

Opinion



Free Press Viewpoint

Suicides leave many questions

The death of a young person by their own hand leaves the majority of us saddened and with many unanswered questions.

If you have heard someone talk about ending their lives take them seriously. They may be joking but only God knows who is serious or not.

There is still a stigma attached to getting help for mental problems. Many psychiatric disorders have been found to have physical, chemical origins. Chemical imbalances in the brain can be treated with medicine. There will be a day, I hope, when mental problems are handled like the flu or a broken arm.

Suicide impacts children more than adults. Children blame themselves for a parent's suicide. Much on the same scale as a divorce. It is really hard for them.

If you know someone is dying there is some preparation when the event happens. Accidents are sudden but most of the time the victims do not choose to die. In a suicide, death is the only way that that person can see to escape pain, which may be physical and mental. They may feel like they are sliding down a black hole trying to hang on by their finger nails. Some quit fighting.

There are individuals who keep saying they want to die. After repeated forced placements in mental facilities there seems to be the moment of choice for those people. They must either decide to get the job done or finally really get help.

I have seen two examples of individuals after repeated rescues by concerned people reach that point. The concerned people realize that forced hospitalizations aren't working and they make the decision to stand back and let that person pick which way they want their lives to go. Stepping back is a really hard decision for those people. They really care. If there are threats to other persons in the home or community there is no choice but to intervene.

One of the examples turned their life around. The other person got the job done and killed themselves.

Drugs and alcohol many times play big parts in suicides. Both release inhibitions. Alcohol and some drugs are a depressant.

Teenagers who are at that age where they feel invincible commit suicide without realizing its finality. Those deaths seem to be more tragic than an adult.

There is a message of hope in all of this. If you feel you have no choice but to end your life talk to a professional, a school counselor, a minister or friend. Get help. Also realize you must be willing to accept the help they have to offer. It may not be pleasant or fun but it will not be as final as death.

As long as there is life there are possibilities. Cry but remember there is also laughter.

Pat Schiefen, Interim Publisher
Colby Free Press

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774

U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 303 SW 10th St. Rm. 171-W, Topeka 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmmorriso@ink.org web: www.ink.org/public/legislators/jmmorriso

State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963
Colby, Kan. 67701
freepress@nwkansan.com

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

Pat Schiefen - Interim Publisher

pjschiefen@nwkansan.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor

pdecker@nwkansan.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment

tc Cox@nwkansan.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter

ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director

crystalr@nwkansan.com

Jasmine Crottinger - Advertising Sales

jasminec@nwkansan.com

Cindy Davis - Advertising Sales

c.davis@nwkansan.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager

lea@nwkansan.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building

japplegate@nwkansan.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator

support@nwkansan.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Ron VanLoenen, Judy McKnight

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. **SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$38, 8 months \$53, 12 months \$70. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$50, 8 months \$62, 12 months \$78. Other Kansas counties and surrounding states: 4 months \$57, 8 months \$67, 12 months \$81. All other states, \$81, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company



Politicians often use hind sight

By Dick Morris

Politicians in Washington are often like motorists who drive only by consulting their rear-view mirrors and never look out of their windshields to see what is going on right now.

Our national political/journalistic complex is obsessed with blaming President Bush for failing to respond quickly to the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina. After weeks of media pounding and casualty figures that were, apparently, wildly and widely exaggerated, polls suggest that the public has no choice but to agree with the critique.

The CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll of Sept. 8-11 shows that only 44 percent of Americans approve of the job Bush did immediately after the storm. But so what? The same survey shows that 58 percent approve of the work he has done since then in helping New Orleans and the Gulf Coast to recover from the effects of the disaster.

The low job approval of Bush's efforts in the week after the storm will fade into history and take its place alongside similar criticism of his slowness to act after the planes hit on Sept. 11 or after the tsunami struck late last year. What counts for the future is that the ratings on his recent performance are 20 points higher than his overall job approval.

This positive affirmation of the president's role in the past few weeks is the leading indicator Washington should be following. While all current polls show Bush falling three or four points in job approval to the lowest of his administration, these surveys reflect neither the increasingly positive view of the president's disaster-relief efforts nor the bounce that he always gets when

Other Viewpoints

● From Pens of Kansans

we are reminded of the horrendous attacks of Sept. 11 on its grim anniversary.

Democrats, such as Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), who are assuming a harsh critical role in attacking the administration are making a huge mistake. They are presenting an image of partisanship and rancor at a time when the nation wants its political leaders to spread healing balm and work together on reconstruction.

The stories of the rapidity with which the Federal Emergency Management Agency is bringing in mobile homes and building temporary housing, the bonding that seems to be happening between refugees and their new communities, the record outpouring of charitable giving — greater even than after Sept. 11 or the tsunami — all attest to the national mood.

If there is one time voters will be impatient with critics and those who they feel are raking over the past to score political points, it is now.

That is not to say that voters will not demand a fair, impartial and thorough review of what went wrong in the relief efforts and of why hospital patients died awaiting evacuation.

They will be particularly interested in why federal money that should have gone to strength-

ening the levees went to other pork-barrel projects that Louisiana senators wanted to be funded instead. The Sept. 11 commission model should be followed to be certain we get the whole picture.

But now Americans want us to face the need not just to recover from the storm but to deal with the underlying poverty it exposed. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice put it best when she said that the storm-devastated areas should not be rebuilt the way they were when the storm hit.

Rather, she said that "maybe now on the heels of New Orleans" we could "deal with the problem of persistent poverty."

Michael Harrington, in his book "The Other America," awakened our national consciousness to the "invisible poor" who live in our cities. Katrina has blown away the veil that kept them from sight and put their plight on all of our television screens. So now we have an opportunity and an obligation to remedy it.

In this task of relief, recovery and reconstruction, Bush has a job that will occupy most of his second term and will lend it a theme and a grandeur that Sept. 11 imparted to his first four years in office.

Bush is a conservative who doesn't believe government should do a lot. But two things he does think it should do are protect us against foreign foes and shelter us from the forces of nature. And now he has both on his plate.

Dick Morris was an adviser to Bill Clinton for 20 years. Look for Dick's new book "Because He Could" about Bill Clinton. Email for Dick Morris is dmredding@aol.com

Natural disaster emphasizes poverty

"Sometimes it takes a natural disaster to reveal a social disaster," Jim Wallis, editor of the evangelical journal "Sojourner's," told a *Washington Post* reporter recently.

He was, of course, referring to the stunning way the fury of Hurricane Katrina and the slow start-up of the governmental response laid bare in stark, tragic terms the profound, corrosive poverty that still exists in America-and which in the Gulf region literally left many poor residents facing a wrenching physical suffering.

The effects of poverty there that millions in America and around the world could see with their own eyes, thanks to the news photographs and television reports, were underscored by two statistical reports published amid the devastation.

One, released in late August just before the hurricane struck, was the annual report of the U.S. Census Bureau on income, poverty and health insurance. It showed that, despite America's general economic recovery, 4 million more Americans had fallen into poverty since 2001, meaning that now there are 37 million Americans in poverty.

The import of those figures was then underscored by the demographic profile of residents, 60 percent of whom were people of color, in the three dozen neighborhoods in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana hardest-hit by the storm, the Associated Press published on September 4.

Using Census data, the AP determined that these Americans were twice as likely to be poorer than the national average and to not own a car.

University of South Carolina historian Dan

Marc H. Morial

● National Urban League

Carter told the AP such figures shouldn't be surprising, but that usually there's "not a lot of interest in (issues of poverty), except when there's something dramatic. By and large, the poor are simply out of sight, out of mind." Philosopher Cornel West said much the same in an interview for the *British* newspaper,

The Observer "It takes something as big as Hurricane Katrina and the misery we saw among the poor black people of New Orleans to get America to focus on race and poverty," he remarked. "It happens about once every 30 to 40 years."

Of course, some have long been trying to direct America's attention to the persistence of poverty.

Now, perhaps, more Americans have seen what had become invisible amid the nation's rising affluence and overall economic recovery.

President Bush in his speech in New Orleans pledged "one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen" for the Gulf region and declared his administration "will do what it takes [and] stay as long as it takes to help [its citizens] rebuild their communities and their lives."

The task ahead, still yet to be fully glimpsed, is one of extraordinary complexity.

But certainly the overriding principle local, state and federal governments must adhere to is fairness-fairness in the distribution of relief funds to individuals, families and businesses, fairness in enabling those who want to return to their communities do so, and fairness in involving Gulf residents in every aspect of the planning and execution-from strategy to jobs to contracts and procurement-that the reconstruction effort requires.

Congress should also provide meaningful federal disaster unemployment assistance to every worker-estimated to be at least half a million-left jobless by this tragedy.

And it must ensure that the hundreds of thousands of displaced Gulf citizens continue to have full voting rights in their home states and districts, so that they can have a proper voice in the rebuilding of their communities.

The crisis Hurricane Katrina has left in its wake has ironically also produced an extraordinary opportunity to make life better for all of its victims and for all Americans, too. It's an opportunity our nation can't afford to waste.

Marc H. Morial is president and CEO of The National Urban League. Morial succeeds Hugh B. Price as the League's eighth chief executive. Morial served two distinguished four-year terms as Mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002.

During that time, he also served as president of the United States Conference of Mayors in 2001 and 2002. Distributed by Minute manMedia.org.

Doonesbury

● Gary Trudeau

