

Opinion



Letter Drop

- Our Readers Sound Off

Offended by part of column

Mr. Dreiling:

This is a letter to the editor, could you please print this? Thanks a bunch and here's the article! I wrote it myself!

As I walked into the kitchen this evening, I read in an article from the *Colby Free Press*, August 13, 2004. It was in Tom Dreiling's article titled "Yes sir, 'Go, Navy'!"

In this article, there was a section called Mid-East Mystery. As I read through this article, I became very appalled.

Sure, it might just be a joke, but it's very offensive.

I'm sorry Mr. Dreiling, but I'm 12 years old and I have better manners than that. Aren't we supposed to be over in Iraq, liberating Muslims? And this is the attitude we have towards them?

These are lifestyles of people from different cultures.

How would you like it if someone made fun of you for shopping at Wal-Mart? How would you feel if they were poking fun of your religion? Does this make us any better because we're born in America?

Caitlyn Gordon, 12 Years old
Colby
(Letter #70)

Reply:

I rarely respond publicly to a letter. But I will not miss an opportunity to thank Caitlyn for reacting as she did to that particular inclusion in the column that carries the tag, "At Week's End." That particular column appeared on Friday, Aug. 13. If it offended you, Caitlyn, then it probably offended some others, too. But you are the only person to have written to register a complaint. And you are to be commended.

Often times I will slip different things into that column — "At Week's End," as well as my primary column, "My Turn" — to see if people are reading. They are, but unlike you, as they differ, in the same breath they ask that I not bring them into the public arena. So, no, your comments do not in the least disappoint or upset me. In fact, when I saw your letter in my e-mail box and read it, I was so pleased to see a 12-year-old get into the public debate. That speaks well of you and the household in which you are formulating your opinions.

Sometimes people in my position play "Devil's advocate" to get people to think.

Have a great day at school.

— *Mr. Dreiling*

About those letters . . .

The *Free Press* encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, and, likewise, reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

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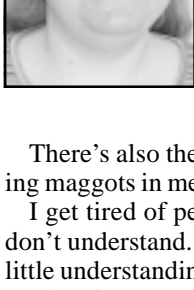
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Get rid of the blinders



Tisha Cox

• Off The Beaten Path

There's also the re-emerging practice of using maggots in medicine.

I get tired of people denouncing what they don't understand. Maybe all it would take is a little understanding to change things.

There is beauty in every culture, as well as the dark and undesirable. It is yin to yang, best personified in Eastern philosophy, where everything has an opposite to bring balance.

Without one, you can't have the other. Some cultural practices are enough to turn my stomach. A few made me sit back and go "wow."

Literally. Like Japanese full-body tattoo, called horimono. In Japan, tattoos still have a huge stigma to them and aren't socially acceptable.

Anyone with a full body tattoo is usually considered a bad person because it's usually associated with the yakuza, or what is known in America as the Japanese mafia.

Not everyone who has horimono done is yakuza, but by Japanese standards, it's a bad thing. Yet culturally, it's an ancient tradition that is fading away because of modern views.

Our own country isn't immune from changes. May people see the relaxation of our moral code as a cause for concern, but for the wrong reasons. They're using religion as an excuse.

Even Wiccans have a moral code, who many Christians consider the worst of pagans. They

practice the Golden rule — Do unto others.

I don't know how people can walk around content to live their everyday normal little lives, secure in the knowledge that nothing can be better than it is at that moment in their day.

People wear blinders instead of taking a hard look at how things really are.

Our country isn't like that and the rest of the world certainly isn't.

Neither is it perfectly ordered and explored. There are still plenty of open spaces out there for a person to get lost in if they wish.

I think people also think this is the best place in the world to live. How do they know? Have they ever lived elsewhere, outside the country's borders, and if they did go abroad, they'd probably seek out other Americans and try to make that little corner of the world as much like America as they possibly can.

It's that arrogance that outsiders hate — that assumption that as Americans, we can go where we want and act like we want.

No can do. It comes down to a matter of respect or disrespect for other countries and cultures. "Well, we don't do that where I come from so it's not right."

That's why so many countries are mad at the U.S. right now.

Where I see arrogance, I also see the will to want to do what is right, something I don't think other countries want to right now.

Our culture is what makes us who we are and as a culture, our country is unique.

Maybe it's time to start taking a look at things through new eyes.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcx@nwkanssas.com.

Listen, think and then speak

John Schlageck

• Weekly Insight

Today, information bombards us like a meteor shower. Every day our eyes see thousands of images on television and computer screens. Our ears hear many thousand words. Many people read thousands of words on the printed page.

With all of the election rhetoric, spin, negative ads, and in some cases smear tactics, some would admonish you to listen to it all, do your own research, sort it out and then make your own decisions.

Are you kidding me? How is one individual going to sort out the truth with millions of dollars of advertising, tons of talk show hosts and all of the television talking heads spewing their agendas?

I listen to them daily for hours and sometimes when the night is finished I am more confused and further from knowing the truth than when I began. It makes my head hurt.

I believe that those who seek to persuade others should tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help me God. They have an obligation to themselves and others to do so. I don't want to be misled, lied to or told part of the story in an attempt to destroy someone's character. To do so is not honorable, is dishonest and only continues to divide a country that is already deeply polarized. To do so is not in the best interest of our nation and those who are attempting to lead.

Whatever happened to truth, honesty and championing a leader's good qualities? What about talking up a person's assets?

Let's not resort to focusing on the negative or

destroying a candidate's good name. Consider the following thoughts. Incorporate them into your every day life. Let them help you chart the pitfalls, mine fields and challenges associated with living each day in our fast-paced, world.

One of my favorite Russian authors, Leo Tolstoy (*War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*) used to choose a theme and offer a wise thought for each day of the year. He coupled this with quotes from some of the greatest philosophers of all times.

Here are a few of the thoughts on which Tolstoy reflected; most have to do with listening.

✓After a long conversation, stop and try to remember what you have just discussed. Don't be surprised if many things, sometimes all things you discuss, are meaningless, empty and trivial.

✓A stupid person should keep silent. But if he knew this, he would not be a stupid person. — Saadi.

✓If you want to be a clever person, you have to learn how to ask cleverly, how to listen attentively, how to respond quietly and how to stop

talking when there is nothing more to say.

✓People whose only motivation is to say something original utter many stupid things. — Voltaire.

✓If you have time to think before you start talking, think: Will what I have to say harm anyone? Is it necessary to speak?

✓Nothing can support idleness better than empty chatter. People would do better to keep silent rather than speak the boring, empty things they routinely say to entertain themselves.

✓First think, then speak. Stop when told, "enough." — Saadi.

✓Those people speak most who do not have much to say.

✓People are taught to speak, but their major concern should be how to keep silent.

✓I have spent all my life amongst wise people, and I have found nothing better than silence in this world. If a word costs one coin, then silence costs two. — Talmud.

✓Keep silent. Rest your tongue more often than you do your hands. You will never regret that you have kept silent, but you will often regret that you spoke too much.

Do not say words you do not feel, lest your soul be blackened with darkness. — The Book of Divine Thoughts.

John Schlageck has been writing about farming and ranching in Kansas for 25 years. He is the managing editor of "Kansas Living," a quarterly magazine dedicated to agriculture and rural life in Kansas.

Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

