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OUR VIEW: RACISM

Discrimination is community's problem

It's easy to look away or ignore the plight of people who are not like us. Too often, white people see racism and discrimination as the problem of people of color or indigenous people.

But another incident of local racism is staring us down. Recent graffiti at Mankato West High School shows that despite honest efforts of some members of the community, we have a problem. Racism is a cancerous growth that if left unchallenged will become malignant and deadly to a healthy community whose lifeblood is respect for everyone's rights.

The pavement in front the entrance to West High School was spray painted April 16 with the meme "Immigration is white genocide." Authorities immediately covered the racist statement and are investigating its origins.

The idea of white genocide has been described as a conspiracy theory, myth and faux history by scholars and other experts. It is based on the notion that somehow birth rates of whites and attempts by others to kill whites will result in elimination of the race. There are no facts to support these premises. White genocide arguments rely on pseudoscience and pseudohistory.

The conspiracy theory is based on hatred and is the currency used to fuel white nationalist, white supremacist and so-called "identitarian" groups.

One could always dismiss such graffiti as a product of the hateful and ignorant. There is no intention here to embolden or glorify this action for copycats.

We condemn it in the strongest terms and call on everyone in the community, no matter your race or creed, to condemn it.

These kind of incidents have increased in frequency with the election of President Donald Trump. Hate crimes nationwide were up 25 percent shortly after his Electoral College victory. There have been more incidents of racism locally as well.

In the last year, St. Peter gay and black residents have been targeted a number of times with threatening hate mail. Last summer 17 hateful flyers that read "America is a white nation" were put up in the North Mankato neighborhood near King Arthur Park.

The first Muslim woman to run for local office found herself being told "Go back to where you came from" when she door-knocked in the community. Even on The Free Press Facebook page, racist comments are directed at subjects of even positive stories.

We can no longer write off these incidents as rare and therefore nothing to worry about.

These incidents are growing. And so too, are the thoughts that give birth to them. Thoughts that may infect the minds of your friends and neighbors. That is why the response must be strong and resolute.

Every member of our communities in south Central Minnesota has a responsibility to condemn these hateful thoughts and actions as an affront to American civil liberties and freedom.

OTHER VIEW

Trump's insecurities hurt national security

The San Diego Union-Tribune

This is unnerving: The New York Times and CNN report President Donald Trump's top staff wouldn't relay officials' fears about Russia using social media disinformation campaigns to interfere in the 2020 election because Trump sees such warnings as a comment on the legitimacy of his 2016 election.

The president's sensitivity — and insecurity — about Russia's history of cyber-meddling in the 2016 campaign have long been obvious. Even worse, a case

can be made that it has led to the U.S. government putting less emphasis on cybersecurity at a time when vigilance is more important than ever. Before her sudden departure, former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen was discouraged from setting up a meeting of Cabinet secretaries to work jointly on a response to expected Russian machinations. Last year, John Bolton — Trump's national security adviser — decided there was no longer any need to have a White House cybersecurity coordinator.

FOUNDED IN 1887

The Free Press

1st Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

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Farmers need support in tough economy

By Rep. Jim Hagedorn

If you could talk to the president about anything, what would it be? I recently had the president's ear while he was visiting Minnesota and used the opportunity to advocate for southern Minnesota's farmers.

Our economy is at a historic high, but far too many of our farmers still face significant economic headwinds. They face low commodity prices, high input costs, excessive regulations and too many barriers to free trade.

For me, farming isn't politics. It's personal. My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all southern Minnesota farmers. Growing up on our family's grain and livestock farm near Truman, walking the bean fields and working the land instilled in me a deep appreciation for agriculture and rural life. All this is what helps motivate me to sustain farming and our way of life.

Shortly before I arrived in Congress a new five-year farm bill was enacted into law. The bill's provisions help farmers maintain operations when times are tough. I support the farm bill and as a member of the House Committee on Agriculture I'll keep working closely with my colleagues to make sure it is properly implemented.

To be successful, farmers need fewer trade barriers and new global markets. I've petitioned U.S. Agricul-

ture Secretary Sonny Perdue, Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Ted McKinney and President Trump himself to break down trade barriers. Based upon my conversation with President Trump, I can assure you he understands the critical importance of expanding trade opportunities making a great deal with China, Japan and other nations.

I also strongly support the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement negotiated by the administration. The deal will boost opportunities for Minnesota's exporters, especially agri-businesses. International trade supports 750,000 Minnesota jobs and in 2017, our state exported \$8.2 billion in goods and services to Canada and Mexico. Trade solutions, with Mexico, Canada, Japan, China and others, will give southern Minnesota great economic stability for the future.

I'm also advocating for farmers in other ways. When Secretary Perdue came before the Agriculture Committee this spring I urged him to remove the red tape affecting ethanol production. Year-round E15 would positively affect numerous farmers and hundreds of southern Minnesotans who perform high-wage jobs at ethanol plants.

In February, I joined 43 of my colleagues in writing House Leadership about renewable fuels. We strongly advocated for a multi-year extension of biodiesel and renewable diesel tax

incentives to give certainty to this industry and support commodity prices.

We must also keep pushing for regulatory reform. Our farmers shouldn't be saddled with burdensome regulations written by some bureaucrat in Washington who has never set foot on a farm. I support the REINS Act, which would require congressional approval for major rules written by the executive branch.

Finally, health care premiums are crippling farmers. I've talked to families paying more than \$15,000 a year in premiums, with deductibles so outrageously the underlying insurance is virtually worthless. That is simply unacceptable.

I support patient-centered care that prioritizes the relationship between doctor and patient. Prior to Obamacare, over 90 percent of Minnesotans enjoyed insurance coverage. We had a high-risk pool, paid for by insurance companies, to cover pre-existing conditions. I am fighting for health care solutions to require price transparency, encourage nationwide competition, reduce the cost of prescription drugs and cover patients with pre-existing and expensive medical needs.

I will always work hard and champion solutions to sustain agriculture and our southern Minnesota way of life.

Jim Hagedorn is a Republican who represents the 1st Congressional District.

Congress must ratify USMCA promptly

My great-great grandfather started farming in New Ulm 107 years ago. He bought some land near Little Cottonwood River back in 1912 and started a farm that has sustained my family for generations.

Today, I operate a 140-cow dairy farm on the same ground with my wife Kerry and our sons. We're proud of our family's heritage in farming. We love our community and we are honored to have been part of its growth.

My great-great grandfather Conrad, I'm sure, would be surprised and disappointed if he were alive today to see that many family dairy farms like ours are going out of business in Minnesota.

USDA recently released a report that shows, on average, four family farms closed each week last year in Minnesota. The simple fact is slow trade negotiations and the ongoing trade war with Mexico, which started last spring when the U.S. imposed tariffs on Mexican steel and aluminum, is killing dairy farms.

Our farm is losing \$4,000 a month,

roughly. It's not getting better. And the pain is being felt throughout the state on dairy farms and crop farms alike.

The University of Minnesota published a report last month that showed farm incomes in the state were down 8 percent last year and were at their lowest levels since the early 1980s.

More trade is needed to turn the tide, and Congress can do something immediately to help: Bring the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) up for a vote and ratify it.

Mexico and Canada are home to nearly half of Minnesota's agricultural trade, and without USMCA, we are in danger of losing valuable market share to our competitors.

The agreement modernizes the old NAFTA and brings it in line with the trade arrangements our competitors in Europe and elsewhere enjoy.

President Trump signed USMCA last year along with the leaders from Mexico and Canada. Now is the time for Congress to act and support rural America and the family farmers that drive the economy in

our communities.

Minnesota exports \$174 million worth of dairy goods every year — trade that supports more than 2,500 jobs. Those are numbers we would like to see increase instead of decrease like they did last year.

Lately, I've been doing a lot of talking about this issue. I was interviewed by Minnesota Public Radio for a piece on the trade war and its disastrous impact on family farms. I also hosted a visit from the advocacy group Farmers for Free Trade, which is traveling the nation to generate support for USMCA.

And, I'm proud that my cooperative, Associated Milk Producers Inc., is taking a leadership role and asking the state's congressional delegation to champion USMCA.

I do all this because I'm optimistic about the future. My great-great grandfather was optimistic. You have to be an optimist to be a farmer. I'd like to see his legacy continue.

Steve Hoffman is a fourth-generation dairy farmer in New Ulm, where he works on the family farm with his wife, Kerry, and his two sons.



STEVE HOFFMAN
My View

YOUR VIEWS

Many problems exist in our legal system

Hats off to Jay Ambrose for his excellent column "Judges should give America a chance," published April 17 in The Free Press.

This is but the tip of a greater iceberg that not many Americans are aware of. Upon digging deeper one can find multiple documented facts on some of the legal travesties that are happening in our court system today. A number of them can be found and are documented in the book "Licensed to Lie" by Sidney Powell.

It does a great job of exposing corruption in the U.S. court system today. The book is well laid out

and written by a licensed, practicing lawyer who definitely knows what she's talking about and what facts are important and critical for the fair treatment of both citizens and businesses in our country.

The author documents facts as well as numerous errors that have occurred in a number of major cases before the courts at various times such as the indictments of Enron, Arthur Andersen LLP, Merrill Lynch and other large and well respected corporations.

A number of officers and employees of these companies have wrongfully served court-imposed prison sen-

tences as a result of some of the messes that have been created. A number of those indictments were documented in the book as having been obtained by some rather dubious means on the part of the prosecution.

I found this to be a very interesting, worthwhile and informational as well as an alarming narrative on many problems in today's American legal system.

Chuck Westermayer
Mankato

Smith being judged by modern standards

I'm old enough to remem-

ber when Kate Smith first sang "God Bless America."

Grown men were moved to tears. President Franklin Roosevelt called her a national treasure.

Now she's become a pariah in some circles because she also sang some songs about black people without the current PC filter. So she joins Stephen Foster and Mark Twain on PC's "other" list because they didn't anticipate the cultural changes and perceptions.

Why do we try to judge people from another era by modern standards? It makes no sense.

James A. Booker
Mankato