

Opinion



Other Viewpoints

We need system to reward 'legals'

Every year Congress authorizes a certain number of permanent-resident visas, or green cards, for immigrants to come to work in the United States or to rejoin their families.

And every year bureaucratic delays prevent a certain portion of those visas from being claimed.

The result? Every year, thousands of potential green cards vanish, like unused cell phone minutes....

Teachers, nurses, engineers, researchers and other aspiring immigrants who follow the rules, file their paperwork, pay their fees and wait — and wait — get the chilly message that they are not wanted. Some of them feel great pressure to go illegally around the immigration system, instead of through it, as their wait to rejoin their loved ones becomes intolerable.

A House bill that could recapture an estimated 550,000 lost visas, sponsored by Rep. Zoe Lofgren, a California Democrat, has been moving slowly through the committee process despite the best efforts of members like Rep. Steve King, Republican of Iowa, to sabotage it with ridiculously restrictive amendments. One would have granted green cards only to people younger than 40 with college degrees. Another would have eliminated an entire category of family visas, for siblings of citizens....

It seems unlikely that a visa-recapture bill would make it through this year. But don't blame Congress's focus on the economic mess for that. Recapturing visas is a modest fix that should have been made a long time ago. The country needs to build a smoother path to legal entry and citizenship. The blame for its failure to do that lies squarely with the hard-liners who rage against illegal immigrants, but are strangely uninterested in helping people who "play by the rules" and "wait in line."

— The New York Times, via The Associated Press

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TOP ISSUES OF PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN 2008



RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH 10/08 BROOKINGS

'Sticks and stones' OK; words breed war

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me."

I seldom hear this anymore. Quite frankly, perhaps, we have learned that words are far more powerful in their lasting effect than physical abuse.

I suppose only those in the very top of the popularity chain in society have not suffered damage to their self image from insulting and demeaning words. That includes most of us!

Human nature is to crave acceptance by our own kind. Some of us have thicker skin than others, and are able to ignore words that have no basis or truth behind them. But, that doesn't mean those words don't have lasting negative effect on our ability to cope with relationships with our fellow man.

Our own community is seeing a little of the power of words concerning politics, even on the local level. I'm not too concerned about the recent spats in the opinion column about performance, experience, qualification and the insinuations of unfitness inciting physical use of "sticks and stones."

However, these people are not seriously addressing the reality that our local law enforcement personnel are supposed to be the example of proper treatment of others, not only material possessions, but, also, protection of individuals' reputations and civil rights. Libelous statements that insinuate lack of moral and ethical performance can lead to inciting riotous actions, if left to feed upon themselves.



Ken Polland

• Ken's World

Style of administration and priorities are legitimate differences between candidate that we should be hearing about instead of personal attacks.

Many people contend that when "politicians" get to the state or national level, they become corrupt. I tend to think corruption begins early in our life cycle and only gets worse as opportunity and reward grow.

The child who is allowed to shift blame for his or her shortcomings or misbehavior onto someone else learns early on about reward, either the reward of avoiding punishment or the consequence (punishment) for their misdeeds. All too often, the positive reward is good enough to justify taking a chance on avoiding negative consequence.

The state of our national presidential contest should be embarrassing to us all. Both sides seem to be caught up with trying to paint the other side as less qualified, less honest, less intelligent, etc. In that process we are not really being given honest differences of policy and platforms. We are not hearing honest debate

on issues that have legitimate policy differences and solutions.

In that process, though, we are hearing words that have real power to incite violence and the use of real "sticks and stones." Most of the campaign speeches are being delivered in an atmosphere of political rally that matches sports rallies and "Indian War Dances" that are, or were, designed to generate the fervor to dominate physically at whatever the cost.

Most wars in history were conceived and incubated with words preceding the actual physical acts. Greed and fear are psychological impregnators that precede most all wars. Greed and fear are not "sticks and stones." Words are powerful stimulants that awaken our natural human greed. Words are carefully put together in contexts that intensify our fears for the future and our inability to control our human destiny here on earth.

How much of our school violence can be traced back to words? How many of the assassinations in our nation and worldwide can be linked back to words? How many suicides are contemplated or completed as a result of bullying by words?

Ken Poland describes himself as a semi-retired farmer living north of Gem, a Christian, affiliated with American Baptist Churches, and a radical believer in separation of church and state. Contact him at rcwinc@cheerful.com.

Different kind of hero, different weapon

Every action film has a hero who saves the day.

In the movie "Flunked," the heroes are teachers and principals who fight the bad guys of declining test scores, failing grades, and inferior schools.

Their weapons? Creativity and determination.

The happy ending? Improved test scores, passing grades and schools so desirable parents are waiting in line to get their kids enrolled.

The stars of the show are education professionals from Harlem to Los Angeles who have confronted the problem of a faltering education system. You won't see violence or suspense in "Flunked," but it is a scary show, as it foretells serious trouble ahead for American students.

The average American student is no longer able to compete academically. In Kansas, nearly six out of 10 eighth grade students have substandard math skills, nearly half are not good readers and four out of 10 fail to graduate from high school, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

These fundamental skills are critical in today's workplace and economy, and recent

Other Opinions

• Sarah McIntosh Flint Hills Center

studies indicate American students are falling far behind those in other countries.

But all is not lost. Student performance can be increased, and there are plenty of heroes out there who can lead the charge. The individuals showcased in this movie tell their stories of perseverance and how they changed the lives of students in their communities.

Ben Chavis is the principal of an American Indian public charter school in Oakland. He turned what was one of the worst schools in the city to a top performing school in the state.

Howard Lappin was the leader who turned the Foshay Learning Center in Los Angeles from a school no one wanted to attend to a place where parents and students fought to get in the district limits.

Steve Barr, founder of Green Dot Schools in Los Angeles, operates five schools which combat the low performance of area students.

Karen Jones, principal of a school in Harlem, in New York, boosted the test scores of her students by leaps and bounds.

How did Ben, Howard, Steve, and Karen do it? There is no one magic formula, but they and others share their stories of success in hopes to inspire more education allstars.

Kansas is full of potential allstars. We have many dedicated, hard-working teachers, principals and parents.

It's time for us to realize that it isn't a losing battle. We can increase student performance in Kansas and become a competitor in the world economy.

If you are interested in watching this film, it is available for purchase at www.flunkedthemovie.com.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

