

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Confused negligence is Michael's problem

Michael Jackson's in-your-face response to his recent court date may be his last such celebration. You recall that after leaving the courthouse in which he pleaded not guilty to charges of molestation and providing alcohol to a child, he put on a show atop his vehicle and then threw a party for a few thousand 'friends' — probably curious onlookers, if truth be known because nobody has a few thousand 'friends.' The party was at Neverland.

If was indeed interesting to see him use that right arm and shoulder that he claims were injured when he was roughed up by police after his arrest. In a televised interview a few weeks after he was handcuffed and hauled in, he said he was in constant pain and had difficulty raising his arm. He sure had no problems raising that injured shoulder and waving his arm while goofing it up atop his SUV parked outside the courthouse.

Reports now surfacing are that his attorneys called him on the carpet and told him he was going to start acting his age, that he will not continue to carry on as he has been, that he will keep in mind that his behavior is being viewed by potential jurors and that he and family will be less visible to the public.

But those who know Michael Jackson say Michael calls his own shots. He listens to no one. If, in fact, this is the way he operates then his defense is going to be challenged like never before defending against the charges that could carry lots of prison time if convicted.

Michael Jackson is a study in confused negligence — read that carefully and thoughtfully. It may sound like an odd description of his shortcomings, but we are talking about Michael Jackson and therefore it makes sense. He is confused as to color and sexual desire, the direct result of being negligent in responsibly accepting who he is and the number of years he's been who he is.

His fate will not be decided by his wealth nor his fame. His fate will be decided by 12 jurors, and if Michael Jackson thinks his in-your-face behavior won't impact those 12 people, then he's not just weird, but he's also stupid.

Tom A. Dreiling, Publisher

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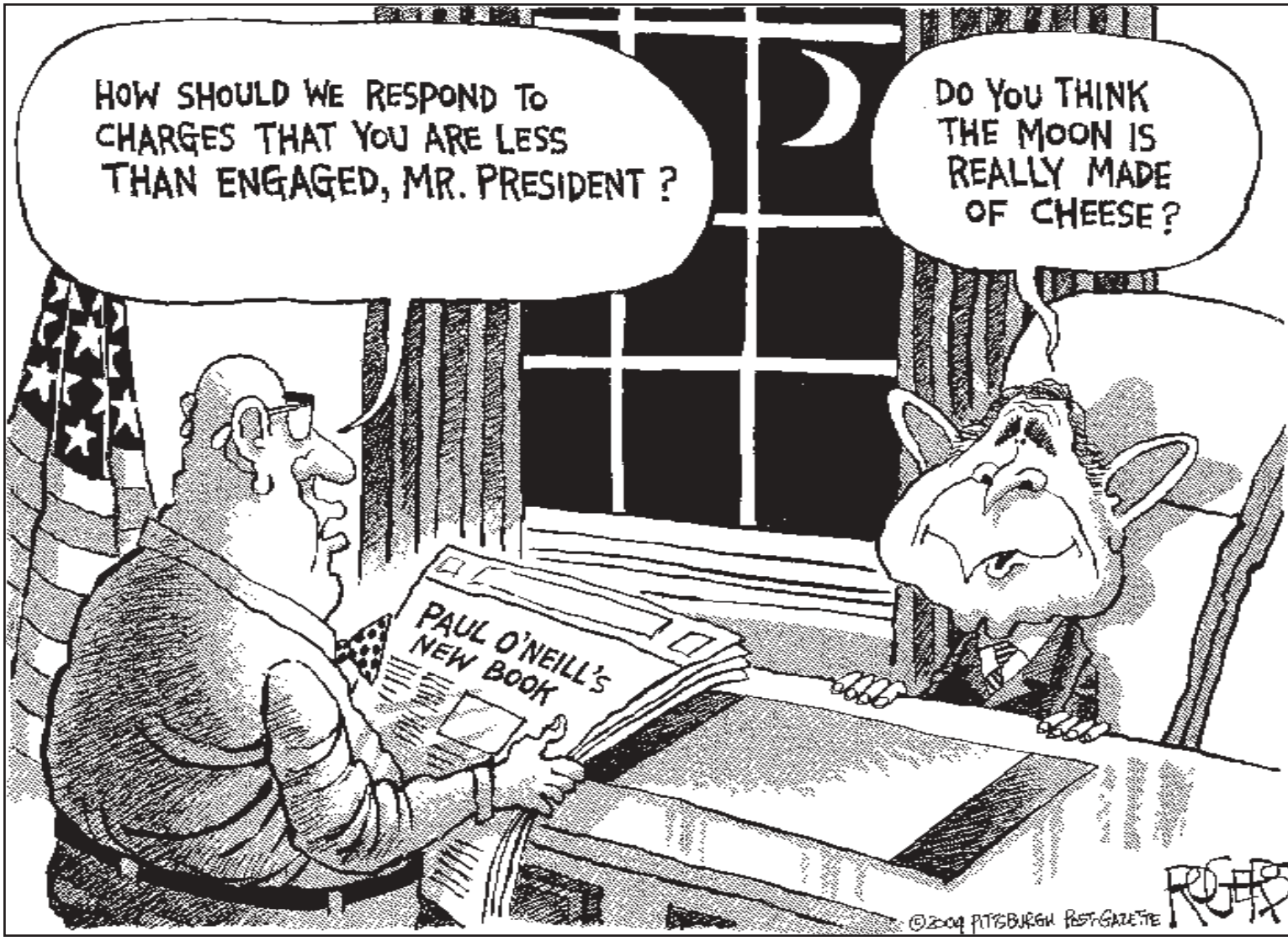
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The road ahead: 2004

As we head into the second session of the 108th Congress, I will be using what I learned from residents who attended my town hall meeting as a blueprint to develop my priorities for the 2004 Congressional session.

Much of what I have heard on the tour this year is similar to years past. Across Kansas, people are concerned about the high costs of health care and prescription drugs, the ability to keep our main street businesses open, supporting our military and veterans, the need to improve educational opportunities for our youth and providing the necessary tools for our family farmers to stay in business.

When Congress reconvenes, I will participate in congressional hearings on BSE and the effects of the USDA's new animal processing regulations on producers. We must be certain that the response was appropriate and that every measure is being taken to help the industry recover.

As Chairman of the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management, I will also work to improve risk management tools available to farmers and ranchers in the new year. Multi-year losses continue to be a problem that crop insurance does not adequately address, especially in light of the

Congressman Jerry Moran

● Your Voice on the Hill

continuing drought conditions.

Improving the access and affordability of health care continues to be one of my highest priorities. Last year, Congress passed a sweeping change to Medicare, which will have long-term consequences for the program's solvency and cost. We must also continue to improve the delivery of health care services in rural areas and continue efforts to lower the overall cost of prescription drugs.

Last fall, I cosponsored the federal highway bill, which will authorize funding for highways, public transportation programs and safety initiatives for the next six years. In Kansas, this bill would invest more than \$2.7 billion in transportation programs and is estimated to create 47,500 jobs. As a member of the House Trans-

portation Committee, my goal is to see that Kansas receives adequate funding for our transportation infrastructure system in these tight financial times.

During Memorial Day 2004, veterans from Kansas and across the country will gather in Washington, D.C. to dedicate the new World War II Memorial on the National Mall. At the dedication, we will recognize the contributions that veterans from WWII and other wars have made to protect this nation and to preserve our freedoms.

This will also be a time for us to remember the promises we made to those who answered the call to serve and for us to keep those promises. I will continue to work to see that health care funding for veterans is adequate to meet their needs.

Congressman Jerry Moran represents the 69 counties of the First District of Kansas. E-mail him at: jerry.moran@mail.house.gov, or visit his web page at: <http://www.house.gov/morank01/>. You can also contact him through his Hays District Office, 1200 Main Street, Suite 402, P.O. Box 249, Hays, Kan. 67601-0249 or phone (785) 628-6401.

Sometimes the truth hurts

Rosie Stockton

● Rosie's Route

ing for the sake of learning, not just because it opportunities and be made to feel that whatever direction they choose with guidance is best for them, whether that is a four-year college, a two-year college or a technical school. They also want support from the community in all areas of student involvement, not just sports. They want a community that encourages people to move in and become involved and to feel welcomed whether they are new comers or are part of a family that has been around for generations.

They ask, "What is the economic development department doing for our community? Where are the jobs being developed that would cause me to want to come back and live in this small town to continue a way of life?" They want parents who are willing to be honest and tough when it is needed. They want to know that if they are in the wrong, you will stand firm, even if it means they won't get to play football or basketball, etc. It means standing up to a teacher when they are wrong, even if they coach a winning wrestling team, or standing behind a teacher when your child is out of line. Our kids need to see education and learning as a valuable thing. Today, there is no cost or value to it. I know we always rolled our eyes when our parents told stories of walking to and from school uphill both ways in the snow, but when they told those stories they conveyed a sense of value in responsibility and education. It was a privilege for them to get an education. I know this first hand. I have been going to college classes part-time for several years and now attend full time. There are those who truly want to be there and then there are those who need

to be booted out, not letting the door hit them on the way out, because they are not accomplishing one thing other than taking up space and hindering those who want to learn. So, what are we as adults doing to improve ourselves and learn and grow as individuals, as families, as businesses, as a community?

Maybe it is turning off the TV and reading a book. Maybe it is taking a class at Colby Community College. Maybe it is learning a new skill or developing a creative or artistic talent. Maybe it is doing research about how other people in other parts of the country are managing a business just like yours, so you can learn new ways to improve what you are doing. For example, since this is such a strong agricultural community there are many programs put on by Kansas State Research and Extension specialists on new ways to produce the crops that are such a dominant part of our way of life. Most of these are offered at convenient times and at free or nominal costs to impart new and cutting edge technology for our ever-changing world.

Do we want the state legislature to tell us what we need to do with our water, or should we be learning ways to grow the most profitable crops for our land with the least amount of water?

Do we want to be liable for a multi-car pile up on the highway in a blizzard white-out or dust storm brown-out coming off bare fields when moderate, undisturbed crop residue would have greatly reduced the problem? Yes, clean tillage has been the traditional method, but we need to learn from history, from the mistakes, but let's not be so stuck in ruts that we can't climb out and try a new and better way.

This isn't a very popular stand, but it is the truth — and sometimes the truth hurts.

Rosie Stockton is a rural Colby resident who frequently contributes to this page.

Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

