

Racial divisions after shooting

People of good will in this country need to come together now and make some sense of the racial divide growing in the wake of the Trayvon Martin shooting and the senseless shootings of five blacks in Tulsa over the weekend.

The potential for more violence seems high. Another spark could set off events which could erase decades of progress in racial equality and interracial goodwill. That must not be allowed.

There's already been way too much irresponsible talk in the wake of the killing of Trayvon, a 14-year-old middle-school student who died Feb. 26 in Sanford, Fla. School pictures showed him as a smiling football player. The neighborhood watch volunteer who shot him claimed he was attacked.

The incident raises as many questions, maybe more, than we have answers. Civil Rights leaders jumped on a chance to trumpet the cause, assuming the shooter, George Zimmerman, had a racial motive.

NBC News reportedly fired a producer over his editing of the volunteer's 911 call reporting a "suspicious" teen. The edit omitted a question from the police dispatcher and made it appear the man had a racial motive for suspecting Trayvon.

In fact, when Mr. Zimmerman called police, the dispatcher asked for a description of the suspect, standard procedure, and prompted him for a race.

Such irresponsible reporting can do great damage, however. And those who want to believe Trayvon was killed because of his race likely won't hear NBC's retraction.

More disturbing, perhaps, is why a neighborhood watch volunteer would call police, then go out alone with a gun to confront a "suspicious person." Why not let the cops handle it?

It has nothing to do with Mr. Zimmerman's right to carry a gun. The truth is, though, that no good can ever come from shooting someone in a situation like this unless a life is in danger. And that was not the case, at least until he stepped out into the street without waiting for help.

Comedian and social commentator Bill Cosby raised the issue Sunday in an interview with the *Washington Times*.

"We've got to get the gun out of the hands of people who are supposed to be on neighborhood watch," said Mr. Cosby. "Without a gun, I don't see Mr. Zimmerman approaching Trayvon by himself."

The situation is further muddled by the fact that Mr. Zimmerman apparently is, like most Americans, of mixed ancestry, half hispanic, and technically a minority himself.

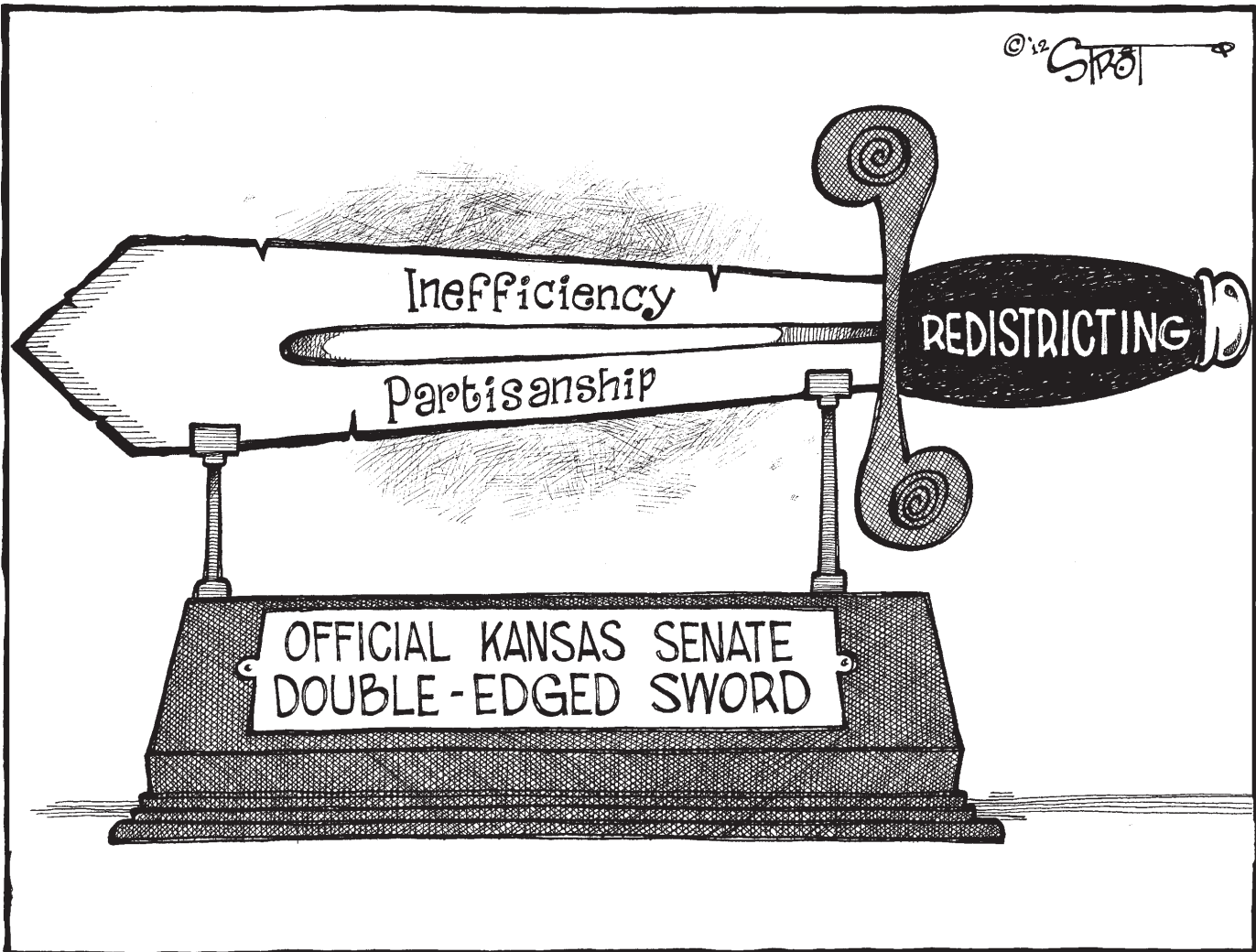
Quick police action in Tulsa led to the arrest of two men, but police cautioned not to judge their motives, at least not yet. People began to return to their normal routines after a weekend of fear.

Perhaps the whole thing will blow over. Maybe not. But those who care need to develop a voice that says race is not the issue. Justice. Less crime, less violence. More love, more understanding. Those ought to be the issues.

Not hyped up, distorted and overblown events. America is better than that.



On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



Seeing life through the eyes of a child

Cole, age three, sits with us sometimes in church.

If it can be said he "sits".

Cole, in church and life, puts one in mind of a ball in a pinball machine! Ping-ping, ping, ping, ping!

One Sunday he was particularly intrigued with my purse. I knitted it. It's felted wool; fuzzy and green. Kids are fascinated.

Once a small child in a restaurant put his hands up and began smiling at me like I was his long lost friend. It's pretty flattering to have a sweet child respond in such a manner. I must be some sort of an enchantress I thought and then realized he wanted to hug my purse!

It's a better reaction than I got from one lady. She made a comment. Mistaking it for interest in the felting process; I explained the construction of the bag finishing with "No one else has one quite like it."

Her rejoinder: "No one would want one!"

Who cares what she thinks, I like three year olds better!

Cole likes the fuzzy part of the purse. And the black cat pin with green eyes which adorns it. But he went straight

This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



for the wallet. I grabbed it and gave him a dime. He asked, none too quietly, for "More money!"

Some weeks we don't get much out of the sermon. The row in front of us was about to lose it also.

I tried to think of something in the purse that might entertain him. There was a hair brush that folds up, sort of like a transformer. He decided JR's hair needed brushed. Except the brush was more like a weapon than a styling tool.

I had a little flashlight; very bright with a halogen bulb. Rather than a switch you push the end to turn it on and off. He's only three; he might not even be able to operate it!

It took him less time to figure it out than it took me to write this sentence.

Immediately he shoved it up to JR's mouth, "Say AHHHHHH!"

He turned to me "Say

AHHHHHHH."

He scrambled around looking for more patients!

Did I mention Cole is our Great nephew? That makes me a GREAT Aunt!!! Anyone who gives a three year old a flashlight in church is pretty GREAT don't you think? As in a GREAT example of what not to do!

Clara Scott wrote a hymn:

"Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me;

"Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.

"Silently now I wait for thee, ready, my God, thy will to see.

"Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!"

They say if you give a three year old a hammer, everything he sees will need a pounding!

If you give him a flashlight everything will need illuminated.

Sometimes the message and the messenger are not what we expect. Convention tells us we should listen to the pastor in church.

But there are many glimpses of truth. Some come via a three year old and a flashlight.

Open your eyes!

Arming today's youth with enough knowledge

In the movie, Apollo 13, there is a scene which, to me, illustrates successful education.

As the astronauts are hurtling on a path of almost certain death, the Apollo Project Director, places a myriad of items on a desk at mission control and says, "This is what they have onboard, get them home." And they did, using duct tape and hosing! Our educational system, including parental guidance, had not only given them an understanding of the potential problem, it had given them practical instruction on how to solve it.

Education was different back then, but so was life in general. If you got in trouble at school, what awaited you at home was going to be far worse. Someone at home was always there overseeing your activities. Latch key kids probably would have meant a youth carrying a key to their house which was never locked. The idea wasn't to drop a child off for kindergarten, or before, and pick them up when they graduated. The idea was to successfully raise a child, with the aid of family, friends, neighbors and indeed teachers.

Research has revealed what many have feared, U.S. children are lagging behind other countries in their abilities and skills to perform certain tasks. Video games may give children the

Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



expertise to navigate a spacecraft but is their education giving them the skills to "bring them home".

The International Adult Literacy Survey is a test given to 16-65 year olds in several democratic countries. In a paper published by the Hoover Institution, a product of Stanford University, Paul E. Peterson of Harvard University, says we are living in our past, but as time goes on the United States "slips" further down the list. "Americans educated in the sixties captured a Bronze Medal in literacy, those schooled in the seventies got 5th place in the race. But those schooled in the nineties ranked 14th."

One of the recent research approaches was, once again, to give tests to measure the achieved levels of success. Supposedly these tests would require mastery of the information, not something to be practiced and repeated. I was surprised when my husband told me they didn't take

standardized tests during his public education in Ft. Collins, CO. In Norton, we took standardized tests, but we didn't do practice tests to prepare for them. We took them based on our acquired knowledge and the ability to apply it. When our children were in Catholic schools in Reno, NV, the tests were performed, without practice, at the beginning of the school year. The information from the tests then helped to outline the year's curriculum offering an opportunity to teach to the weaknesses...and they did.

All of us want our children to succeed and we all have different ideas on how to achieve this, but one thing is certain, it is a team approach. Until parents realize being gifted is a very elite group, not the majority of the class and encourage learning without needing the reward of a grade, we will never move forward. Information without application will not help us to become number one in any race. Apollo 13 was launched on April 11, 1970; it returned to earth without completing a planned moon landing, but return to earth it did, not because of the grade or score received, but because of the knowledge instilled. Mail to:mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net



Thumbs up to the City of Norton for purchasing and distributing the rubber mulch for the city playgrounds. Not only does this look nice, it provides soft landings for the many children who enjoy these playgrounds. Thanks so much! Emailed in.

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