



Free Press Viewpoint

Be slow to put race as motive for shots

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 17-year-old 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 muddied 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. — *Steve Haynes*

We encourage comments on opinions expressed on this page. Mail them to the *Colby Free Press*, 155 W. Fifth St., Colby, Kan., 67701, or e-mail colby.editor@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the *Free Press*, its staff or the owners.

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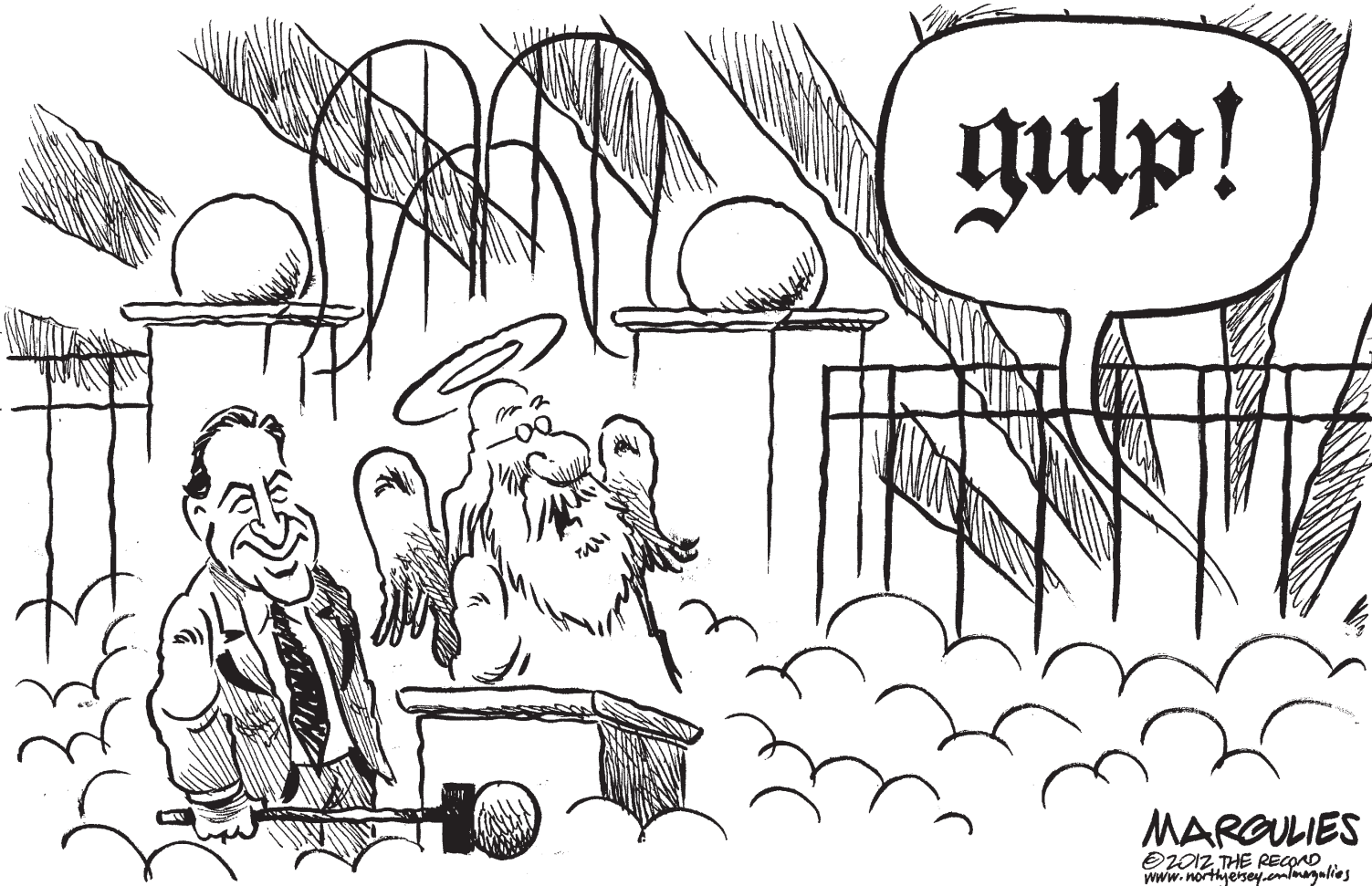
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"Mike Wallace is here to see you..."

Birds of a feather loooooove spring

The birds are telling me that it's springtime. Mind you, I have a yard full of flowers. The daffodils are almost gone, but the tulips are up and at 'em all over the place. And back in a sunny southern corner, three irises are blooming.

Irises aren't supposed to bloom before my daughter's birthday on May 9. However, no one seems to have told the blossoms that they're way early. As is just about everything else that flowers, from lilacs to cherry trees.

Still, it's the birds that let me know spring is truly here.

I watched a robin singing his heart out at the top of a tiny white blossom-covered apple tree the other day. More robins were greedily checking out our newly turned garden and taking a bath in the water bowl I leave out for our cats and the dog.

Over by my bird feeder, our feathered friends line up for the seeds that sat there most of the winter without a taker.

Now, however, I have to fill both feeders every other day. As I sit at my dining room table, I watch the grackles try to figure out how to fold, spindle and mutilate themselves into a small enough package to get to that delicious



Cynthia Haynes

• Open Season

seed. It's pretty hilarious watching them.

There was a red-winged blackbird out there on Sunday. He was having a similar problem. The feeders are set up for chickadees, sparrows and finches, not for the larger species of seed eaters.

Each evening as we take our walk along a shelterbelt, we hear hundreds of pairs of wings flapping. The grackles have taken over that row of trees and bed down there each night. They are not happy to have a couple of humans and a dog walk past their bedroom and annoy them just when they're getting ready to take a nap.

Up in the sky, we are seeing the vultures. They don't seem to be perching on the Oberlin water tower as much as they have in years past, but that may be because they are in the

trees making their nests. My guess is after the eggs are laid, we'll see more of the old men hanging around the water tower. Their mates will toss them out of the nest and tell them to go find something else to do, 'cause they're in the way.

Out on the highway, you can't go more than a few miles without seeing a cock pheasant making goo goo eyes at a bunch of hens. It's like watching teenage boys and girls at a dance. All the boys are on one side and all the girls are on the other, and they're all trying desperately to figure out how to cut one of 'em out of the herd on the other side of the room.

A tom turkey we saw Sunday had no such problem. He was fanning his feathers for three or four hens, hoping to make a good impression.

Love is in the air, and that means it's spring.

A little birdie told me so.

Cynthia Haynes, co-owner and chief financial officer of Nor'West Newspapers, writes this column weekly. Her pets include cats, toads and a praying mantis. Contact her at c.haynes@nwkansas.com

Help tell Kansas' agricultural story

During the past three years, we've witnessed nearly every single sector of the economy sustain considerable damage. Banking, finance, housing and manufacturing have been some of the hardest-hit industries. Millions of Americans have been out of work.

But during this time, agriculture has remained one of the brightest spots in the economy, providing tremendous value to both Kansas and the entire nation. Whether it is crop or livestock production or processing these into food, fiber and fuel, there is much to celebrate in Kansas agriculture, especially our ability to capture growth in export markets like South Korea, Japan and Mexico.

However, prosperity in agriculture, and all of rural America, is cyclical. Commodity and input markets, always highly volatile, have become increasingly so — often in response to world economic conditions, money policy at the Federal Reserve, Washington's fiscal policy or the age-old unknown of weather. The recent onslaught of regulation and red tape has not been kind, either.

One additional area that affects agriculture's prosperity is the Farm Bill. Last crafted by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in 2008, the bill establishes the priorities for programs ranging from food stamps, nutrition and school lunches to actual farm programs dealing with crop insurance, commodities, conservation and credit — among other things.



U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp

• Capitol Notes

While it is a large undertaking to write a farm bill, it accounts for less than 2 percent of all federal spending. Within the Farm Bill, less than 20 percent of every dollar actually goes to agricultural programs. The remaining 80 percent is directed toward nutrition welfare programs.

As a fifth-generation farmer, I have personal experiences and knowledge that would inform my decision-making in Farm Bill deliberations, but I would like to ask Kansans to provide their input as well. After all, it is Kansans' hard-earned dollars that support the Farm Bill and their enterprises that are affected by it.

I am honored to have the opportunity to be the host for a field hearing of the House Committee on Agriculture on the Farm Bill. Please join me for this hearing at 9 a.m. on Friday, April 20, at the Magouirk Conference Center in Dodge City.

Chairman Frank Lucas will preside as the committee hears the testimony of witnesses on two panels. All Kansans are invited to submit

their comments for the official record at Agriculture.House.Gov.

After the hearing, Kansans are invited to stay for an Agriculture Town Hall that I will hold at the same location. There will be an "open mic" session so anyone who wants to provide their thoughts, experiences and priorities will have a chance.

Kansans have a long, proud tradition of agricultural success, and it is my hope that as many Kansans as possible will share their stories as we engage in writing the next Farm Bill.

Congressman Tim Huelskamp of Fowler represents the First District of Kansas. He serves on the Veterans' Affairs, Budget, and Agriculture Committees.

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

