terrie Altman, told me, "I personally am so disheartened [or comfortably numb] it's hard to believe, even here in the thick of the numbers, that some just are complacent and put off by health re-

strictions to curb the curve."

And yet, the coronavirus has claimed well more than 120,000 deaths nationwide. We also lead the world in COVID-19 deaths, the U.S. has merely 4.5% of the world's population, and yet simultaneously 27.5% of the deaths. In a little more than three months, it's startling to think this is twice as many Americans as died in the decade-long Vietnam War.

Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz ripped the Trump administration's poor response to the coronavirus pandemic. He further cautioned that the U.S. could be headed toward a second Great Depression as a result. The World Health Organization said that if the past is prologue expect a second wave, especially given that so many people thus far have ignored precautions. And the governmental response at all levels has been underwhelming.

Even Oklahoma has now more than 380 deaths, where Gov. Kevin Stitt's early state opening in opposition to White House guidance for cases to fall consistently for two weeks beforehand. If you look

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at the Oklahoma Health Department guidelines, you find daily fluctuations, certainly never a consistent downward trend. At the same time, Oklahoma has seen more than a 90% jump in its coronavirus cases in mid-June, two weeks after phase III. “We’re at a point where there are warning signs going off, and people need to take steps to help control it,” Chris Meekins, a health policy research analyst at the investment bank Raymond James, said.

On top of the fact that from my observation and others, few people choose to wear masks. Another friend, Luke Oldham, from Liberty Mounds told me, “It is odd because it’s really easy to act like it’s almost not happening.”

FEEDING US FEAR FOR FREE

Neil Postman’s 1985 *Amusing Ourselves to Death* found that television packaged as entertainment, warps our sensibilities and crippling rational thought as we move from being “informed” to “disinformed” where knowledge is irrelevant, misplaced, fragmented and superficial.

Media scholar Susan Moeller’s 2001 article in *Media Studies Journal* says that we are falling prey to two of our most seductive coping mechanisms when faced with calamity: compassion fatigue, and psychic numbing. She says that news stories about particularly egregious events often provoke less empathy from people because they do not perceive that they can do anything about the situation.

On top of the fact that people find it difficult to comprehend the sheer complexity of factors that result in unspeakable the deaths mounting from COVID-19. As a result, Moeller says people just “tune out” as it becomes overwhelming. Even just having to stay home over a long period of time and completely disrupting our normal habits and rhythms can also be disorienting – it becomes “collective trauma.”

NEGATIVE PARTISANSHIP DIVIDE

It seems that the party system over time has totally ruptured between two tribes along racial, cultural, and religious lines where each party’s supporters hold a rather jaundiced view of the other side as seen in the divide among partisans over the coronavirus.

Fairleigh Dickinson University in mid-June found that when asked if they supported requirements to wear face masks in enclosed public spaces, 63% of Trump backers said they were fine with the measure. Ninety-five percent of all of Trump’s critics though supported the mandatory use of face masks. Fairleigh Dickinson University Poll Director Krista Jenkins said: “Masks are becoming political Rorschach tests. For some, they’re necessary safeguards against the virus, while for others they’re intrusions into one’s personal freedom.”

This difference might be because many of Trump’s supporters are following his cynical lead. He recently told *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, that he thinks that people are wearing masks to voice their disapproval of him – not as a preventive measure.

Emory political scientists Alan Abramowitz and

Steven Webster call it “negative partisanship.” This means that people are often more motivated by their antipathy for the other party than by affinity for their own. Therefore, the willingness of passionate Trump supporters to stay with him regardless of scandal, outrage and actions that may damage their own economic standing becomes more understandable. Therefore, even

just criticizing him or seeing him undergo a defeat means that the evil enemy [i.e. the Left, Blacks, Hispanics, Antifa, etc.] has won. They say don’t give an inch in this “culture war.”

In March, for example, an NPR poll found 54% of Republicans, but only 20% of Democrats felt the coronavirus was “blown out of proportion.” Not



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surprising, by June a CNN poll found 73% of Republicans, but only 23% percent of Democrats felt comfortable returning to their old routine. A Washington Post poll in May likewise found though that 73% of Democrats were wearing masks, but only 59% of Republicans are doing so. By June, a third of people asked whether they should have to wear a mask in public, said “No.”

HERD IMMUNITY

In Science Journal, scholars recently found only 43% of the population is needed to get sick with COVID-19 to reach herd immunity. However, mathematicians from the University of Nottingham and University of Stockholm say it's closer to 60%. The assumption is that if we reach herd immunity whether it's by attrition or a vaccine, we will finally be in the clear. Of course, this assumes you can't get it a second time.

One estimate, by Johnson and Mueller [2002], found that the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918 killed 50 million people. That would have been 2.7% of the world population at the time, or Case Fatality Rate [CFR]. Today, CFRs vary widely between countries, from 0.2% in Germany to 7.7% in Italy. In the U.S., the death rate ranges from the Libertarian magazine Reason's .5% to the CDC, which reports closer to a 5.2% average death rate overall. This range might be explained by the fact various ages differ in their rates of death. They agree with the .5% but only for 45 to 54 year olds, according to the CDC, and more than 10% for those older than 85.

So, let's assume the CFR is only .5% in Oklahoma with nearly four million population. With a 43% threshold for herd immunity, that's more than 1.7 million who will have to get sick. That's 8,600 deaths in the state, or 22 times the current deaths. If we assume a 5% CFR it's closer to 86,000 deaths. In the U.S. that's 830,000 deaths to more than eight million on the high end.

LET GRANDMA DIE?

In reading Facebook posts and viewing the lack of social distancing and masks in town, it seems the Herd Immunity idea is gaining steam. On the bright



side, Herd Immunity means we can go on with our life comfortably numb. On the dark side, as you see above, many will die.

I had first heard the first rumblings of this term after Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick claimed that “lots of grandparents out there” are willing to take a chance against the COVID-19 coronavirus in order to save the economy. In response, Fox host Tucker Carlson, said “And if that’s the exchange, I’m all in,” adding there are “lots of grandparents” who agree.

Not surprisingly, conservative pundit Glenn Beck echoed this refrain. “Even if we all get sick, I’d rather die than kill the country, because it’s not the economy that’s dying, it’s the country.” Likewise, Larry Kudlow, a Trump official, exclaimed, “We’re going to have make some difficult trade-offs.”

I doubt my grandma would agree.

Some use Sweden is an example as a successful country that focused on Herd Immunity, but not without a grave cost as they have reached the seventh most deaths per million people worldwide, just a head of the U.S. at ninth.

TRUMP RALLY ANYONE?

In mid-June, 18 states, including Oklahoma, experienced an increase in cases, and health officials implored Americans to heed task force guidelines – including wearing a mask and social distancing. With this news in hand, Vice President Pence surreally suggested on national television that the pandemic was all but over. Pence, head of the COVID-19 task-

force, provided cover for Trump with laser-like focus on the election, the two staging a rally in deep-red Oklahoma even with a blizzard of criticism for doing so.

It was held just blocks from Greenwood district, where a white mob massacred more than 300 Black Tulsa residents and more than 10,000 were displaced 99 years ago, the day after Juneteenth, celebrating the end of slavery. Dog whistle anyone?

What's more, even as Trump promoted the slow down of testing at the event, he still sardonically felt that COVID-19 was real enough to require a waiver and six members of his advance team were sent back because they came down with the virus.

Even in the face of obvious danger, unfortunately, the Oklahoma Supreme Court unanimously spurned legal efforts by the John Hope Franklin for Reconciliation, a nonprofit that promotes racial equality, and the Greenwood Center to stop Trump's rally. The court held there the state's reopening plan lacked mandatory language relating to masks and social distancing. Of the 6,200 attending, almost no one did.

CLOSER TO HOME

I appreciate Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt, who said: "People between the ages 18 and 50 don't live in some sort of a bubble. They are the children and grandchildren of vulnerable people. They may be standing next to you at a wedding. They might be serving you a meal in a restaurant."

Holt points to the scientific findings that asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 walk among us and are potentially spreading it to you and me if they are not wearing a mask and socially distancing. But like the rest of the state, caught between a rock and hard place in not being able to enforce CDC guidelines himself because of Gov. Stitt's lack of a mandate.

My family was hit by this virus, too. My little brother and nephew have thankfully recovered and are taking the whole thing more seriously now. I can only imagine the unnecessary pain and suffering of tens or even hundreds of thousands of Oklahoma families who will have to pay the ultimate price of our "business as usual" mantra, as we continue to pretend it's all over.

At the end of Pink Floyd's *Comfortably Numb* video, he throws off his suit representing his numbness to the world around him.

*I prefer to face it and let it hurt me,
than lose all sense of feeling.*

My hope is that maybe Oklahomans can wake up to COVID-19's grave consequences, but I'm not holding my breath.

Stillwater resident John Wood is an associate professor of political science at the University of Central Oklahoma. The views he expresses are his and not necessarily the university's.

[Editor's Note: On June 30, Stitt finally donned a mask himself at a news conference in which he urged all Oklahomans to wear masks in public. But he again stopped short of mandating their use.]

5 Ways To Manage Social Anxiety As States Reopen

BY CATHY CASSATA

Since your social calendar has been blank for the last few months, filling it back up can feel liberating – but it can also cause anxiety.

"The change from having a highly social work and personal life to nothing at all can be really detrimental to a person's mental health, and may cause many people who are normally extroverted to feel like they are becoming introverted and not wanting to mix with others," Jana Abelovska, medical advisor for Click Pharmacy, told Healthline.

Emily Anhalt, PsyD, founder of Coa, agrees, noting that isolation is emotionally draining and can feed into social anxiety.

"We are not gathering experiences that disprove our worries; there's no gradual exposure [to our worries]. Normally when you are being social in a regular way, you are having some of your worries disproven. You're getting used to them. You have a chance to try different things and see what helps with your worry, but now that we are all on our own, jumping back into the unknown poses its own set of anxiety," Anhalt told Healthline.

As you begin to socialize in person more, the following simple tips can help put your anxiety at ease.

EASE BACK INTO IT

For those who live with social anxiety, Dr. Allie R. Shapiro, psychiatrist with Community Psychiatry, says to slowly enter into a social life.

"This will help them to ease into situations that were previously uncomfortable. As quarantine ends, the auto-avoidance will also end, necessitating their introduction back into situations they deeply fear. That's not a leap anyone should take all at once," Shapiro told Healthline.

Start by connecting with those in your closest inner circle.

"That circle is your comfort space, and people you feel most like yourself with and can be honest with and who you trust," Anhalt said.

When you're ready, she suggests reaching out to people you enjoy being with but may feel nervous around and need warming up to. Eventually, expand your circle to include people and situations that make you anxious.

"[The idea is to] give yourself a little taste of something that makes you anxious and then wait for the anxiety to calm down. Then increase your exposure

a little more and wait for the anxiety to come down,” Anhalt said.

If you're not ready to see people face-to-face, Abelovska suggests setting a goal to talk with a different person each day over the phone or via video chat.

“After you have had a week of calling a friend a day, why not go further and organize a group call with a few friends to get used to group interaction. If you feel ready, why not get a date [on the calendar] for a socially distanced walk with a friend,” she said.

VISUALIZE SITUATIONS IN YOUR HEAD

Shapiro recommends preparing for upcoming social events by role-playing specific worries or concerns with someone you trust, on paper or in your head.

Abelovska elaborates by explaining if you have an upcoming walk planned with a friend or are about to meet them at the park, try to mentally plan your meetup and how you'd like it to go.

“Visualize your friend when you see them and what you will say. It may be awkward at first, especially as we are not able to hug or touch friends, but you will soon adapt to the new way of greeting a loved one,” she said.

Another strategy Shapiro suggests is to challenge internal negative thought patterns with a reversal thought, either before or during anxiety-provoking situations.

For example, if you're going to an outing where you'll be around new people, she says, “Instead of auto-thinking, ‘These people won't like me and will make fun of me,’ try: ‘They've been stuck inside for months just like me. We'll trade stories. They will like me and I'll probably find one new friend,’” she said.

ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE SCARED

Even if it seems like everyone around you isn't worried or scared to get back into the world, Shapiro says it's acceptable to have your own reaction and anxieties about the situation.

“Remember, no one has ever been through anything like this in the modern world, so no one really knows how to do it ‘right.’ Even the experts don't have all the answers, so it's normal to have your own uncertainties and doubts,” she said.

Socialize at your comfort level, Shapiro adds.

“You're not obligated to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or puts you at risk. There

are a lot of different factors that will affect when you feel it's the best time to start venturing out. Think about your age, health history, quarantine situations, and even your own anxiety when taking that next step outside,” Shapiro said.

Feelings of safety in the world validate some of our anxieties, notes Anhalt.

“There is so much unknown about what is ultimately safe, and some of our fears about being out in the world are actually warranted, so it's a good idea to be thoughtful about who you are engaging with socially, and understand if they are [on the same page] as you are,” she said.

Share your feelings of panic and fear over social plans with those who are closest to you.

“You may feel slightly embarrassed about these feelings, especially if you are usually the life and soul of the party, but there's no shame in feeling slightly overwhelmed by the changes, especially after so much time spent alone,” Abelovska said.

“I can guarantee that at least one of [your friends] will be going through the same thing and will be glad and relieved that you have spoken about it,” she said.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Prioritizing your physical health, learning breathing exercises, developing self-reflective practices like therapy and journaling, and talking to friends and family about your worries are all practical parts of anxiety management, says Anhalt.

“While we don't have a playbook, we can rely on coming back to ourselves and the present moment, and making sure we have [reliable] spaces in our lives so we can navigate the spaces that feel out of our control,” she said.

Anhalt believes that people who work proactively on their mental health are better equipped to handle the unknowns.

“It's like doing emotional pushups, so when things get hard in the world, we have these core tools we can come back to that make us feel grounded,” she said.

She compares going back into the world like participating in an obstacle course that you didn't get to see in advance.

“You might not be able to prepare for everything you're going to encounter, but you can get your body and mind ready to handle difficult things beforehand. This will put you in a better position to navigate anything that comes your way,” Anhalt said.

GET PROFESSIONAL HELP

If you've tried all you can to assimilate back into some form of socializing but anxiety and panic are interfering with your ability to do so, it may be time to reach out to a mental health professional.

Search the Anxiety and Depression Association of America [<https://adaa.org>] for a licensed mental health professional who specializes in anxiety and related disorders.

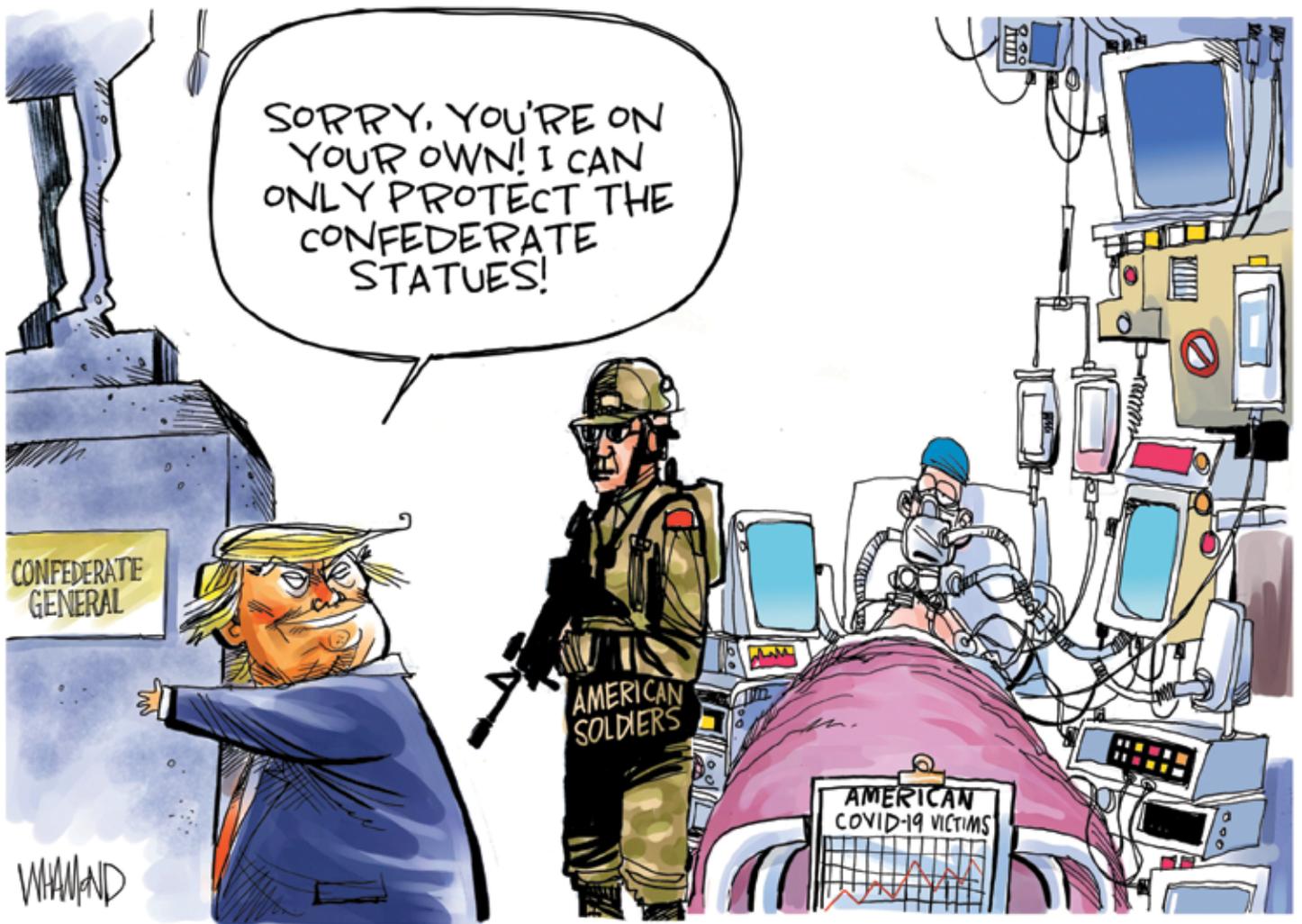
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Monuments, Masks, Mascots And More

BY ANN DAPICE

So many messages confront us. The Arctic circle reaches 101F. The “Godzilla dust cloud” threatens the southeastern states. The president asks the Supreme Court to overturn the Affordable Care Act as people continue to suffer and die from the coronavirus. Unarmed Blacks continue to be killed by police in disproportionate numbers.

In the recent Georgia election voters experienced long lines and faulty machines in minority areas. Many voters reported having asked for, but not received, absentee ballots. President Trump vows prison time for people removing Confederate monuments.

A meme shows that “Aunt Jemima” has been removed, Confederate flags and monuments are being removed, but the Washington “R*DSK*NS” mascot remains. COVID-19 affects minorities in greater number due to poverty, access to health care and diseases that make them susceptible.

The president claims that people who wear masks are doing it because they don’t “like” him. Mean-

while he refuses to wear one.

The Corona virus spikes again in a large number of states. Its fallout doesn’t just bring suffering and death but seriously affects our lives in innumerable ways.

What we’ve experienced as education is now an unknown from Pre-K-12 through college. Will schools at all levels open in August?

Businesses and services suffer in high numbers. When people have kept their jobs, except for “essential” services, work is now from home and in “virtual” meetings.

Large gatherings have been limited by the coronavirus; however, President Trump ignored the precautions and held rallies in Tulsa and Arizona where there was no social distancing and only a few wore masks.

In contradiction to what the president’s experts in infectious disease have stated, he tells us we can choose to wear the masks or not. This is a curious exception since we don’t have choices in other areas

where lives are at risk.

The president tells us, seriously or not, that we should stop testing for the virus because it results in larger numbers with the disease – as opposed to identifying more disease that otherwise would remain unknown. The Trump administration is ending funding for 13 COVID-19 testing sites.

There is information overload and there are many unknowns. My own research shows that most of us can only respond to two or three categories of information at a time. And to do so productively requires accurate knowledge and facts.

Many of our lifetime habits and routines are being changed. We watch television newscasters from their homes. We plan to go to a restaurant and then realize there is only curbside delivery. A visit to a physician requires a mask with only the patient allowed in the waiting room.

Never ending political surveys come to us by email. They provide lists of issues to choose. But issues are all related. Do we want gun control or environmental action? Affordable health care or criminal justice reform? Affordable college or police reform? Civil Rights or infrastructure?

The removal of monuments has brought new questions.

“It’s no accident that: You learned about Helen Keller instead of W.E.B. DuBois. You learned about the Watts and L.A. Riots but not Tulsa or Wilmington. You learned that George Washington’s dentures were made from wood, rather than the teeth from slaves. You learned about black ghettos, but not about Black Wall Street. You learned about the New Deal, but not ‘redlining.’ You learned about Tommie Smith’s fist in the air at the 1968 Olympics, but not that he was sent home the next day and stripped of his medals. You learned about ‘black crime’ but white criminals were never lumped together and discussed in terms of their race. You learned about ‘states rights’ as the cause of the Civil War, but not that slavery was mentioned 80 times in the articles of secession. Privilege is having history rewritten so that you don’t have to acknowledge uncomfortable facts. Racism is perpetuated by people who refuse to learn or acknowledge this reality. You have a choice.” [Author unknown]

What of the other slave-owning presidents like Washington and Jefferson [Newsweek, June 20]? Is it only the Confederate monuments to be removed? Are other monuments in question?

The largest mass execution in the history of the country was the hanging of 38 Sioux by order of Abraham Lincoln in 1862. After the U.S. failed to meet its treaty obligations with the Dakota, armed conflict between some of the Dakota, the settlers, and the U.S. military began. After more than a month, Dakota warriors surrendered and were tried by a military commission. 303 were condemned to death.

The trials were held unfairly in a number of ways.

The military commission did not know that it was the aftermath of a war and that the men had surrendered. In a series of decisions and fearing uprising of settlers if executions didn’t result, President Lincoln, reduced the numbers to be executed to 39 then 38 Dakota [Charles, 2017, nativenewsonline.net].

The psychological importance of the face and the “mask” we show others is that it either hides or expresses who we are. Similarly, we build monuments to show what values, ideas or individuals are of importance to us.

When our understandings change or we learn more of historical events related to existing monuments, we are given the opportunity to reassess these values and persons.

Curiously, schools and teams use mascots to show what is important to them. When questioned in recent years about the use of the term R*DSK*NS schools and teams have said they used this term to honor American Indians. When Indian communities explain the history of the word – bounties given by the U.S. government for the skins and other body parts of Indians, some teams and schools have made immediate changes while others have chosen to keep the mascot even if offensive to Indians. In this sense the use of monuments, masks and mascots declare what matters to us for good or ill.

Hope for change occurs. The governor of Virginia has announced that the statue of Robert E. Lee will be removed from the Capitol. The governor of North Carolina has ordered Confederate monuments to be removed. A related action has just been announced by Princeton University.

The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs is to be changed to Princeton School of International and Public Affairs. The residential Woodrow Wilson College will be named First College. The name, John Rogers, was removed from the University of Tulsa’s law school when his connections to the KKK became known.

The Black Lives Matter movement has forced schools to confront issues of racial justice and inclusion [Holson, 2019 NYT].

How can we navigate the chaos? Complexity and unknowns challenge what people call the “old normal” – the comfortable routines, the known habits, the known “truths” that have now been turned upside down. What is the “new normal to be?” We are told that we are “all in it together” and to “be safe” in every newscast. But those who are surprised by what happened in the past, and now in the present, have not had to be “in it.” The idolized history is threatened not only by history but also by their understanding of the present.

Positive changes can happen. Compassion is required when helping people understand the past and the present. Compassion understands that we all come from different experiences and may have difficulty understanding events that we have not experienced. There are teaching/learning strategies that

help people understand “the other” in transforming ways. But at the same time, we must not excuse people who act in clear and dangerous pathology towards others, nor those who continue to support destructive behavior despite all evidence of wrongdoing.

How we respond in our changing “normal” will express who we are.

Ann Dapice received a PhD in psychology, sociology and philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania. She has taught and/or served as administra-

tor at a number of universities teaching courses in the social sciences, philosophy and Native American Studies. She is Director of Education and Research for T.K. Wolf, Inc., a 501(c)(3) American Indian organization and Founder/Executive Director, Institute of Values Inquiry. Her cross-cultural and interdisciplinary research has been reported in professional journals, books, and academic presentations regionally, nationally and internationally – and in newspapers, radio, television, and the internet.

Why I Removed Confederate Monuments From Cherokee Capitol

BY CHUCK HOSKIN JR.

Across our country, we are having a new dialogue about how we experience race and the painful chapters of United States history, including the American Civil War. Recently, I oversaw the removal of two monuments from the historic Cherokee Nation Capitol Square in Tahlequah. The monuments failed to reflect the Cherokee Nation’s values of freedom and inclusion, and they run contrary to the idea that Cherokee Nation should have control of telling its own story.

We have long had public discussion about the potential removal of these monuments. I concede that recent events in the country caused me to reflect further on the matter. America is engaged in a dialogue on the subject of whether public monuments glorifying the Confederacy are appropriate. I think they are not, but that only begins to delve into the reasons I removed the monuments. The discussion goes even deeper, to the core of whether a people should have the power to tell their own story.

Contrary to popular belief, the monuments, both relating to the Confederacy and Confederate Gen. Stand Waite, are not “Cherokee” in terms of creation or origin. The monuments were set in place by a non-Cherokee organization, the Daughters of the Confederacy, in 1913 and 1921. This began less than a decade after Cherokee Nation lost ownership of our historic Capitol Square at Oklahoma statehood. The state owned the property, and it was controlled by the county government as a courthouse. Cherokee Nation, its government suppressed by the federal government, was not involved in the placement of the monuments.

What an insult to a great nation to have its Capitol taken and then adorned with monuments by those who seized it. It would take a half-century for Cherokee Nation to regain its full ability to self-govern and take back its Capitol Square. Yet, for the last centu-

ry, one of the most hallowed places in the Cherokee Nation – a symbol of Cherokee unity, endurance and progress – was decorated based on the judgment of the state government, the county government and a non-Indian organization as they saw fit.

The days of Cherokees leaving it to others to tell our story are over. We have suffered for centuries with others telling our story for us and telling us which people, places and events should be glorified in monuments. I have committed much time and energy to giving our national story back to Cherokees. On that point, I will never yield.

Today, we have the power and resources to build our own monuments and memorials to significant people, places and events. We have exercised that power across Cherokee Nation in a way that has brought pride and unity to our tribe. You can see it in each of our public spaces. Through museums, books and online material, people can explore the Cherokee story. This includes a discussion of Stand Waite and the Civil War, as it is not possible to explore Cherokee history without understanding both.

Telling our own story allows us to tell it more fully and accurately. The Daughters of the Confederacy had as its mission the glorification of the Confederacy. The monuments were set in the midst of great racial strife in the country, including lynchings, race massacres and the enforcement of Jim Crow laws. To anyone with even a basic understanding of Cherokee Nation’s connection to the Civil War, the monuments did a poor job of depicting that pivotal era in Cherokee history. The monuments, bearing painful references to the Confederacy and glorifying the cause of the rebellion, detract from the spirit of unity and friendship that Cherokees today want to extend to each other and to the world. We can do better.

As for the monuments, will work to find them a

new and appropriate home.

Going forward we plan to develop more artistic spaces for Cherokees to better tell our story across the entirety of the Capitol grounds. For the first time in more than a century, the Cherokee Nation will take full control over the images and symbols depicted on our historic Capitol Square. As long as I am Chief, those symbols will reflect unity and inclusion, not divisiveness.

Chuck Hoskin Jr. is principal chief of the Cherokee Nation

Renaming Forts

BY KEN NEAL

Changing the names of Fort Hood and Fort Benning named after generals initially seemed a bit excessive, but then I made a quick study of the generals for whom they are named and the dates when the forts were named.

What I learned in my shallow dive into history changed my mind.

Fort Hood was officially opened Sept. 18, 1942 when the country mobilized after Pearl Harbor. It was named for the Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood, who commanded Hood's Texas Brigade during the civil war. Hood was one of the youngest generals on either side. He lost an arm at Gettysburg and a leg at Chickamauga, but still commanded the army of Tennessee in the later part of the war. He was obviously an outstanding soldier and it seemed fitting that Texas would have a fort named after him.

Fort Benning is named after Henry L. Benning, also a general in the Confederate army during the Civil war. Benning was an ardent pro-slavery politician before leading troops in the war. He was a United States senator from Mississippi before the war. First opened in 1909 as camp, the post was renamed to Fort Benning in 1922.

Both are in Confederate states and were named for the generals during the height of Jim Crow days.

Recent events that have made all of us aware of racism has awakened a call to rename the forts, a move that President Trump, of course, opposes. Congress has signaled its willingness to change the names. But why change them?

The short answer is because Hood and Benning were generals who were a part of the effort to break up the nation via civil war. The best reason, though, is because they are more emblems of the determination of the old South to reinstitute slavery than commemoration of the war.

Lincoln treated the Civil War as a rebellion that had to be put down to save the Union. After the war, he welcomed these rebel generals as U.S. citizens, provided they pledged allegiance. It was the right

thing. He could have tried the southern leaders, certainly from Jefferson and the Confederate officer corps as war criminals. Indeed, many northerners wanted them hanged.

Lincoln's generous treatment of the South failed. By 1876, Republican Rutherford Hayes fell one electoral vote short of election. He was named president by the House when southern Democrats agreed to elect him provided the hated federal troops were removed from the South. His opponent, Samuel Tilden, won the popular vote.

That bargain allowed the South to go full speed putting laws on state books that effectively enslaved blacks once again. Most of the monuments to Confederate generals came during Jim Crow days as Southerners tried to restore their "way of life."

The South's "gallant" fight to keep a culture dependent on slavery has been so romanticized through the years that it seems at first unreasonable to take the names off forts and take down monuments to the war.

But it's not. These generals and others were indeed traitors forgiven by Abraham Lincoln in hopes of healing the country. Southerners took advantage of him to resurrect white supremacy.

In the language of Lincoln, it is altogether fitting that the forts be renamed.

Ken Neal is former opinion editor of the Tulsa World.

Primary

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

In addition, hard right Republicans – particularly those devoted to school vouchers – dealt a serious blow to Shawnee Sen. Ron Sharp's bid for a third and final [because of term limits] term.

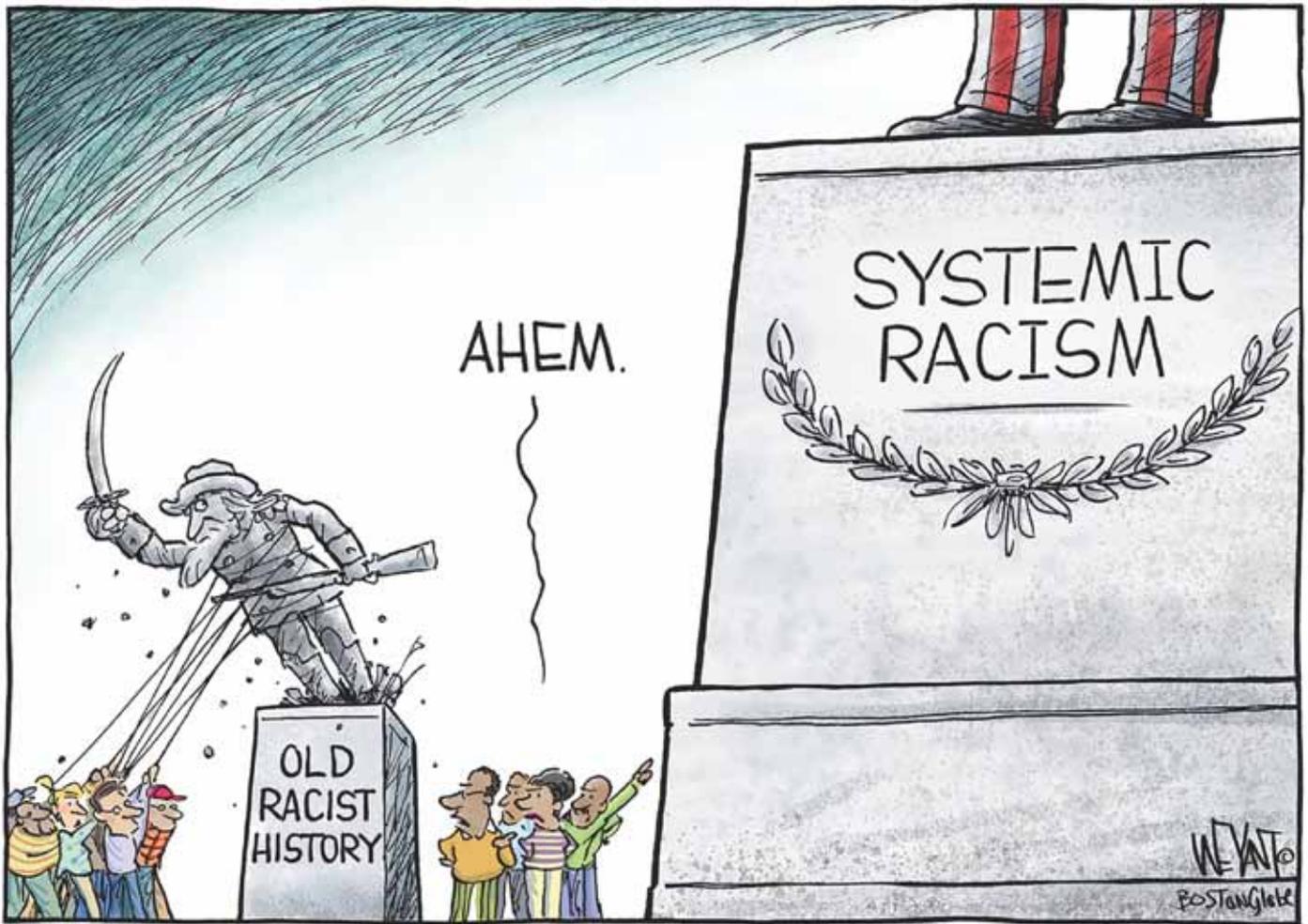
Sharp, a career educator, is the GOP's leading legislative proponent of public schools and opponent of vouchers. He was removed as chair of the Senate Education Committee because he wouldn't play ball with the privatizers. Now he's been forced into an Aug. 25 runoff against former state Rep. Shane Jett.

ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

Nine Republican candidates promoted themselves as abortion abolitionists. Only one – McCurtain's Warren Hamilton – survived the primary, forcing incumbent two-term Sen. Larry Boggs of Wilburton into an Aug. 30 runoff for the Senate District 7 seat.

With departing Watson Sen. Joseph Silk gone – Silk mounted a failed congressional bid rather than seek re-election – the no-abortion, no-way crowd failed to make significant inroads in this year's legislative races.

For more primary analysis, listen in to July 6's Observercast, available at okobserver.org/observercast/ or wherever you get your podcasts.



The Economics Of Race

BY SHARON MARTIN

What if the United States had made good on its promise to give freed slaves 40 acres, or even 20? They had been farming the land for their owners for more than 200 years when they were emancipated. Imagine what they could have done with their own land! Is that what white farmers feared, successful black folk?

In January 1865, Gen. William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order No. 15, approved by President Lincoln. It granted 400,000 acres of land, previously owned by defeated Southern plantation owners, to the former slaves. The land stretched from Charleston, SC, to St. John's River in Florida.

There were 3.9 million former slaves, and each family could each claim 40 acres. By June of 1865, 40,000 families had been settled on this "Sherman Land."

It took only until the fall for Andrew Johnson to take back the promise and return to land to the

planters who previously owned it.

We've been perpetuating this travesty ever since.

In 1921, white supremacists in Tulsa, aided by the National Guard and the governor of the state, wiped out the wealth of Greenwood's black residents.

This is what racism looks like.

During reconstruction, out-of-work black men could be charged with vagrancy and jailed. White employers refused to hire them, instead paying the state for convicts, slave labor by another name.

Descendants of slaves who were denied their own land worked as sharecroppers. That system always worked in the landowners' favor.

Vagrancy laws weren't enough. In the 1920s and 1930s, marijuana laws and propaganda targeted black people.

In the 1980s, a white person arrested with cocaine got a lesser sentence than a black person arrested with the same drug in a different form.

PUBLIC FORUM

Even now, a white man with a gun gets the benefit of the doubt more often than an unarmed black man does.

Families can't get ahead when the breadwinner is locked up. Or has been shot in the back.

Families can't get ahead when addictions are treated as a crime instead of an illness.

Families can't get ahead when the breadwinner has a prison record.

You can't refuse to give people jobs and expect them to prosper. You can't deny them opportunity and an adequate education then complain when they need financial assistance.

Racial justice and economic justice, you can't have one without the other.

None of this will be set straight until racism is acknowledged, until laws and attitudes change. It's going to take all of us working together, and that includes both political parties.

People just don't seem to understand that the economy works best when everyone works, when every family has the means to pay the bills and buy the groceries. Only when we extend America's promise to all will we make this country great.

Oilton author, essayist and poet Sharon Martin's latest book is I've Got the Blues: Looking for Justice in a Red State. Her previous books include Not A Prodigal and Froggy Bottom Blues.

Thoughts On Getting It Done

BY BOB D. ROUNSAVELL

When you get to be my age, you've certainly acquired enough knowledge on ways for getting things done. What follows are random thoughts on my goal of living long enough to see passenger rail service re-established between Tulsa and OKC.

The Eastern Flyer is my dream. Shared with other Okies, this we hope to bring to fruition with people in power in Oklahoma today, if they acquire the wisdom to benefit the state, including its two biggest cities. Soon both the young and the older segments of the population will demand a good public transit system to replace their pickups or SUVs.

Millenials now reside in central cities because some basics of public transit are moving them without having the concerns of car ownership. Not only do they want to keep transportation costs down, they also want to be safer and to conduct business while in travel mode.

At the end of Century 21, most of the nation will

have a comprehensive public transit system as the primary mover of the population. Life will then be easier to navigate for those using it.

More important, far fewer people will be killed or injured and incur the big cost of hospitalization and severe strain on our health care delivery system in this COVID-19 period.

Most significant of all perhaps, climate change will come later and its outcomes not as severe, especially for great cities like New York, London and Shanghai, storied islands Samoa or Fiji or hamlets like Maria's hometown.

So what are we waiting for? I honestly don't know, but here's a concise plan for getting the Eastern Flyer up and safely moving three-fourths of our population.

Aside from public safety, there's the lower mileage for our individual vehicles, as well as more revenues for education and other social services due to less spending for highway/bridge maintenance.

Remember there's no guarantee of success. Who knows what's in the horizon? We know something is, whether it's to our liking or not.

Since we cannot know, then we who believe in the Eastern Flyer simply intend working hard and smart so that the public can utilize this service. We'll do what we can, put one stone on top of another then another. If they get knocked down, we begin again. If we don't, nothing gets built, including our state.

In other words, we persist, because in the final analysis that's what succeeds. Regardless of the vagaries of events or the seesaw of government policies, coronavirus pandemic or not, we persist, because in the long run persistence will shape the future of Oklahoma.

If cities and towns along the Eastern Flyer route truly want passenger rail service, now's the time to go for it. Currently Oklahoma City has surpassed Tulsa in developing public transit. In December 2019 OKC began downtown streetcar service. With dedicated MAPS funding, OKC is now working on a light rail plan for the metro area.

Tulsa started its AERO BRT [Bus Rapid Transit] system last year but lags in developing public transit. Now's the time to seriously work on public transportation to supplement its excellent bike trails network.

Here's what we need: the Eastern Flyer, the commuter rail service to our state capital! Don't wait longer, just do it. A better chance may not come along later. Yes, tenacity will win out but timing is also important.

We true believers are in it for the long haul. *Oologah resident Bob D. Rounsavell currently serves as chairman of the Eastern Flyer Coalition of communities between Tulsa and Oklahoma City. His wife Maria serves as his editor.*

In This *Red* State,

Nothin' But Blue Seats

BY GARY EDMONDSON

We knew that Donald Trump doesn't care about small children – either the small brown ones he cages or all others he threatens with his anti-environmental policies.

We knew that Donald Trump doesn't care about the military – stealing money earmarked for the armed services [a theft recognized as such by the courts] to build a wall – that Mexico has not contributed un centavo toward.

We knew that Donald Trump doesn't care about American values – praising dictators and autocrats and endorsing klanazi bigotry on our own soil.

We knew that Donald Trump didn't care about women – except as possible targets of gleeful predation.

We knew that Donald Trump didn't care about poor people even before he re-launched his attack on the Affordable Care Act to limit their health care in the middle of a pandemic. More than 500,000 people who lost their company insurance along with their jobs have applied for this coverage over the past three months. Donald Trump and Greed's Own Party does not care.

But we weren't aware until recently that Donald Trump doesn't even care about his own supporters.

With Typhoid Mary as his role model, the president has taken to the campaign trail during the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging his followers to congregate in enclosed spaces without protective masks. Stroking his ego takes precedence over their safety.

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TRUMP PREDICTED 100,000 AT HIS RALLY. ONLY 6500 SHOWED FOR HIS PHOTO OP.



WHERE WAS EVERYONE?



AVOIDING HIM LIKE THE PLAGUE.

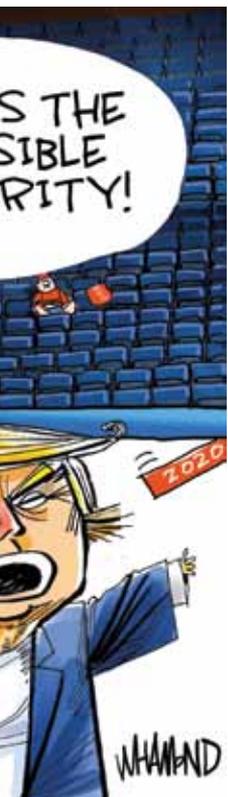
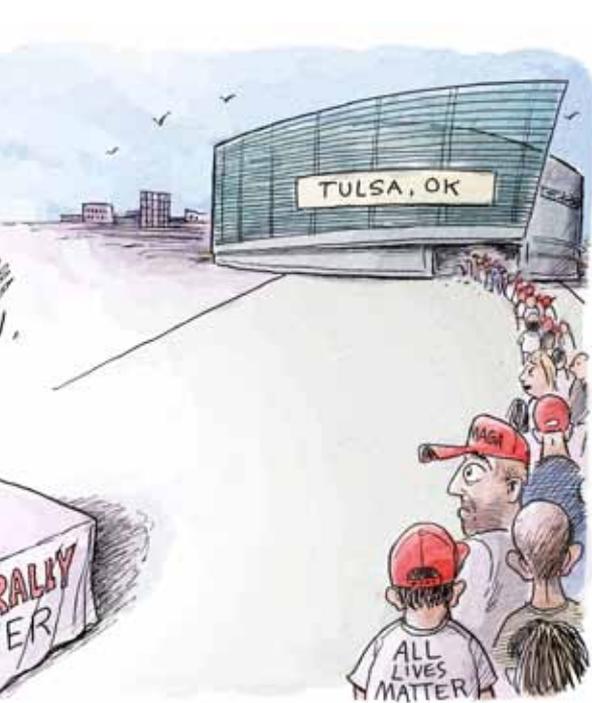


THE SILENT MAJORITY IS BIGGER THAN EVER!

BUT THEN WHY DO WE HAVE THOUSANDS OF EMPTY SEATS?



s Did Trump See



TUMBLIN' TUMBLEWEEDS

Not wearing a mask to protect yourself and others from a serial killer averaging about 1,000 deaths per day has now become a pro-Trump political statement in order to support the most-tested and protected pandemic denier in the country.

June 20, the president brought his infected staff to Tulsa as Oklahoma's coronavirus infections were already spiking on a daily basis. Eight campaign staffer tested positive almost immediately and, subsequently, dozens of Secret Service agents and others are now in self-isolation.

That Trump ended the day departing his helicopter with his weary, stunned, orange clown face streaked white offers the hope that the majority no-shows expected for his rally did actually put their health above his ego.

[Could it be that our Infector-in-Chief's aversion to a mask is because he knows that it will similarly streak his face paint?]

On June 23, Trump took his Coronavirus Covers the Country Tour to Phoenix – as Arizona, too, was witnessing an upsurge in reported cases. Here, his supporters were in a “tightly packed mega-church,” according to National Public Radio.

He did manage to verify something we've known all along. He doesn't care about facts, either.

The Huffington Post reported: “President Donald Trump on Tuesday indicated that he didn't know what the '19' in COVID-19 stands for.

“In the middle of a riff in which he also made racist jokes about the coronavirus, Trump said he wondered about the infection's official name.

“COVID-19, COVID, I said what's the 19?” he asked at an event in Arizona. ‘COVID-19, some people can't explain the 19.’”

In January, someone might wonder about the nomenclature – and find the answer. Maybe even

March if you were slow on the uptake. How about as the death toll started rising up toward 120,000 Americans?

The fact is his counselor, Kellyanne Conway, made that same gaffe in mid-April. And was roasted hilariously by pundits across the nation. So, even if one didn't know two months ago that the “19” stood for 2019, the year the virus was first detected, anybody paying attention was immediately informed.

And who's not paying attention? First, you have to care about dying Americans and then care enough to educate yourself instead of denying the evidence. Trump doesn't care about facts, or educating himself to any issue or even the welfare of his supporters. Egomaniacs are like that, and Trump's version of that disease threatens the welfare of us all. *Duncan resident Gary Edmondson is chair of the Stephens County Democratic Party.*

A Superior Path To November

BY FROMA HARROP

What didn't happen in Tulsa was gratifying and a relief. The protests against racism were overwhelmingly orderly. President Donald Trump's rally also proceeded without serious incident and, notably, without much of an audience.

And this didn't happen for lack of provocation. Trying to whip up excitement for his revived rally schedule, Trump started the weekend with a bloodcurdling threat against protesters should they step out of line. Oklahomans, he opined, would not treat protestors in Tulsa with the same delicacy allegedly afforded those in liberal New York, Seattle and Minneapolis. The tweet doubled the offense by lumping protestors with “anarchists, agitators, looters or lowlives.”

To further stir up the cauldron of racial tension, he had originally scheduled his rally for Freedom Day, which commemorates the date in 1865 that the last enslaved blacks in Texas learned they were free. And this in the city where, almost 100 years ago, white

mobs rampaged through a thriving black commercial district, massacring hundreds and burning down businesses and homes. All that was piled on enduring embers of nationwide anger over the death of George Floyd.

But the people of Tulsa didn't go where some tried to lead them. The Tulsa police and National Guard troops kept the sides apart so protesters and Trump rallygoers could both exercise their right to assemble. And they kept their cool. For example, when an attention-seeking demonstrator demanded to be arrested, the police officer smartly ignored him.

Mareo Johnson, a pastor and founder of Black Lives Matter Tulsa, organized a disciplined demonstration in a park not far from the president's rally. Tykebrean Cheshire, founder of Peaceful Rally Tulsa, kept her group away from the BOK Center. “I wanted to do the old school MLK thing,” she said.

A thumbs-up goes to Tulsa's Republican mayor, G.T. Bynum, who posted on Facebook: “The world

is watching, Tulsa. Let's show them what love looks like. They need it."

And a round of understanding is due to those Oklahoma Republicans who gave the rally a pass, leaving empty rows of blue seats. The Trump campaign boasted that one million had signed up to attend. Only about 6,200 people actually showed at the 19,000-capacity BOK Center.

What happened? The poor attendance may have partly reflected melting support for Trump. But much of it certainly indicated a serious concern about the coronavirus.

It's true that many young people on TikTok and fans of the K-pop school of music registered for the event with no intention of participating. That may have inflated the numbers the Trump campaign said would be present. [An area was set outside for an expected overflow crowd.] But people were admitted to the arena strictly on a first-come, first-served basis,

not registrations.

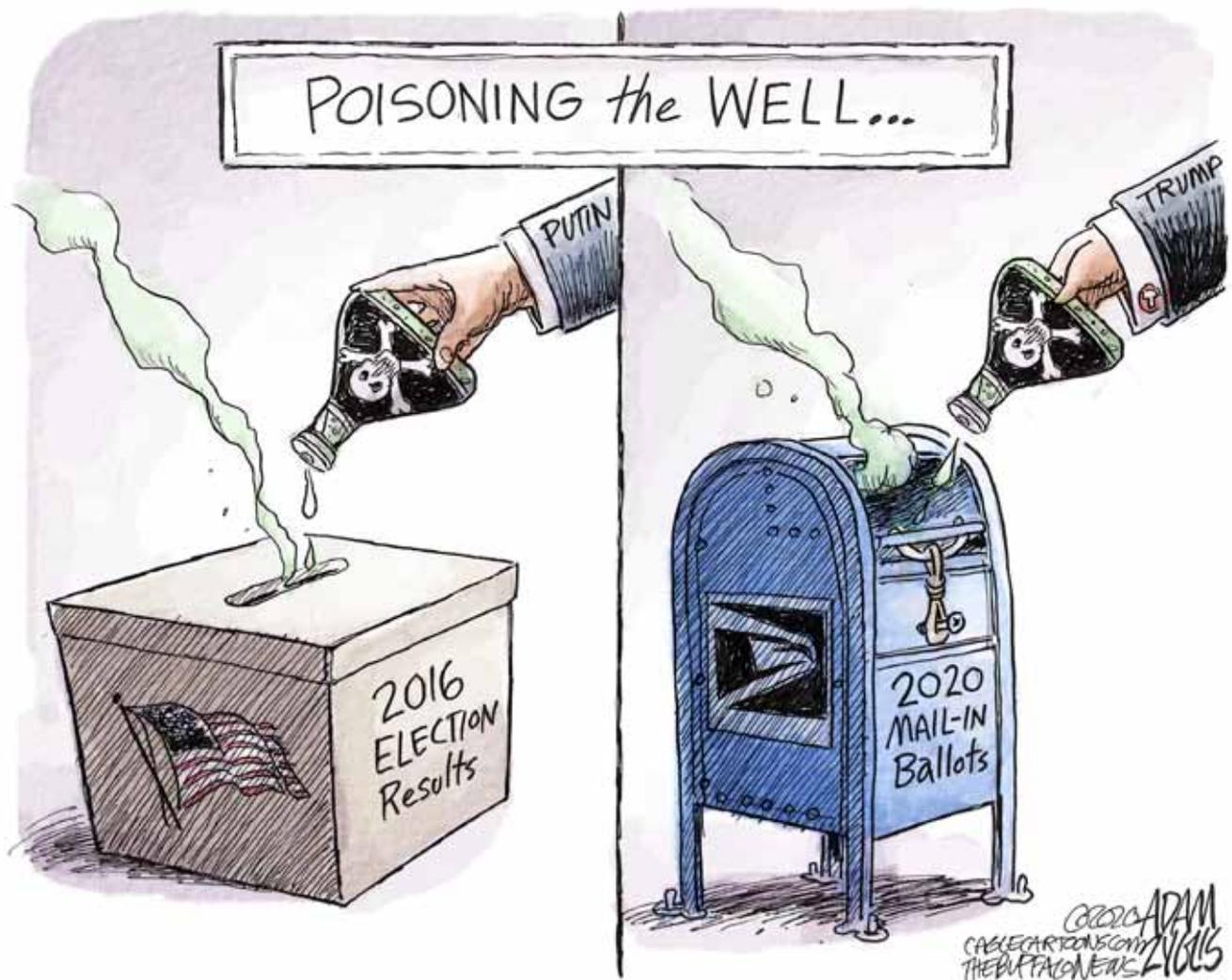
Fact is, COVID-19 cases were spiking in Oklahoma, and informed people know that a hollering crowd in an enclosed space was going to produce a steaming stew of pathogens. They also knew of Trump world's hostility toward face masks that would help protect them and others from the virus.

Would someone please explain the definition of courage that elevates refusing to wear a mask during a pandemic to an act of heroic defiance? Kudos, meanwhile, to the few brave attendees who did wear masks in the face of social pressure to be stupid.

More flashing red lights took the form of demands that rallygoers sign waivers absolving Trump of any legal responsibility should they contract the virus. If Trump is good at anything, it's looking out for No. 1.

Tulsa, you rose to the occasion by not rising to the bait. Congratulations, and may the rest of America follow your example.





Trump Seeks Election Day Chaos By Starving Post Office

BY PETER MONTAGUE

President Trump and his Republican advisers appear to be laying the groundwork for presidential election chaos on Nov. 3.

Part of the plan seems to be to allow the coronavirus-slammed U.S. Postal Service [USPS] to run out of money in September, throwing the mail service into crisis, possibly disenfranchising everyone who votes by mail.

The postal service is essential for U.S. elections. The U.S. military has depended on vote-by-mail since 1864. Five states now conduct elections entirely by mail – Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah. The other 45 states allow voting by absentee ballot by mail. Because of the coronavirus, many additional states and localities are currently considering universal vote-by-mail.

Killing or weakening the U.S. Postal Service would essentially guarantee election chaos in November.

The postal service does not ordinarily receive taxpayer funds; it is the only government agency expected to fund itself, via sale of stamps and services such as money orders.

Now, a combination of recent events has thrown USPS into financial turmoil. It started in 2006 when Congress required USPS to set aside cash sufficient to cover the cost of post-retirement health benefits, 75 years into the future, for its 600,000 employees. This unusual financial burden, combined with a 30 percent drop in the volume of mail after the coronavirus shut down the economy, put USPS into financial crisis.

In April, the postal service estimated it will lose \$22

billion in the next 18 months while it continues to deliver medicines, food, personal protective equipment [masks, gloves, test kits], and all kinds of household necessities to every address in the U.S., no matter how rural or remote, regardless of cost.

When the first \$2 trillion coronavirus bailout was written, Democrats and Republicans agreed on a \$13 billion direct cash payment to the postal service to keep it afloat. But President Trump announced that he would not sign the bill if it included any direct payments to bail out USPS. Eventually, a compromise was reached: The CARES Act signed in late March contained a \$10 billion loan to the postal service subject to approval by Trump's Treasury Department.

Polling shows that 80% of the public wants vote-by-mail to avoid the dangers of standing in line at polling stations. Furthermore, about 60 million people living in rural areas would be hurt badly by loss of mail service, which they depend upon daily for medicines, household necessities and information. So why would the president and his close advisers want to disable the postal service?

They probably have four motives:

First, Trump has described the USPS as a "delivery boy" for online retailers, chiefly Amazon. Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post, which has relentlessly fact-checked Trump's frequent lies. So hurting the Post Office seems part of a presidential vendetta against Bezos.

A secure election requires action now. Saving the postal service is the essential first step.

Second, the anti-government billionaires who have gained powerful influence within the Republican Party since 1980 have long sought to privatize the mail service, kill the powerful postal worker unions and benefit Republican benefactors like FedEx and UPS.

Third, Republicans believe that vote-by-mail will increase voter turnout, which they believe will cost them victory. To win, many Republicans believe [and admit] that they must disenfranchise people of color, recent immigrants, the young, the elderly and those with disabilities.

Republican strategist and founder of the ultra-right Heritage Foundation, Paul Weyrich, acknowledged this back in 1980, saying, "I don't want everybody to vote ... Our leverage in the election, quite candidly, goes up as the voting populace goes down."

On March 30, Trump spilled the beans himself when he said, if it were easier to vote in the U.S., Republicans would never get elected. The president made the comments as he dismissed a congressional Democrat-led push for reforms such as vote-by-mail, same-day voter registration and early voting to help states run elections safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"They had things, levels of voting that if you'd ever agreed to it, you'd never have a Republican elected in this country again," Trump said. "We don't want anyone to do mail-in ballots," the president said in May.

The fourth reason is far more speculative and more sinister. Current polls show Trump trailing Joe Biden

by 8 to 12 percentage points if the election were held today. This has the president worried. In such circumstances, the president "charts a consistent direction, toward chaos, which he then seeks to exploit to his advantage," as Steve Coll has observed.

A chaotic, delayed, postponed, or disputed coronavirus-inflected election on Nov. 3 might offer Trump an opportunity to go full-bore authoritarian and claim victory no matter what the vote count eventually revealed about the preference of the people.

A secure election requires action now. Saving the postal service is the essential first step.

On May 15, the House passed the "HEROES Act," which includes a \$25 billion cash bailout for the postal service, but Senate Republicans have promised to "cast it aside" and the White House has issued a veto threat. A large citizens' campaign called "A Grand Alliance" is urging everyone to take action now to save the postal service.

Peter Montague is a historian and journalist whose work has appeared in Counterpunch, Huffington Post, The Nation and many other publications. He has co-authored two books on toxic heavy metals.

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A Contrast So Stark

BY JOE CONASON

Protecting the lives and health of citizens ought to be the most basic duty of any government. But the Trump administration, abnormal and toxic, is evidently determined to inflict illness and death on as many Americans as possible.

Consider what President Donald Trump and his minions have done over recent days [not to mention the past several months]. Owing to their feckless insistence on reopening the economy, the coronavirus has again surged across the country, from Florida to Texas to California, infecting tens of thousands — many of whom will soon need care in overburdened hospitals. Yet the federal government has simultaneously announced a drastic cutback in testing funds. They're suppressing the numbers rather than the disease.

Pretending that the virus is receding, as Vice Presi-

dent Mike Pence instructed Republican governors to do, isn't destructive enough for them, however. In addition to ensuring that more and more Americans become sick and cannot be tested or traced, Trump's policy aims to deprive them of health insurance at a time of grave peril.

This week, the president sent his government lawyers to the Supreme Court for another attempt to kill the Affordable Care Act, just when Americans are losing their jobs and the health insurance upon which they and their families depend.

Let's review these insane acts in context: While we try to survive a deadly pandemic, with no end in sight, the president of the United States is seeking to end the only source of health coverage for millions of Americans. If that effort succeeds, the result will be a massive disruption of the health insurance market and a disastrous blow to the struggling hospital sys-

tem.

At this moment, in fact, there are half a million unemployed workers who have turned to ObamaCare because they've lost insurance tied to their jobs. Soon there will be millions more lining up behind them – and Trump wants to leave them all without care.

Although Trump has been trying to repeal his predecessor's signature health program for years, he no longer pretends he will replace ObamaCare with something “better” and “beautiful” that provides care to all. He's like a movie villain who finally drops the smiling mask. Except if this were a movie, nobody would find it believable.

So this is the perfect moment for Joe Biden, the anti-Trump, to deliver a speech on health care. Or it would be, if only the media would pay attention.

The Democratic candidate may feel frustrated to emerge from his home – where he dutifully sheltered for most of the past few months – and offer a major policy address that only one network bothered to carry live. Any irritation he felt was probably soothed by the fact that he is leading Trump in every competent poll by margins of nine to 14 points.

Biden's performance is worth watching for anyone who still needs reassurance that he can carry this

fight to November. His speech was at once crisp and passionate, substantive and sharp, without any worrisome stumbles.

Much of what he said was obvious yet necessary: that Trump's scheme to curtail ObamaCare is callous and cruel; that the Trump administration has botched its pandemic response; that Trump cares above all about his image; and that only massive testing will permit the economy to recover.

While the complete details of Biden's health care program will be unveiled in coming weeks, he made an important promise that, if kept, would remedy the original deficit in the Affordable Care Act. Americans, he said, “need a public option, now more than ever.” We need a public option, which would cover every American lacking insurance under a version of Medicare, because health care must be a right, not a privilege. He vowed to “fight like hell to get Americans the health care coverage they need.”

Before our eyes, this veteran politician, long discounted by all the clever types, is becoming the leader of his party – and his country. His depraved opponent offers only a contrast that could scarcely be more stark.

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Trump Is Lying Or Out Of Loop On Afghanistan. Both Are Bad.

BY WILLIAM RIVERS PITT

The corporate media have been straining at its collective leash since the weekend, firing a volley of barks our way about Russian intelligence agents paying the Taliban to kill U.S. soldiers, and my God, did Donald Trump know? The high dudgeon in these reports is unmistakable; one CNN article by Paul Begala calls it “the worst of Trump's outrages.”

It's a story that has everything, if you like that sort of thing: war, international intrigue, tragedy, politics. Plus, because did Donald Trump know is in the mix, the Russia connection is enough to give John le Carré the vapors.

As matters stand today, a Russian intelligence agency is believed to have paid bounties to Taliban-allied militants for targeting and killing U.S. troops in Afghanistan. No one seems sure of how many troops came to grief by way of this program – perhaps one, perhaps more. Some 20 U.S. service members were killed over there in 2019, the year that is apparently in question regarding these activities.

Intelligence officers and Special Operations soldiers raised the alarm as early as January of 2019,

and suspicions continued to grow when a snowdrift of U.S. currency was found at a Taliban outpost after a raid. “Interrogations of captured militants and criminals played a central role in making the intelligence community confident in its assessment that the Russians had offered and paid bounties in 2019,” reports *The New York Times*.

This may all be absolutely true, but let's be clear: The discovery of a pile of U.S. currency in Afghanistan pretty much proves only that our government has been slinging shady cash around in that country for a hell of a lot of years now. Here's a report from April 2013, about three months after Obama's second inauguration:

For more than a decade, wads of American dollars packed into suitcases, backpacks and, on occasion, plastic shopping bags have been dropped off every month or so at the offices of Afghanistan's president – courtesy of the Central Intelligence Agency. All told, tens of millions of dollars have flowed from the CIA to the office of President Hamid Karzai, according to current and former advisers to the Afghan leader.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47

Jim Hightower



Moving Forward During The COVID Crisis

In February and March primary elections, a cabal of backroom political geniuses rushed out a coordinated campaign, screeching that impending doom would await the Democratic Party if it were to actually run on democratic ideas like Medicare for All, paid sick leave, universal basic income and expanded unemployment aid.

Too bold, they wailed, too socialistic-y-sounding ... too scary!

Clueless billionaire Mike Bloomberg actually hurled the “communism” smear at Sen. Bernie Sanders’ policy ideas. Better to go slow with Joe, they warbled, for he’s the safe choice – a trusted life-long insider who’ll excite voters with his unexciting, steady-as-she-goes conventionality.

Then, *kablooey!* In a flash, conventionality started coughing, gasping and dying. Instantly, the public was clamoring for [and even the GOP-controlled Senate was voting for] the very remedies that Biden & Co. were so loudly decrying as extremist.

As Franklin Delano Roosevelt taught Herbert Hoover in 1932, in times of widespread troubles, ordinary folks begin to understand that “status quo” is Latin for “the mess we’re in.” And that’s when they open up to non-establishment thinking, seeking solutions potent enough to meet the challenge.

Since Wall Street hucksters crashed our economy about a decade ago, it’s been increasingly clear that the American majority of middle-class and poor families is being intentionally crushed by corporate and governmental decisions imposed by plutocratic elites, creating an untenable, ever-widening level of inequality. That’s where the big “extremist” proposals being put forth by progressive forces come from – not from ideology but from extreme human need.

America’s inequality crisis, now made much more pressing and painful by the fiasco of our aloof “leaders” mishandling the coronavirus pandemic, cannot be met by small-ball political tinkering and legalistic tweaks to failed systems. The point is that whatever Joe Biden and his old-guard contingent do or fail to do, this is no time for progressives to back off; it’s time to become even more *aggressively progressive*, insisting on our popular agenda of real change.

Let’s start with our proven winners. While Sand-

ers, Sen. Elizabeth Warren and the other Democratic presidential contenders who offered bold democratic ideas didn’t win, their ideas clearly did.

Populist proposals entirely dominated the election debate, and, as polls and the vote on ballot questions show, they’re now mainstream with majority backing, including surprising Republican support: a wealth tax; green jobs and infrastructure; forgiveness of student debt; broadband equality for rural areas and poor neighborhoods; Medicare for All; universal basic income, etc. Such popular programs stand as a ready-made New Deal/Fair Deal action agenda for America’s workaday majority.

The time is right; the need is obvious; and the people are ready to *enact* it ... and put it to work.

To get from here to there, we need to go on the offensive with a comprehensive democracy initiative to make the people’s voice supreme over corporate money. There’s a long list of necessary reforms – from such fundamental steps as overturning the Supreme Court’s democracy-crushing Citizens United edict to such procedural innovations as instant-runoff voting. But the impact of each reform and the overarching purpose of the whole initiative are to reverse the ugly voter-suppression ethic that contaminates today’s electoral structure, processes and results.

It’s time to go right at the nefariousness of the suppressors with a program proudly affirming the vote as a right and a joyous civic action that must be made as open, welcoming and easy as possible, encouraging maximum democratic participation.

In an act of blunt-force plutocratic thuggery, the Trump/GOP cabal has mounted a vast voter-suppression ploy to cut off a simple electoral reform that is crucial this pandemic year: voting by mail. The Trumpateers are getting their legislative and judicial partisans to require in-person voting for nearly all people in states that might have large numbers of Democratic voters, intentionally pitting people’s health against their core political rights.

Rather than encourage the safe, secure and sane use of mail-in ballots, Republicans and corporate lobbyists are demanding that voters and poll workers violate all public health standards, crowd small

balloting areas and wait in long lines for hours. Subject yourself and family to more COVID-19 horrors – or stay away and give up your vote.

A progressive America, grounded in the majority's egalitarian values of fairness, justice and opportunity for all, can be ours *only* if we demand it, articulate it, organize for it and go get it. Despite the sour, regressive example of Trump Republicans and the status quo recalcitrance of today's smug establishment, ideas do matter in politics. In fact, in down times, new, bold and positive is the way up and out, for that combo at least intrigues people and plants possibilities for change.

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George Floyd, Me, You ... And A Trump Coup!

Viewing the video of George Floyd's gruesome murder, one word in particular from him stuck in my head, one painful human utterance that conveys the horror of it all. "Mama," Floyd cried out in desperation and disbelief as his life was cruelly and senselessly suffocated in yet another brutal white-on-black slaying by so-called officers of the law.

This can't be America. Can it?

Yes and no. Certainly, it can't be the America we accept, one totally antithetical to our people's deeply held democratic values of justice for all. Yet, from the founding of the nation forward, the official knee on the neck of Floyd has been a common experience for African Americans, and for Latinos, Native Americans and other people of color.

It's that stark separation between the American ideal and reality – now so vividly and violently thrust in our faces – that has ignited such a diverse, massive and furious protest from coast to coast.

To me, this outpouring of public anguish feels different than previous ones, for the protesters are not only angry about what the power establishment did to George Floyd but also angry for themselves. The intentional spread of inequality in America is now swamping the once-middle-class majority. So, more and more people – especially among the young – are feeling the establishment's knee crushing their opportunities, rights and lives. More than empathy for the black community, there's now a shared inkling that the rise of autocracy and plutocracy is engulfing all but the moneyed elites, threatening the existence of America itself.

There's a rising political awareness that today's

social order is corrupt and the system itself must be changed – not tinkered with but fundamentally changed. And there's a growing understanding that we really are "all in this together," so we've got to stand up for George Floyd, one another ... and the America we want.

Thousands of Americans are in the streets protesting police brutality and systemic racism – and that's driving President Donald Trump plum crazy! Of course, that's a pretty short drive for him.

He would be hilarious if his buffoonery were not so dangerous and destructive. For example, there was his recent bizarre performance of having peaceful protesters gassed, clubbed and shoved out of the public square across from the White House so he could walk out and pose stone-faced with a Bible, as some sort of political stunt.

However, worse than the antics of this unhinged, incredibly shrinking president is the craven willingness of our top military officials to play along with his infantile attempts to appear manly. When Trump strutted out to do his little photo-op with a Bible, guess who was loping along right behind him like eager-to-please puppy dogs: Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of America's joint chiefs of staff.

Yes, our nation's top two war chieftains were adding their symbolic blessing to Trump's pathetic desire to look tough, suppress our constitutional right to dissent and militarize his claim of autocratic powers. Milley even wore combat fatigues to the media show, apparently to model the authoritarian look We the People can expect in Trump's brave new world.

Esper has been even more servile, playing up to Trump's grandiosity by describing our country as a "battle space" that "we need to dominate." Of course, that would make you and me the dominated, which is as un-American as they could get, short of crowning The Donald as America's king – and don't put that past them.

To their credit, dozens of U.S. military leaders immediately assailed Esper and Milley for even implying that the armed forces could be anyone's political pawn to police our own people, and both have retreated from Trump's authoritarian stance. But their willingness to toy with it shows how vulnerable our democracy is to autocrats ... and how vigilant We the People must be. – *Jim Hightower*

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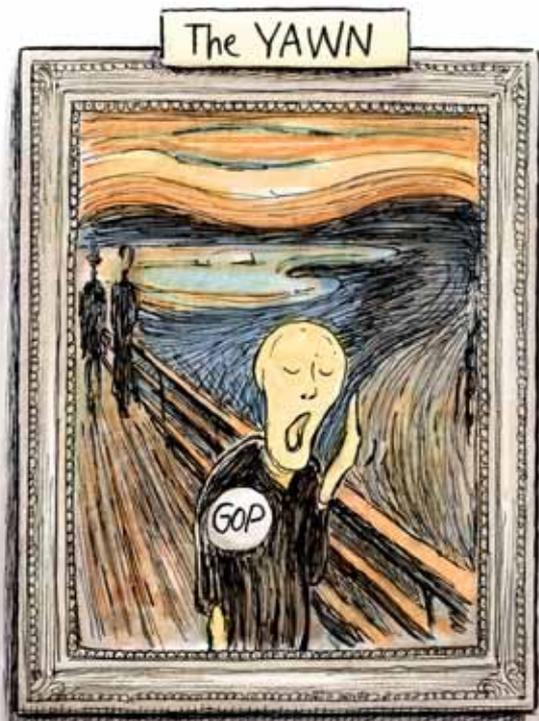
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Anger, Politics And Pluralism

BY RANDOLPH M. FEEZELL

A case could be made for the claim that the ruling emotion of our social and political lives is anger. It's dangerous to make such a bold claim about the complexities of contemporary life in America, yet social scientific research tells us there are more angry people now than just a few years ago. Anecdotal evidence points in a similar direction.

For the time being I would like to bypass the most apparent cause for anger inflation. As a matter of fact, by 2012 there was plenty of anger directed toward Barack Obama [and Mitt Romney?]; the machinery of outrage was excreting its venom in predictable places. And something did happen by 2016 and beyond as the Divider-in-Chief sullied the tone and expectations surrounding political discourse.

It's the anger that should interest us. Much has been said about the need for addressing the dysfunction in our politics by becoming more tolerant and civil in our relationships with political adversaries.

Perhaps one way to do this is by addressing the emotions that inflame our thoughts about the supposed enemy: Rush, Sean, Mitch, House Republicans – or Barack and Crooked Hillary and Nancy.

We should be cautious about wading into an area of human experience – the nature of the emotions – that has been the object of an enormous amount of inquiry, both scientific and philosophical, for a very long time. However, the anger is ours – yours and mine. We should be able to understand ourselves.

My guiding thought is this: understanding our anger will help us control and direct it; moderation might allow us to live better.

If we step back in reflection and behold our anger as a psychological presence that invites understanding, not an agitated acquaintance we take for granted, we may seem to be at odds with ourselves.

Is anger good or bad, positive or negative? Is anger something we should attempt to alleviate or should it be embraced and affirmed as a moral spice that

shows we care? Anger may motivate, or it may alienate and undermine our relations with others and our feelings of being at home in the social world.

This ambivalence is reflected in a significant disagreement in the history of western philosophy between the ancient Stoics – Epictetus, Seneca, Marcus Aurelius – who demonized anger, and Aristotle, who argued for the possibility of its appropriateness and reasonableness, not its negation.

For the Stoics a good life is characterized by a sense of freedom and happiness dependent on things we can control, our mental life and our virtue, by the use of our reason. Rational self-control of the emotions leads to tranquility. Anger is an inner turbulence that leads away from peace of mind.

Aristotle agrees that reason is needed to educate the emotions, but not, for example, by extinguishing anger. The Stoics were right to be mindful of the way anger may take hold of us and be transformed into irrational outbursts and violent episodes that damage lives.

Aristotle, however, was more sanguine about the possibilities associated with anger, because he imagines not only a life characterized by too much anger. He also imagines the character of a person who does not become angry when an appropriate emotional response is warranted.

Aristotle situates anger at the heart of a social virtue, a morally praiseworthy character trait. He says it's nameless but good, and chooses to call it "mildness" [the translation of a Greek word]. His approach to anger is an example of his famous doctrine of virtue as the Golden Mean. Virtue requires moderating morally significant emotions, not attempting to remove them altogether from a well-lived life.

"The person who is angry at the right things, and toward the right people, and also in the right way, at the right time, and for the right length of time, is praised."

Mildness is a mean between the excessively angry person, who displays a vice Aristotle calls "irascibility," and a person who feels anger too little. Aristotle calls this type of person "foolish" and "insensible." Too much meekness makes Casper a submissive, shrinking milquetoast – a doormat.

Here's how Robert Solomon, a philosopher who wrote about the emotions for much of his academic career, describes a more Aristotelian approach to anger. "The important question ... is whether anger is rightly aimed, whether it has picked out the right object [the offender], and whether the anger is warranted by the situation ... If both the object is right and the seriousness of the accusation is warranted, then the anger is rational and reasonable."

There's much to chew on here, because what I'm calling a broadly Aristotelian approach to anger is at odds with two other prevalent views of the emotions. According to what is sometimes called the "basic emotions" model, anger is a physiological phenom-

enon and a product of evolution, thus universal in its scope. According to this model, anger is simply "neurological [or rather, neuro-hormonal-muscular]."

One problem for this view of anger is that it leaves out the affective content of the emotion, what it feels like to be angry. A common view, reinforced by our ordinary ways of talking about "feeling angry," is that anger is a feeling: involuntary, irrational, stupid, and explosive.

No doubt there's something it feels like to be angry, but the reference to feeling may confuse the notion of feeling as a sensation [a pain in your toe, the bitter taste of a hop-forward IPA, the smell of a rose] and an experience that isn't really a sensation. Solomon says, "... An emotion is [at least in part] an experience [a 'feeling'] but is not at all to be identified with anything like a sensation ['feeling' in this other sense]."

There are physiological correlates of anger and there are experiences associated with anger. But anger is more than a basic emotion, defined physiologically, and more than a simple set of feelings. Both views omit the essential role of judgment in anger.

Solomon was among the first contemporary philosophers [and scientists?] to emphasize the cognitive aspects of emotions. These features are essential for understanding anger.

Solomon again: "Anger [like all emotions] is a cognitively and value-rich phenomenon, not just a momentary state or event but a complex process that proceeds through time and can last a very long time. It necessarily involves feeling and judgment as well as physiology."

Anger is "basically a judgment that one has been wronged or offended ... It is a way of interacting with another person [or with a situation or a task] and a way of situating oneself in the world." It is "... a distinctively and famously judgmental emotion."

Anger is strategic; it's something we do, not merely something that happens to us. The title of Solomon's chapter in *True to Our Feelings: What Our Emotions Are Really Telling Us* [2007] is, "Anger as a Way of Engaging the World."

Stoics capture our sense that, other things being equal, it's better not to be angry because our anger indicates to us that the world is not what we want it to be. Anger is evidence there is a conflict between our desires and our judgments about the world.

If it is better to be unperturbed than Epictetus' central stoic directive follows: "Do not seek to have events happen to you as you want them to, but instead want them to happen as they do happen and your life will go well." Stoic therapy leads to equanimity, the overcoming of anger.

This strikes many as too defeatist. I think Stoics give up too easily. Anger can motivate us to change the world. As Solomon argues, "Anger is usually direct and explicit in its projection of our personal values and expectations on the world."



Anger, Solomon says, “ ... registers our displeasure that the world does not obey our expectations, and displays our desire to punish those who would not obey our demands, no matter how trivial and meaningful, or how indubitably moral and eloquently humane.”

This view leads us back to the moderating tone of Aristotle. For Solomon, the central metaphor associated with anger [he calls it a “mythology” in an earlier work] is the courtroom. We are our own prosecutor, judge, and jury, issuing indictments and accusations and findings of guilt and punishment.

We should become aware of our responsibility for our anger, exhibit a judicial temperament, and judge impartially. Our anger needs to be properly directed, the result of good judgment, and felt [if at all] in a way that is proportionate to the situation and consistent with rational self-control.

What would it mean to make good judgments that are central to [my] anger? If I am angry at you because I believe that you have wronged me, then my anger must not be based on false beliefs. If I find out that I was wrong about the facts surrounding the offense, my anger dissipates.

It’s interesting that if I find your actions were the product of coercion, that you were somehow forced or not fully responsible for the actions that wronged me, then these facts about coercion or various kinds

of causal influences might mitigate my anger. [Belief in determinism might soften anger.]

When anger is a function of apparent disagreements about values or ideals and the consequences of such commitments, then for my anger to be reasonable and rightly felt, I must be willing to probe our differences with charity, resisting the impulse to construct an easily defeated straw man.

Much could be said here. I will simply gesture toward a philosophical viewpoint about the nature of values that might function as an ameliorating strategy for our anger. It’s found in the work of the great 20th century historian of ideas, Isaiah Berlin, and in a more recent widely read work in moral psychology by Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided By Politics and Religion* [2013].

In measured and humane voices, the philosopher and the moral psychologist encourage us to adopt a pluralistic view of values as an antidote to a rigidity that might intensify our righteous and angry mind.

Pluralism is a straightforward idea, although it can be misunderstood. Serious people disagree about the content and range of values that should guide both personal lives and political structures.

Pluralism should not be misunderstood as simple-minded relativism. The relativist claims that anything goes. According to relativism the difference between a Nazi and Jesus [or Buddha or Confucius] is like the difference between someone who prefers chocolate

ice cream and someone who prefers vanilla. Relativism [or subjectivism] holds that our values are no deeper than mere preferences, which, obviously, differ among persons.

Pluralism claims there is some relatively limited range of [objective] fundamental values: freedom, equality, justice, loyalty, fidelity, and more. Given the plurality of ideals and the way that people may interpret differently a single value, disagreements will be inevitable and not easily resolved.

Haidt's work is explicit in its goal: "... we wanted to use moral psychology to help political partisans understand and respect each other."

His research provides empirical evidence showing how people are attracted differently to a range of values that define liberal and conservative political stances: care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, sanctity [sacredness]. Liberals and conservatives construct different "grand narratives" about the moral forces at work in the story of our country and in contemporary society.

The details of his research are fascinating and complex [and well worth the effort]; the general pluralistic strategy is clear. The righteous mind needs to attempt to see things as others might, however difficult this might be.

It's difficult to be charitable to your political opponents when they are spewing bile, misconstruing

your positions, misdescribing your character, and calling you names. However, it's important to distinguish the merchants of rage, who want to manipulate and obfuscate, and the serious proponents of philosophical, religious, and moral outlooks with which you disagree.

Pluralism is an important reminder that the world is morally, politically, and religiously ambiguous. It doesn't ask us to give up fighting for our ideals nor does it make easy the task of tolerating deep differences. Pluralism instructs us to comport ourselves with intellectual charity. It tells us that the world is quite different for those with opposing worldviews: religious and secular; nationalist and cosmopolitan; individualist and communitarian; libertarian and socialist; traditionalist and experimentalist.

The best we can do is to understand that we are involved together in a search [if we do search] for answers that inevitably resist consensus. Judgments associated with pluralism provide a less homey atmosphere for anger.

A final thought. For me, anger is not the appropriate emotion to direct toward Trump. He deserves contempt, not anger. Anger versus contempt: another interesting topic.

Randolph M. Feezell, PhD, grew up in northwestern Oklahoma and is professor emeritus of philosophy at Creighton University in Omaha, NE.

New Trump Rule Makes It Easier To Kill Bear Cubs, Wolf Pups

Hunters will soon be allowed to venture into national preserves in Alaska and engage in practices that conservation groups say are reprehensible: baiting hibernating bears from their dens with doughnuts to kill them and using artificial light such as headlamps to scurry into wolf dens to slaughter mothers and their pups.

With a final rule published last month in the Federal Register, the Trump administration is ending a five-year-old ban on the practices, which also include shooting swimming caribou from a boat and targeting animals from airplanes and snowmobiles. It will take effect the second week in July.

State officials primarily composed of hunters in Alaska argued that the October 2015 regulations ordered by the Obama administration infringed on traditional native hunting practices and were more restrictive than what is permitted on state land.

National Park Service Deputy Director David Vela said in a statement that the federal government will defer to Alaska's wildlife management on national preserves. "The amended rule will support the Department's interest in advancing wildlife conserva-

tion goals and objectives, and in ensuring the state of Alaska's proper management of hunting and trapping in our national preserves, as specified in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act," Vela said.

But conservationists called the changes inhumane. "National preserve lands at Denali, Katmai, Gates of the Arctic and others are the very places where people travel from around the world, in hopes of seeing these iconic animals, alive in their natural habitat" said Theresa Pierno, president and CEO of the National Parks Conservation Association. "Shooting hibernating mama and baby bears is not the conservation legacy that our national parks are meant to preserve and no way to treat or manage park wildlife."

Jim Adams, the association's Alaska director, said the state's real aim is to reduce the population of wolves and other predators to increase the numbers of caribou, moose and other game animals that sport hunters enjoy harvesting. Adams said the rule was established in 2015 when the National Park Service determined that Alaska's practices conflicted with the federal mission to protect wildlife. Reducing the predator population throws the natural ecology out of

balance, conservationists say.

Opponents said the administration has “declared open season on bears and wolves” amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The rule changes have been pending since 2018. That year, then-Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke issued a memo to department heads declaring that fish and wildlife management on federal land “should defer to states.”

The National Park Service, a division of the Interior Department, says it “reconsidered its prior position” after determining that the “2015 rule conflicts with federal and state laws which allow for hunting and trapping in national preserves.”

Alaska permits practices such as baiting with doughnuts, grease-soaked bread and other foods to lure brown bears in some areas with federal land.

The new rules will mean that hunting on federal land will align with hunting and trapping regulations “established by the state of Alaska by providing more consistency with harvest regulations between federal and surrounding nonfederal lands and waters,” Vela said.

The move was praised by members of the state’s congressional delegation and Republican Gov. Michael J. Dunleavy, who called it “a step toward ac-

knowledging Alaska’s rightful control over fish and wildlife resources all across the state.”

Park Service officials agreed with nearly every position taken by the state. Without naming them, it cited six national parks where it is legal to hunt with artificial light, seven areas that allow hunting black bears with dogs, and four that permit bear hunting with bait.

Coyotes, which proliferated from west to east after federal and state officials eliminated gray and red wolves that kept them in check, do not generally receive the same protection as wolves. The final rule does not specify the type of bait that parks in other states allow for hunting bears.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-AK, said the decision “protects Alaska’s hunting and fishing traditions and upholds long-standing states’ rights,” and she thanked Interior Secretary David Bernhardt for encouraging and signing the rule.

Alaska hunting and trapping organizations also praised the move. Outside Alaska, Safari Club International’s chief executive, Laird Hamberlin, said the old rule had been “based on the subjective views of the decision-makers, with complete disregard for biological need and the expertise of Alaska wildlife management experts.” – *Washington Post*

Trump’s Cruel Assault On ObamaCare

Maybe it’s because he resents his predecessor’s popularity, especially as his plummets to record lows.

Or maybe he is just so clueless and in such a state of denial that he has no idea what is going on in this country beyond his inner circle of yes men.

In late June, the Trump administration filed a brief once again asking the Supreme Court to declare ObamaCare unconstitutional. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it “an act of unfathomable cruelty.”

There could not be a worse time to destroy a system that allows millions to go to a doctor, much less a hospital, without worrying the visit will bankrupt the family. Unemployment means that most people out of work are losing their employer-provided health insurance, and we are facing record levels of unemployment.

Nobody should face this pandemic without the protection of insurance. Nobody should delay taking a loved one to the ER because of how much ER visits cost. COVID-19 can be an expensive disease, particularly for those who must be hospitalized.

President Donald Trump has never had trouble paying for the best insurance money can buy. He doesn’t need ObamaCare, and plainly, he couldn’t care less about those who do. Before Obamacare, it was either impossible or impossibly difficult for individuals who were not covered by an employer’s plan to insure themselves and their families.

Trump doesn’t care. Half the White House is in quarantine, as well as his Secret Service detail. The White House statement dismissed the pandemic as essentially irrelevant to its arguments. “A global pandemic does not change what Americans know: ObamaCare has been an unlawful failure,” deputy press secretary Judd Deere said.

Actually, that’s not what Americans know. They know that the Supreme Court has already upheld the act against the same arguments they are making now. Polls have consistently found that ObamaCare is, in fact, quite popular with voters.

Everywhere he goes, Trump asks people to risk their lives to see him. Trump is so determined to have a packed hall and balloons and cheers that he moved the convention site to Florida, which promised him an indoor venue packed with a crowd shouting support. The problem is that the virus is out of control in Florida, because its Republican governor has been a mini Trump, closing the state too late and opening too early. In trying to hold on to his shrinking base, the president is alienating more and more Americans every day.

Stay well. And make sure you have health insurance so that if you hear a loved one coughing, if you find that he or she has a fever, if you think it could be COVID-19, you won’t hesitate to go to the hospital, as so many people did in the days before ObamaCare. – *Susan Estrich*

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A Monument To His Own Grandiosity

THE ROOM WHERE IT HAPPENED

A White House Memoir

By John Bolton

Simon & Schuster

592 pages, \$32.50

BY PETER CONRAD

Any hairdresser could have told them it wouldn't work. Donald Trump initially refused to hire John Bolton because he disliked his moustache. That walrus brush, which looks like a grizzled version of the cow-catching guardrails on an ancient locomotive, annoyed the elderly combed-over dandy.

Trump's spun-sugar plumage starts behind one of his ears, circles round his scalp, hardens under a toxic rain of spray, then tapers into a jaunty duck tail above his collar: did he envy a man who branched such stiff bristles on his upper lip? But the Fox News sex pest Roger Ailes recommended Bolton as "a bomb thrower," so Trump, avid for explosions, made him national security adviser.

They resolved to play good cop and bad cop, although the partnership turned out to be more like bad cop and worse cop. After a mere 18 months it fell apart. Bolton says he resigned, Trump claims to have fired him; I'm content to contemplate what nuclear theorists would call their mutually assured destruction. Now Bolton declares Trump unfit for office and accuses him of appeasing foreign despots in return for an electoral leg-up, smiling on Chinese concentration camps for Muslims and wanting American journalists executed.

Trump, incapable of answering the charges, has instead defamed Bolton as a "wacko" and a "sick puppy." In American parlance, the first means that he's mad and should be locked up, the second that he's disgusting and ought to be put down. Politics is the continuation of warfare by other means; it also prolongs into adulthood the name-calling of schoolboys in the playground. Yes, such superannuated adolescents hold the world's fate in their bunched fists.

Bolton's macho facial hair advertises his mettle as a cold warrior. His book sneers at the peaceable protocols of "international governance" and disparages Europeans as weak-kneed ninnies. Juggling phone

calls at a G7 meeting, he bizarrely boasts "I felt like the Light Brigade," and in an epigraph he echoes the Duke of Wellington's rallying cry to his troops at Waterloo. Yet when Bolton says "my scar tissue had scars," the cicatrices are merely metaphorical. Although he enjoys sending others into battle, in 1969 he avoided service in Vietnam by joining the non-combatant National Guard. His excuse? He disdained participation in a losing war.

Trump, another draft dodger, at first appears to be thrillingly keen for conflict. "Holy f---!" he yelps when the vixenish Melania shafts one of Bolton's aides. "Hit 'em, finish 'em," he grunts during a dispute with the Turks. "Kick their ass," he orders an envoy to China. But his rampages are mostly rhetorical, no different, as Bolton says, from the way that Obama "graced the world with his views, doing nothing to see them carried out," – a comment that incidentally reveals what Trump and Bolton hate about Obama: they can't forgive his grace under pressure.

While Bolton pleads for a "kinetic response," Trump frustrates him by cancelling war games to placate North Korea and calling off a strike on Iran because a paltry 150 casualties are predicted. When Trump reconsiders his initial wheeze of invading or annexing Venezuela, Bolton diagnoses "a case of the vapors," that affliction of sensitive 19th-century females. Could the famed pussy-grabber be a wuss?

Even Mike Pence, that stalwart Christian soldier, lapses into campy lingo when he reports on Trump's jockeying with the Ukrainian president. "Just between us girls," pouts Pence as he whispers an update into Bolton's ear.

Trepidation gets the better of Bolton just once: he admits he never asked what Trump thought of Putin because he was "afraid of what I might hear." Despite the promise of the book's title, Bolton was not in the room during Trump's extended confab with Pu-

tin in Helsinki, from which Putin emerged as cockily as a strutting bantam while Trump stumbled out like a trodden hen with ruffled feathers. Nor, in further blows to Bolton's bravado, did the unspecific "it" invoked by the title always happen.

For the most part, this memoir compiled from bureaucratic memos lists Bolton's failures to incite what he calls "existential" show-downs with NATO and the European Union or Syria and Iran. He missed his best chance to change history when, reluctant to spoil his eventual book sales, he declined to speak up during Trump's impeachment. He did offer to let the Senate subpoena him, confident that the Republican majority would not want to hear from witnesses for the prosecution.

In an epilogue, he offers a variant of his unrepentant apology for sitting out Vietnam: why bother, since impeachment was a lost cause.

When it's not tallying Trump's offences, Bolton's book is a monument to his own grandiosity. One chapter title quotes Antony's threatening prediction about "the dogs of war" in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, and the Caesarism of Trump and his authoritarian buddies in Turkey, Brazil, Russia and China is a recurrent theme. Institutionally and even architecturally, Washington DC models itself on republican Rome, where right-minded senators reined in or struck down aspiring emperors. We get a glimpse of this latter-day Roman ethos when Gen. John Kelly, enraged by a tiff with Trump, says: "I'm going out to Arlington." At serious times, Bolton remarks, Kelly drove to the national cemetery to calm down by brooding at the grave of his son, a Marine killed in Afghanistan.

Bolton defers to the same lofty standards. To explain why he refused the first jobs Trump dangled before him, he quotes Joseph Addison's neoclassical tragedy Cato – a play much admired by George Washington because it traces the conscientious resistance of a stoic

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who defended the republic against Caesar's tyranny.

"When vice prevails and impious men bear sway," declares Cato in stately pentameters, "the post of honor is a private station."

But where Addison's hero finally recognizes that "the world was

made for Caesar" and kills himself in despair, Bolton chose to collude with a vicious and impious man.

Now, rather than attitudinizing on a pedestal in a post of honor, he will forever be a footnote in the annals of infamy.

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engaged in renewed, primarily non-violent protests of systemic racism made manifest in health care, educational funding, criminal justice reform, homelessness, and housing, food insufficiency, and more particularly nationwide protests of over-policing, militarized responses to civilian problems, implicit bias, inadequate testing and selection of police recruits, insufficient training, criminalization of poverty, police practices leading to the premature death of citizens [disproportionately citizens of color], and the intransigence of police unions, agencies of government, and elected officials to change the status quo – even with the evidence in front of us.

Such criticisms must also recognize the fine work of dedicated law enforcement officers who serve and protect us while facing daunting requirements.

On the eve of what may be a new revolution, Thomas Paine reminds us, “... a long habit of not thinking a thing is WRONG, gives it the superficial appearance of being RIGHT, and raises at first a formidable outcry in defense of custom.” But building the case for independence, Paine further concluded, “THE TIME HATH FOUND US.”

Following the senseless death of George Floyd, the clear acknowledgement that protestors are correct in their charges of systemic racism rests in the amazing speed with which every level of American governance has responded with reform measures beginning with the president’s Executive Order #13929 issued on June 16, generally outlining principles for police training, use of force restrictions, de-escalation training, and greater accountability – all changes repeatedly asked for over years and more recently again by Black Lives Matter and other groups.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

Earlier, on June 8, the House of Representatives had already introduced H.R. 7120, the 140-page “George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020,” inclusive of the requirements later incorporated in the president’s Executive Order.

Essentially two versions of the bill are being considered – the Democratic bill and a competing Republican bill or “Justice Act” – endorsed primarily by GOP senators. According to several recent reports, both parties agree on four fundamental provisions: 1. increased data collection; 2. more training for law enforcement officials; 3. incentives for use of body cameras; and 4. making lynching a federal crime. Yet, the competing bills differ substantially in the details.

For example, the Democratic bill would ban chokeholds, while the Republican bill defines the practice more narrowly and makes certain grants dependent on discontinuing their use. The Democratic bill would allow victims of police brutality to seek damages; the Republicans might be willing to consider “qualified

immunity” from prosecution – but in a separate bill.

Though criticized for granting nearly “blanket immunity” to law enforcement officers, the U.S. Supreme Court [SCOTUS] announced recently that they would not reconsider cases limiting police immunity, though Justice Thomas dissented.

In lieu of making it easier to prosecute police officers for misconduct as the Democratic bill provides, Republicans would emphasize de-escalation training. The Democratic bill bans “no-knock” warrants, and the Republican bill would require reporting usage of “no-knock” warrants. Finally, the Democratic bill requires an end to racial bias while the Republican bill creates a study commission.

Critics of both approaches remind us of the slow implementation of past police reforms enacted as long ago as 2003 and 2006 and that denial of Justice Department grants has not proven to be a strong incentive because they represent a small percentage of the total spent by state and local governments.

The Congressional Black Caucus and 183 civil service organization opposed the Republican-backed “Justice Act,” and on June 24 the bill was blocked from debate in the Senate by a vote of 55-45. The following day H.R. 7120 was passed in the House by a vote of 236-181. The issues remain on the table.

STATE, LOCAL RESPONSES

On June 8, Oklahoma’s Legislative Black Caucus responded to an earlier Governor’s Roundtable on Race. Citing specific cases, Chair Rep. Regina Goodwin, D-Tulsa, clarified that Black Oklahomans have already died or been murdered at the hands of police. She further reported that she had filed legislation about use of bodycams, excessive force, and hate crimes generally; however, none of the bills had made it to the House floor. Vice-Chair Jason Lowe, D-OKC, concurred.

Days later, Rep. Monroe Nichols, D-Tulsa, outlined several solutions, including creation of the Office of Independent Monitor within the Attorney General’s Office as well as an Oklahoma State Law Enforcement Standards and Training Task Force. Lowe said people want accountability and “want their faith restored in law enforcement.” On the opinion page June 21, the Oklahoman summarized Nichol’s proposals and noted Rep. Mike Osburn, R-Edmond, had acknowledged problems that needed attention.

A newly released poll from the Associated Press-National Opinion Research Center [AP-NORC at the University of Chicago] reported majorities of both Democrats and Republicans support or strongly support clear use of force standards and video cameras; a requirement for officers to report misconduct of peers; and prosecuting officers who use excessive force [despite the recent SCOTUS announcement]. Let’s hope the Oklahoman with its measured response is not behind the arc of the moral universe in its transit to justice.

Locally, and more heavily reported are actions tak-

Observations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

num ripped the scab off the case of Terence Crutcher, an unarmed Black man shot dead nearly four years ago by a white Tulsa police officer Betty Shelby.

Reporter Kelefa Sanneh posed this question to the mayor: “A lot of people saw what happened to Terence Crutcher, and they said, ‘This wouldn’t have happened if he was white.’ Do you think that’s true?”

“No, I don’t,” Bynum said, later pointing to toxicology reports that found illicit drugs in Crutcher’s system. “It is more about the really insidious nature of drug utilization than it is about race, in my opinion.”

Bynum’s remarks ignited a firestorm. He subsequently apologized, writing in a Facebook post that he “screwed up” by giving an “overly-simplistic answer to a complex question.”

As the president’s rally neared and new coronavirus cases spiked in Tulsa, Bynum looked less like a strong, confident leader than a windsock, tossed too and fro between public health and political concerns.

When asked about the wisdom of a throng assembling in downtown Tulsa amidst a pandemic, the mayor tap-danced. Even though he’s a Republican, he made clear he would not attend the rally, though he did welcome the president when Air Force One landed in Tulsa.

At Trump’s request, Bynum also rolled back a curfew he imposed as racial justice advocates demonstrated and Trump supporters camped out for first-come, first-serve admission to the rally – an example of politics trumping [pun intended] public health and safety.

And what did Bynum get for his troubles? The president stiffed him on the airport tarmac. Didn’t shake his hand. Didn’t so much as acknowledge him.

Trump’s Tulsa toe-touch was very revealing. Not about Trump, of course – we already know what he is – but about Stitt and Bynum.

In his first 19 months in his first political office, Stitt has cemented a reputation as a Trump mini-me, not just politically naïve but also tone deaf and uneducable. Other heavyweight Republicans who thirst for the Capitol’s second-floor corner office clearly smell blood.

Bynum, meanwhile, proved he isn’t ready for the political big leagues. His missteps enraged Trump supporters and detractors alike.

With any luck, these three stooges soon will exit the political stage.

Monumentally Dumb

The latest legislator to besmirch Oklahoma’s national reputation is Sen. Casey Murdock, a Republican from Felt, an unincorporated, western Panhan-

TOM GOODWIN

Cheyenne, OK

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dle, Cimarron County burg that in the 2010 counted all of 93 inhabitants.

Murdock decided it would be a grand idea for his sprawling, northwestern Oklahoma district to be a sanctuary for Civil War-related statues and monuments being removed from public squares across the country – most because they honor racist Confederate leaders who were traitors to the U.S.

“Four years ago,” Murdock said, “President George W. Bush spoke at the opening of the National Museum of African History and Culture in Washington DC, and he said a great nation does not hide its history, it faces its flaws and corrects them.

“We must face our flaws and move forward as a nation, but erasing our history dooms us to repeat it. I think we should protect those artistic representations and continue to learn from them.”

But bring them to Oklahoma? A state to which thousands of indigenous peoples were forcibly resettled. A state whose second largest city was home to the nation’s worst race massacre. A state whose largest metro ranks second only to the San Francisco Bay Area in the likelihood Blacks will be killed by police.

How exactly would it enhance Oklahoma’s reputation to proudly declare itself home to monuments to slavery and racism? Maybe we could change our slogan from “Imagine That” to “Land of The Unenlightened”?

Murdock clearly is guzzling QAnon-style Kool-Aid. He also is wild-eyed over fears religious artwork will join Civil War monuments – including statues of Union soldiers – as targets of ... of ... who exactly?

“It makes no sense,” Murdock said, though not of his nutty idea. “It’s even gotten to the point where some extremists have called for the removal or destruction of art depicting Jesus with light skin and hair.

“Jesus taught us to love our neighbors as ourselves – focusing on skin color diminishes his message and teachings. This is just wrong.”

We suggest a better way for Oklahoma to begin correcting flaws is by ensuring Murdock is never again elected to any public office.



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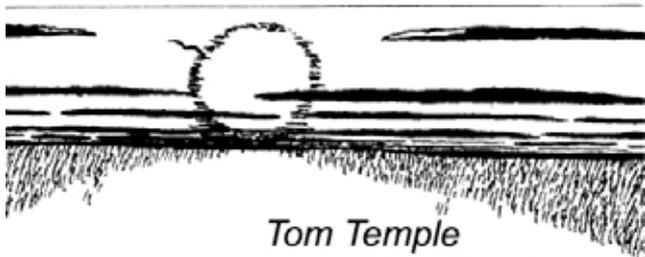
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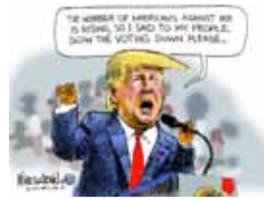
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Observerscope



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Laurel: To Norman City Council, voting to shift \$865,000 from the police budget to sorely needed social and mental health services. It's not anti-police – it's recognition police are ill equipped to do all they're being asked to do.

We mourn the passing of our dear friend Phil Horn-ing, retired attorney and former OKC school board member who was an indefatigable champion of civil rights. He was 79.

So Eskimo Pie is joining Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben's and others in the stereotype dustbin. How about Eskimo Joe's? FYI: Eskimo is a disparaging term for indigenous people of the Arctic.

Laurel: To Twitter, not only flagging President Trump's oft-bogus claims, but also giving its employees two new paid holidays – Juneteenth and Election Day.

Donald Trump's campaign insisted his Tulsa rally helped raise \$10 million. They also claimed a million-plus ticket requests and forecast at least 100,000 would jam the streets around the BOK Center. Actual attendance: 6,200.

The 29-story SandRidge Energy tower in OKC is set to become new hub for state agencies, after it was purchased by state Land Commissioners for \$35.5 million. Initial tenants will include Tax Commission and Health Department.

As we predicted, Tesla isn't going to Tulsa, despite the lovely alliteration. Thank goodness. The Austin area is expected to pony up \$68 million in tax incentives to land the gigafactory. Corporate welfare on steroids.

Baby Bust? If past economic downturns such as 2007-09 Great Recession and 1918 Spanish Flu are prologue, the U.S. can expect 300,000 to 500,000 fewer births next year. – Brookings Institution

Oklahoma's transition away from fossil fuels accelerated recently when state Land Commissioners leased 4,350 acres near Lawton to EDF Renewables for a 250-megawatt solar facility.

Letters



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

I bring this up because I went to a celebration of the Bostock SCOTUS ruling about GLBT employment discrimination. “Queer” was used loosely in a way intended, I suppose, to make the attendees feel connected as a family or a collection, trying to slim down the off-putting inclusion of every sexual or social combination that gets its feelings hurt by the unfeeling crowd of majority citizens. It’s not my fault that LGBTQI-2S has become an awkward buzz acronym to describe the legal fight for the full civil rights that straight people never have to think twice about.

The only thing different between the consonant-letter-salad people and the ruling majority is sexual expression and affectational attraction. We all do it, as the Cole Porter song so deliciously describes animals and nationalities falling in love.

I object to the word “queer” to describe people who have orientations that are other than normative whether if used by people who are “queer” themselves or by allies who think they can prove their honorary “queerness” by using the word.

I don’t agree with the idea that using the word openly by “queer” people weakens the intended sting of its use as an epithet.

I find it as offensive as the word “n-----” thrown at people of color. Does “n-----” feel better if it’s used frequently? No, I don’t think it does and the proof is that no serious media outlet – print, audio, video, or digital – will use the word spelled out, it’s always the “N-word,” “racial epithet,” or other clever euphemism.

Maybe it’s cool and counter cultural, the millennial, gen-Xer thing to do, to speak fast and loose with popular verbal culture, but I don’t like it.

James Nimmo
Oklahoma City

Editor, The Observer:

The crossroads of American democracy: does government provide for the common good, or does it exist to create wealth and privilege for the few? This is what your vote has come down to ... it’s not just party or politics anymore. Voting is a moral and imperiled decision.

Kimberly Littrell
Sapulpa

Editor, The Observer:

It is not about abolishing the police. It is about help



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instead of punishment. Wouldn't it be good to leave the really dangerous stuff to the police and send experts to deal with mental health issues or drug addiction issues or marital issues? Wouldn't it be nice to have mental health or addiction or alcohol treatment facilities to use instead of putting people in jail for months because they can't pay bail?

Don't be stupid. It is about using prisons for what they are supposed to be for, protecting us from the really dangerous.

Why not do something else with all that money instead of building more prisons? Why are you willing to pay a private prison or any kind of prison hundreds of dollars a day to lock up someone for a non-violent offense rather than have some kind of treatment or help?

They talk about adding money to services for abuse spouses or children not defunding it. They talk about turning abandoned department stores into treatment centers. Why not pay teachers more for better schools?

Karen Webb
Portland

Republic

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42

en by the City of Oklahoma City and Norman.

Oklahoma City, facing a 5.6% reduction in its general fund, has approved its FY '21 budget with a 2.65% reduction in the police operating budget. The lengthy council meeting included a hearing on a proposal advocating redistribution of the public safety sales tax to housing, mental health, education, and other services. Oklahoma City has been proactive in some of these issues through participation in OKC Metro Alliance and the Oklahoma County Criminal Justice Advisory Council; there are also plans to dedicate more than \$20 million of CARES reimbursement for "community support." The council approved a resolution creating a city manager's working group to study six specific ideas for improving policing and community interaction.

In Norman, one council member introduced a couple amendments to the FY '21 budget aimed at "defunding" police to fund alternative programs; the Norman City Council voted to cut \$865,000 from the police budget in response to demands for alternative programs, avoiding yet deeper cuts also proposed. The AP-NORC poll found that only 25% of Americans favored reducing law enforcement spending, a position supported by the only Black GOP Senator Tim Scott, R-SC, who states police need more resources to reform policing.

The significance of Juneteenth and the Tulsa Race Massacre was not lost on the young minister, orator, and activist from Montgomery, AL who galvanized a national movement and organized marches for Black civil rights – more specifically for desegregation and

the unimpeded right to vote.

Most of the issues he devoted his life to were enacted into law with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In addition to receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, after his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the man with a lasting dream, was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal.

With dedication to his belief in nonviolent direct action, he changed the world – realizing, in part, the promise of the Declaration. A local candidate was quoted recently as saying, “This is a moment in history that gives us a chance to make the kind of difference that everyone can be proud of.”

Indeed, the time hath found us. Let’s not waste it. And like Thoreau, let’s not “lend ourselves to the wrong we condemn.”

Jan New is a retired public administrator for municipal, state, and federal programs, private industry, and national trade association program development.

Loop

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 31

The United States was not alone in delivering cash to the president. Mr. Karzai acknowledged a few years ago that Iran regularly gave bags of cash to one of his top aides ... Like the Iranian cash, much of the CIA’s money goes to paying off warlords and politicians, many of whom have ties to the drug trade and, in some cases, the Taliban.

The “did Donald know” question squatting atop this situation is every bit as bewildering as the man himself.

According to a Friday report in the Times, Trump was briefed on the situation months ago, but as the story broke over the last few days, the White House has denied he knew anything. This Times article from the last Sunday in June has former national security adviser John Bolton claiming “that he was not aware of the intelligence assessment” in question. Yet this article from the Associated Press reads, “Thenational security adviser John Bolton also told colleagues he briefed Trump on the intelligence assessment in March 2019.”

The Times, for its part, seems pretty convinced Trump had been briefed. They have two unnamed [of course] intelligence officials who claim the Russian bounty data was included in the President’s Daily Brief document, and one of them pegs the specific date as Feb. 27. They can hash it all out with AP at their leisure.

So ... did Trump know about all this and lie, as is his way? Was he briefed and immediately forgot about it, as is also his way? Did members of the intelligence services – many of whom see Trump as an active menace to national security – simply not tell Trump about

it at all because, really, what’s the point?

It’s difficult to decide which scenario is worse, frankly. Trump lying to cover his ass is as commonplace as pavement in the city, but that doesn’t make it any less galling. If he was told and forgot, well, his inability to retain or synthesize information is the stuff of legend, so no galloping surprise there. Meanwhile, the fact that the president of the United States is such a national security threat that his own intelligence officers don’t tell him important things pretty much sucks hard enough to bend the light.

At some point, maybe, we will find out which of these is true.

In the meantime, and in case you are wondering where all of this first started, allow me to introduce you to something that was called Operation Cyclone.

Not to be confused with the same-name Allied operation for the invasion of Noemfoor in 1944, this Operation Cyclone was the CIA’s program to fund and arm the mujahideen in Afghanistan during their war against the invading Soviet Union.

“Arming the rebels has cost the United States more than \$2 billion over eight years,” reported the Times in April 1988, “although the exact amounts of appropriations are secret because the operation is not officially acknowledged by Washington. The program has had strong bipartisan support in Congress throughout.”

Cyclone went on from 1979 to 1989, accelerating massively after Ronald Reagan took office in 1981. By 1987, the CIA was pumping more than \$600 million annually into the mujahideen fight, which two years later resulted in the defeated withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan and the eventual collapse of the USSR. At the time, it was called “the last battle of the Cold War.”

All in all a bully op for U.S. intelligence, but for the fact that the mujahideen eventually morphed into the Taliban, which harbored Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, who blew up a couple of very tall buildings in New York City 11 years after the Soviet war ended, and were able to do so because we taught the mujahideen how to effectively fight a superpower in the first place.

The CIA’s money and weapons over that decade helped the mujahideen kill around 15,000 Soviet soldiers over the course of the conflict. Now, if the reports are to be believed, the descendants of those mujahideen fighters we funded were killing U.S. soldiers to collect a bounty from the Russians, who used to be the Soviets, all in an effort to further bog the U.S. down in Afghanistan in the same fashion we bogged them down there almost 40 years ago.

In a final irony, John Bolton was in the Reagan administration when Cyclone became the hood-ornament op for U.S. intelligence. Now he can’t get his story straight on whether or not he told Trump that Russia is getting its vengeance for Cyclone all these years later.

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