

Does a failed system re-victimize its victims



I am writing in response to an article that was printed on the front page of The Norton Telegram on Friday, Sept. 2. The title of the article was "Former police officer released on diversion."

It made my stomach turn as I am a mother of a teenage daughter who was raped two years ago this September. I want to focus mainly on the last paragraph in the article, which reads "You can say you're never totally satisfied with the outcome, but I think this solution best serves the interest of justice," Sebelius said. "The defendant has the opportunity to better himself without suffering the full repercussions of what could come from taking the case to trial."

In a case like this involving rape, there is always suffering. When the defendant is given "opportunities" to better himself so that he will not have to "suffer the full repercussions," the suffering that he gets the privilege to avoid does not just disappear. That suffering that he should have and deserves to experience is now just transferred to the victims and their families.

The victims and their families are already suffering and experiencing pain that no one on the outside can fully understand or comprehend. They are already facing fears that no one should have to face. Now they have to take on more suffering knowing that they will not just be the victims of a violent crime committed by one person, but they will be victims failed by a system that gives the perpetrator more rights than they have received. They will be victims failed by a community that is consumed by so much fear and denial regarding this issue of rape and sexual assault that they will not stand up for the victims.

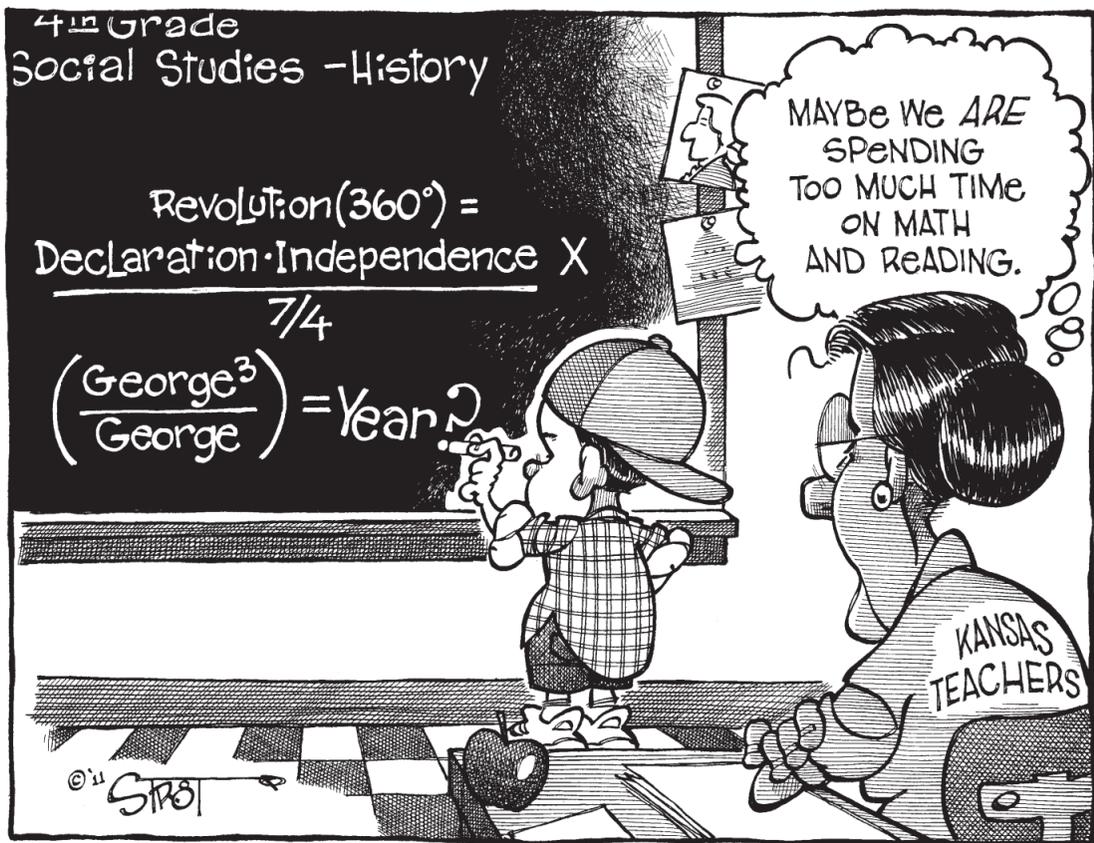
There is a mountain of fears, pain, obstacles, struggles and suffering that victims and their families have to face. They have no choice, no options, no opportunities to do anything other than face that mountain head-on and climb it, despite their weaknesses. The struggles and battles they face are constant and ever-present. These struggles are unforgiving to the victims and their families and make it difficult for them to climb that mountain. It makes it even harder when they see that the perpetrators receive a clear path ahead, often times with obstacles cleared for them by a system that wants to help them by giving them opportunities, freedom and a future free from any suffering. Where do you think that path will lead? I sure hope it's not to your doorstep!

Though I like to refer to my daughter and our family as survivors rather than victims, we were not always so. We became survivors despite a failed system that did not help us. The love and support of friends and family is what got us through it all. I thank the good Lord above for my amazing family and friends. I realize, however, that not all victims have the support system that we had in our time of need. We as a community need to stand up for one another and be the support system that so many of these people are in need of.

I do not know the specifics of this case but I do know that rape/sexual assault continues to be a highly underreported crime. Hearing a prosecutor speak of reaching an agreement with the defense attorney and describing that deal as one that will give the defendant "the opportunity to better himself without suffering the full repercussions of what could come from taking the case to trial" is scary for any victim to hear. Statements that sound like that will only prevent future victims from stepping forward and seeking the justice they deserve.

They need our support to empower them to seek justice, not to scare them from doing so due to social attitudes. Comments and attitudes like these will not empower victims, they will empower the perpetrators. I am disgusted by his comments and feel like the attitudes do not best serve the interest of justice. The county attorney is an elected official and the people of Norton County need to decide if he is doing the job they elected him to do, which is to prosecute those who commit crimes.

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Getting the facts straight on immigrant workers

I am aware.

At times, or maybe all the time, I come across as arrogant, sanctimonious, or condescending. It's just that I have questions. When the answers seem less than honest it really, really bugs me.

At a recent social event someone commented about a crew that did some construction in the area. They worked hard. They worked long hours. They worked in all kinds of weather. Most did not speak a word of English.

"Where did they come from," I asked.

Great Bend.

ME: So why don't they speak English?

They are close knit and stick with their own.

ME: How long have they been in Great Bend? Were they born there?

No one knew

ME: Are they U.S. Citizens?

The assumption was probably not.

ME: Do they have work visas?

Oh, of course. Otherwise they could not have been hired.

ME: Is it easy to get a work visa?

Oh yes, our (priest, doctor, brother's wife etc) came here on a work visa.

ME: Then why are so many Hispanics here illegally? Or are the claims wrong that there are thousands (millions?) of them in this country?

I am aware. I am a pain in the neck, or even lower.

The answer was two fold: there are a limited number of work visas and there are unlimited menial, low paying jobs for them.

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



Turns out the abundance of menial, low paying jobs is the fault of the Hispanics. They are here illegally and cannot demand good pay, benefits, overtime, retirement, and bonuses. Thus citizens are forced to choose between terrible jobs or unemployment.

ME: That's sad, but legitimate, I guess.

It was best to let the subject drop and I did.

However it is telling no one (certainly not me) knows appear to really know the facts about this huge social problem.

We assume. We have opinions.

I know a couple of people (small employers) who have hired employees they suspect have false documentation. This was awhile back and things may have changed, but one of these employers said, "We are told not to question their paperwork."

There is a push to go after employers of illegals. How is this fair if the employers are told not to question paperwork?

The issue of so called "anchor babies" is also troubling. Who isn't an "anchor baby" or doesn't have one in their family tree.

It seems particularly heartless to punish people so desperate for a better

life.

It is absolutely true some connive to give birth here. Who hasn't worked the system?

It seems odd to me that the Germans in my community have little sympathy for Hispanics. By now even the oldest were born in the USA. But their parents or grandparents were not. Still these people, who were mistrusted, even hated because of two World Wars, whose church was burned during World War One say: Assimilate. Learn the language. Give up your customs.

In the ashes of the burnt church a paper from the cornerstone read: "Be not deceived. God is not mocked....."

The rest of the verse from Galatians 6:7 is: ".....for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I have tried to educate myself on what it takes to obtain legal entry from Mexico. It's confusing. As I understand it there is not a limit on the number of work visas. However you must have a job before crossing the border. You may not be self-employed. If you have an education things are easier.

Unlike the European immigration through Ellis Island a century ago there is no easy way to obtain citizenship especially if you are here on a work visa.

I'm college educated. If I were not a citizen I have money, I could hire an attorney to help me. I speak the language. I have white skin and blue eyes; I look like I belong here.

My life is easy; except when I make it difficult by being a pain.

I am aware.

Let there be light, lights on the courthouse this year

It seems a little early to think about Christmas and most particularly about Christmas decorations, but past experience tells us we need to be on top of these things in Norton County. Last year, in a surprise move, the Norton County Commissioners on November 8th, 2010, made the decision to refrain from the traditional lighting of the Courthouse. In the past we have had a festively lit building which beckoned several miles around, welcoming all to our community.

The commissioners said the reasons for this change of plans, at the last minute, were because the sidewalks around the Courthouse were damaged by the heavy equipment used to hang the lights and because they could get loose and blow against the Courthouse damaging the marble on the exterior of the building.

In addition it was said, "Thompson, Miller and Wyatt agreed that county officials wouldn't allow the city to put up the lights on the building this year."

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



Oh, I'm sorry one of those isn't a commissioner.

Perhaps John Miller stated it best when he said, spoken like a true politician, "We'll see what the general public does to us."

Well, now is the time to see what the general public has "done". I know several people were very disappointed in the decision, considered by many to be a mere power play. It is not easy for anyone, but most particularly for politicians to admit they don't have all the answers, but just in case you aren't sure Norton county commissioners, you don't. A last minute decision like you pulled last year was a sign of coward-

ice not strength.

If sidewalks broken by heavy equipment are the real reason to withhold the lights then we have a bigger problem than Christmas lights in Norton. Many walks across town are in disrepair, but the City Council hasn't banned walking on them and has implemented a program to correct the problem. As for the wind damage to the marble, I imagine there are solutions as marble statues have withstood centuries of 365 days a year of winds and weather.

County Commissioner Applegate assured me there would be lights on the Courthouse this year. At the time I spoke to her in the early summer they were preparing to order them, she said. Let us hope they equal or exceed the ones which have decorated the building for many previous decades, a sign to visitors, travelers and the community, saying Norton is alive and well. Welcome home to all. mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

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Another letter to the editor, simply stated

I have come to believe, if you want to commit treason, murder, rape, pillage or plunder, you should first become either a politician or a policeman. Then, if you get caught, your crime can be justified.

Bill Olsen

Almena