

from our viewpoint...

Making sense of Martin shooting

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 14-year-old middle-school 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*.

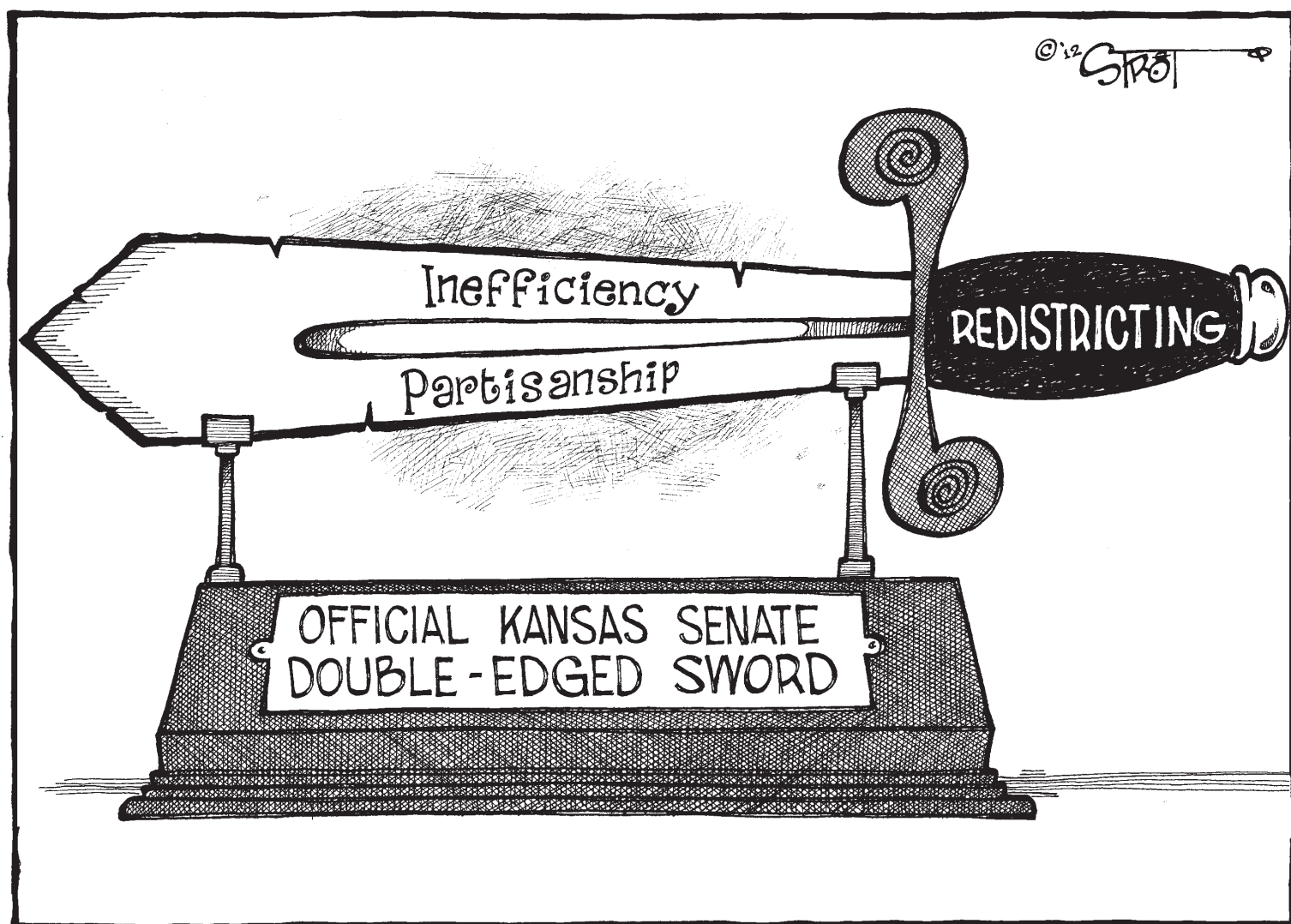
"We've got to get the gun out of the hands of people who are supposed to be on neighborhood watch," said Mr. Cosby. "Without a gun, I don't see Mr. Zimmerman approaching Trayvon by himself."

The situation is further muddled 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*



"The Hunger Games" is worth seeing

I don't often use up space on this page talking about movies, but this Wednesday I went to see "The Hunger Games" and I don't mind telling you it was an incredible film.

Despite never having read the books, it was a film I was very excited to see given how many glowing reviews it's gotten.

As a brief synopsis, our hero Katniss Everdeen (Jennifer Lawrence), lives in a poverty-stricken part of a future country, where as punishment for a rebellion, her district and 11 others have to send one boy and one girl each year to a "game" where they are put in the wilderness and fight to the death. Our hero gets chosen, and finds various enemies and allies along her path to and during the game.

In many ways it was hard to watch. It is at its core a movie about a society that forces children to fight to the death. To the ancient Romans that wouldn't have seemed strange, but it was appalling to me and to its credit the film never glamorizes it the way that some of the characters in the story do. To her credit, our hero understands how horrible it is, how soulless the people around her who perpetuate this "game" have become, with a few exceptions.

I'd seen Jennifer Lawrence in "X-Men: First Class" last year, and even though I liked the movie overall, I wasn't impressed with her performance. Of course, it would have been tough for any actor to get some of that dialogue out in a way that wasn't horribly cheesy.

But in "The Hunger Games" she's incredible. She carries the movie from start to finish, showing pretty much any emotion you could think of in a genuine and realistic manner. You, the audience, end up feeling it along with her, and that's pretty much the goal of any actor.



kevin bottrell

- simple tricks and nonsense

I can now see why she was nominated for an Oscar for one of her earlier films, "Winter's Bone." I'm very tempted to go rent that one. Like many critics have been saying, I think she's going places.

The other actors are great as well. The male lead Josh Hutcherson was excellent. I didn't entirely find his character likable, but I don't think I was supposed to and he pulled it off very well. He makes up one part of a love triangle that is thankfully not overblown. The other part, Liam Hemsworth, was good but wasn't given much screen time. I've read that his character is a much bigger deal in the other two books.

Woody Harrelson was a really fun addition to the cast. He's playing completely against type here as a drunken cynic, but one you eventually come to like. Donald Sutherland, even though it's a small part, is always good, as are Elizabeth Banks, Lenny Kravitz, Wes Bentley and Stanley Tucci.

Beyond the casting, the set design is great, showing a huge contrast between Katniss' poor, starving homeland and the decadent, 1980s-on-steroids capitol. The special effects are very well done and actually used only minimally, with most of the film focused squarely on Lawrence and her performance.

Birds, flowers herald springtime

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 are 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



cynthia haynes

- open season

watch the grackles try to figure out how to fold, spindle and mutilate themselves into a small enough package to get to that delicious 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.

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