

Ted Here.....by Ted Almen

Are you a racist?

Of course none of us like to think that, holding ourselves above the fold as far as our own character, pointing fingers at other, lesser beings in our estimation, and quickly finding fault where we have none.

And also of course, that's baloney.

Racism is alive and thriving right here in our midst. We look at other skin tones and the cultures that often times go along with them... and we criticize or ridicule.

Why can't everyone just assimilate into one bland way of life, like we have? Why can't everyone speak the universal language that we do, and worship the same God as us and wear the same clothes? Don't they know that is the American way?

And why can't everyone just see all the good in this country instead of focusing on the bad? After all, troubles like that don't affect us, and besides if "those people" would just behave themselves and act like real Americans like us they wouldn't have all those problems in the first place.

Like profiling. And lower wages. And discriminatory housing. And stereotyping. And smirks and snarks from the people who think they discovered this land. Go ahead and tell that last one to the Native Americans.

Racism raises its ugly head whenever people start to consider themselves superior to their fellow man based on inherent differences in the way they look or love or where they come from. It's present in crude jokes and manufactured rumors about people we don't even know, and spend little if any effort to change that.

The old saying about walking a mile in someone else's shoes before judging them is too often lost on us as we jump to conclusions that are easier to conjure than really trying to understand.

Dr. Kathleen Annette, who is the president and CEO of the Blandin Foundation, wrote to us last week about standing up against this scourge that is infecting our country.

"The time is now," wrote Dr. Annette. "To recognize racism and discrimination, to name and stop it when we see it. To stand with those working to make our communities more welcoming. To make sure that opportunity truly is available to all, that no one is living unseen in the shadows. To recognize that our destinies are intertwined with those of neighbors. To not let another hateful remark or act pass without addressing it. To be courageous and curious."

Those are strong words seeking strong action... uncomfortable action. Like calling out friends when they are obviously crossing the line of racial bias or discrimination. Believe me, I

know from first hand experience that it is much easier to just let it pass and excuse the offender as "not really meaning anything by it" or being too dim to know the difference.

A challenge for every one of us would be to try accept that everyone is different. That is their right, and that makes the world an interesting place. We don't all have to be the same clone. Let's open our eyes to those differences and celebrate the diversity and even excitement that can come from learning how our fellow man ticks.

"Red and yellow, black and white. They're all precious in His sight." So goes that little song that most of us learned as children. Here's a thought: if they're good enough for Him, I certainly would argue that they should be good enough for us as well.

Will we ever be able to eradicate racism from the earth. No, I'd say not. It's too much a part of human nature. But we can work to eliminate it in the one person who really counts. That person is you.

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Something cannot go unsaid for another week in this space, and I'm as guilty as anyone in not pointing it out sooner. It's about Kerkhoven's trailer houses... or rather, about the residents of them.

Most of the people living in Kerkhoven's or any town's trailer houses are fine, decent people. By the same token most -- but not all -- of the people living in standard houses or apartments or tents for that matter are fine, decent people. Using the forum of a city council meeting to call anyone trash or hope that their home burns down is outrageous language, and should not happen. Ever.

Just as bad are the chuckles or nods of agreement around the table, and the lack of quelling such talk. It's shameful.

Like them or not, mobile homes provide the only affordable living option for some people. Would those folks love to move into a nice new house? Probably. Be thankful of your fortunate circumstances if you have the means to do so.

Agreed, people no matter what kind of house they live in should abide by the same laws and ordinances as everyone else, and should keep their property tidy, if not for their sake then for their neighbor's.

But there are other ways to ways to get that message across and enforce policies than by degrading residents. Remember, these people are constituents no less than any other citizen. Respect by public officials should not fall along social or economic lines, nor on the type of house in which one lives.



OTHER VOICES

Gun safety laws: Minnesota can and should do better

by Erin Zamoff
Writing for MinnPost

(Editor's Note: The following opinion piece was first published in MinnPost on July 29, one day after a shooter indiscriminately killed four people at the Gilroy Garlic Festival in Gilroy, California. This past Sunday two mass shootings took place hours apart, in Dayton, Ohio and El Paso, Texas. As of Tuesday morning the death toll from those acts of gun violence totalled 31, with other victims still in critical condition.)

In February 2014, I received a call from my sister, sobbing uncontrollably, who told me that a close family friend, the mother of three sisters we had grown up with, had been murdered. A convicted felon -- who should never have had access to a firearm -- shot and killed her when she opened her front door. Five years later, it's still hard to come to terms with what hap-

pened. My friends will never get their mother back.

Gun violence is personal for so many of us in Minnesota. 465 Minnesotans died by firearm in 2017 -- including one a day, on average, from firearm suicide alone.

With so many Minnesota families touched by gun violence, it's not surprising that the public overwhelmingly supports reasonable gun safety laws, and it was truly shameful that the Legislature failed

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OTHER VOICES

Fossil fuel infrastructure affects Minnesota's economy and environment

by Jacob Herbers
Writing for MinnPost

From an overall energy markets and climate policy perspective, building new fossil fuel infrastructure would not be a good long-term deal for Minnesota's environment and taxpayers.

Once the up-front costs of building new fossil fuel infra-

structure have been sunk, fossil fuels would continue to be processed for several decades into the future, long past the time when they would ordinarily become economically unviable. This effect is called infrastructure lock-in. It would lead to increased costs for everyone involved, increased pollution into Minnesota's air and water, and increased

greenhouse gas emissions that intensify the climate crisis.

In 2017 the Minnesota Legislature passed a law allowing Minnesota's largest utility, Xcel Energy, to build a natural gas power plant in Sherburne County without going through the usual regulatory process. This was reflected in their most recent integrated resource plan

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Have fun and good luck to all local 4Hers and exhibitors at this year's Swift and Kandiyohi County Fairs!

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