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OUR VIEW SYMBOLS OF RACISM

MSU should retire 'Baton of Honor'

Police batons have been used throughout U.S. history to beat striking workers, struggling immigrants and civil rights protesters.

But it's a symbol of honor and recognition for students in Minnesota State University's law enforcement program, the biggest law enforcement program in the state. MSU's "Baton of Honor" award is given to high-achieving law enforcement students each year.

Why it matters:

MSU's baton award for law enforcement students carries a negative racial narrative that casts a shadow on the program.

We believe the Baton of Honor should be vanquished from a program that must reshape its culture to one where use of a baton should never be the goal.

The police baton is a symbol of racism and injustice, and it shouldn't be glorified. While law enforcement literature calls it a defensive weapon to presumably fend off striking workers or civil

rights protesters, the literature notes its many offensive capabilities including lethal blows to the head.

The Free Press asked MSU leaders for the history of the baton and its purpose as a student award. Professor Pat Nelson, chair of the Department of Government, told us through a spokesman that she wasn't aware of the history, but faculty was going to "discuss that award and whether it still has a place in the program."

We would argue the award and its symbolism has no place in a modern-day law enforcement program. We would urge MSU, its alumni and its community stakeholders to come together and reject it.

The standard police baton, according to industry literature, has a higher "risk of lethality" than stun guns or pepper spray, meaning it can be more deadly than both. It was most popular in the 1800s England and 1900s America as the "billy club." But the baton has also fallen out of regular use since new technology such as stun guns have come online.

The baton is repugnant as a symbol of force and racism and not acceptable as a useful tool in the new world of public safety and community security.

MSU's Baton of Honor also does a disservice to the many good students in the program who have been recognized in the past. Recognition through a "special baton" should not be something coveted by a modern-day law enforcement student.

And while an academic program should be more concerned with best practices than best publicity, one cannot ignore the narrative that comes with a former "baton" winner being charged with manslaughter after a routine police stop and the killing of a person of color.

That was the case with MSU graduate Jeronimo Yanez in the Philando Castile killing in 2016, where Yanez was acquitted of manslaughter after he shot Castile multiple times for what was a routine traffic stop gone bad. Yanez was fired shortly after he was acquitted.

The case for removing the Baton of Honor as an academic plaudit is overwhelming. MSU should do away with it.

OTHER VIEW

Listen to the doctor

Press-Democrat (Santa Rosa, Calif.)

President Donald Trump finally appeared in public wearing a mask last weekend, but behind the scenes White House aides were engaged in a scurrilous effort to discredit one of the nation's leading experts on infectious diseases.

Dr. Anthony Fauci's sin? Leveling with the American people about the coronavirus.

Over the past four months, as the U.S. case climbed steadily past 3.4 million and the death toll hit 136,000, the president stubbornly insisted that the virus is a hoax, a harmless nuisance akin to the common cold or that, "like a miracle," it would disappear on its own.

Fauci, as much as anyone else, has filled the leadership gap.

Speaking plainly and directly in his Brooklyn accent, the longtime chief of the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Disease has provided facts about COVID-19 and explained how people can protect themselves and their loved ones.

Unable to stifle him, the president and his aides are working to undermine him.

Trump's aversion to science is nothing new, so the disinformation campaign shouldn't surprise anyone. Still there's an almost absurd irony to the White House attacks, which effectively accuse Fauci of underestimating the coronavirus threat, citing out-of-context quotes as "evidence."



Sweeping peaceful citizens off the streets

Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech ... or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

WASHINGTON — Something terrible, something dangerous — and, yes, something unconstitutional — is happening in Portland, Oregon. It must be stopped.

"Federal law enforcement officers have been using unmarked vehicles to drive around downtown Portland and detain protesters since at least July 14," reports Oregon Public Broadcasting. "Personal accounts and multiple videos posted online show the officers driving up to people, detaining individuals with no explanation of why they are being arrested, and driving off."

The report continues: "The tactic appears to be another escalation in federal force deployed on Portland city streets, as federal officials and President Donald Trump have said they plan to 'quell' nightly protests outside the federal courthouse and Multnomah County Justice Center that have lasted for more than six weeks."

Of course, authorities — and we'll get to the matter of what authorities in a bit — have the power to prevent violence. But that doesn't seem to be what's happening in Portland, where nightly protests have been taking place since early June. Law enforcement agents aren't targeting protesters who engaged in violence; they appear to be sweeping up random people who have exercised their rights under the First Amendment.

Like Mark Pettibone, 29, who was heading home in the early hours of Wednesday morning when, according to The Washington Post's Katie Shepherd, "several men in green military fatigues and generic 'police' patches sprang out of an unmarked gray minivan." Pettibone was detained, searched, driven to the federal

courthouse, placed in a holding cell and read his Miranda rights against self-incrimination. He declined to waive them. And then, about 90 minutes later, he was released.



RUTH MARCUS
Washington Post

"I just happened to be wearing black on a sidewalk in downtown Portland at the time," Pettibone told Oregon Public Broadcasting. "And that apparently is grounds for detaining me."

This is not America. As much as I revile what President Donald Trump is doing to the country, I have not been among the alarmists who warn of incipient authoritarianism, of festering fascism. I believe — I have believed, anyway — in the rule of law; the steadfastness of the courts, even larded with Trump-appointed judges; the strong tradition of the U.S. military refraining from being used to serve partisan interests. But to have watched live as federal agents attacked peaceful protesters near Lafayette Square, and now to read the reports from Portland, is to worry: Perhaps that was over-optimistic.

This is not America because of the First Amendment, quoted above. It is not America because we are a federal system, something you would think Republicans, who supposedly believe in states' rights, understand and respect. So we are a country in which governors can summon federal help, are authorized to call out the National Guard — not a country in which unbadged federal police are loosed upon innocent citizens of a state *over the objections of its governor*. In this case, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown, joined by Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler, who have beseeched the feds to leave.

Yes, President Dwight D. Eisenhower deployed federal troops to Arkansas. That was to protect black students attempting to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, and to enforce a federal court order. It was to protect the students' constitutional rights, not undermine them.

"This political theater from President Trump has nothing to do with public safety," Brown, a Democrat, said in a statement. "Deploying federal officers to patrol the streets of Portland" is "a blatant abuse of power by the federal government," she said, adding that acting Homeland Security secretary Chad Wolf, who visited the city on Thursday, "is on a mission to provoke confrontation for political purposes. He is putting both Oregonians and local law enforcement officers in harm's way."

Wolf, for his part, said Portland "has been under siege for 47 straight days by a violent mob while local political leaders refuse to restore order to protect their city. Each night, lawless anarchists destroy and desecrate property, including the federal courthouse, and attack the brave law enforcement officers protecting it."

But Wolf's list of terrible depredations allegedly committed by the Portland protesters was less than convincing — and, in any event, in no way justified the kind of random, unprovoked arrests that have been described. The tally from July 15:

- Violent anarchists doxed members of federal law enforcement.
- Violent anarchists attempted to damage the Hatfield Courthouse by throwing objects at it and spray painting it. Numerous fireworks were also lit.
- Violent anarchists trespassed on federal property and destroyed a card reader at the Justice Center.

There is a difference between solving a legitimate problem (the destruction of public property) and picking a political fight. Trump, understandably terrified of losing reelection, appears intent on doing the latter. "A federal courthouse is a symbol of justice — to attack it is to attack America," Wolf thundered in his statement.

But there is a more important symbol of justice than a brick-and-mortar building.

It is called the Constitution. To ignore it is to attack America.

Be Karen. Don't be 'a' Karen

Dear Karen:
I wanted you to know that I got your email. Yours, your husband's, your brother's and your best friend's. All were vexed at my recent evocation of the meme that uses your name as shorthand for a certain type of white woman: rude, entitled and presuming to police African American lives.

"I am OFFENDED," wrote Jim, whose Karen is the wife of his priest. "It is reprehensible," wrote Robert, whose Karen is his daughter.

And an actual Karen asked, "How would you read it if 'Leonard' was used to mean pedophile?"

Karen, I'm pretty sure I wouldn't like it much. But I'm also pretty sure I wouldn't give it a lot of thought. After all, there are more important things to be upset about. Like, say, pedophiles.

I'd hardly be the first person — and neither are you — whose name was a synonym for something objectionable. Former Vice President Richard Bruce Cheney and the great comic actor Richard Wayne Van Dyke both go by a nickname that connotes the male sexual organ or a very unpleasant man. Singer John Legend and comedian John Oliver share a name the dictionary defines as a toilet or a man who patronizes a prostitute. And I'd imagine black boxer Thomas

"Hitman" Hearn and black radio host Tom Joyner do not particularly enjoy being called out in public by their nieces and nephews.



LEONARD PITTS
Miami Herald

Yet somehow, they all manage to live with it.

Predictably, Karen, one of your defenders suggested white people retaliate by adopting a "Black" name — he suggested Lakeisha — as a meme for things they find disagreeable in Black women. They're welcome to try — it's a free country — but I can guarantee it won't work out well for them. That's because of something I call the Goliath Principle after a quote from Wilt Chamberlain: "Everybody roots for David," said Chamberlain, who stood 7 feet, 1 inch tall and weighed 250 pounds. "Nobody roots for Goliath."

Karen, that's not just sports, it's life. The Goliath Principle is why we empathize with secretaries over supervisors and maids over millionaires, why a tiny woman decking a brawny man makes you laugh, but a brawny man decking a tiny woman is infuriating. Human nature dictates that we side with little over big, weak over strong, with those power is wielded upon over those who wield power. So the white person who attempted to meme "Lakeisha" would only reveal himself or herself as a thin-skinned bully who had missed

the point entirely.

The point being power, and the lack thereof. A "Karen" does something a Lakeisha simply cannot. She weaponizes her race and gender to bully people of color in ways that are humiliating and sometimes even life-threatening. Think of Amy Cooper, shrieking desperately to a police dispatcher as if the black bird-watcher Christian Cooper was killing her after he asked her to put her dog on a leash in compliance with Central Park rules.

I'm sorry, Karen, but I haven't the luxury of prioritizing your pain above — or alongside or even slightly back of — the pain of thousands of Christian Coopers whose ability to live their lives unmolested is interdicted on a daily basis. Frankly, to have power and yet still want pity takes a bit of nerve.

For the record, I also have a Karen. She's my cousin. I recently asked if she was offended at having her name used as a meme for women like Amy Cooper. She laughed. "Absolutely not," she said. "I have such a thick skin that it just doesn't bother me. It's not me (they're referring to)." Which strikes me as the right attitude.

There's nothing wrong with being Karen.

Just don't be "a" Karen.

Email Leonard Pitts Jr., at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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The Free Press

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