

Editorials are the institutional voice of The Free Press and independent of the newsroom reporting staff

OUR VIEW: RACE

# Peace must precede politics or revenge

In our current struggle for racial justice, peace must ultimately supersede revenge for the Black community, and it must overcome politics for the white community.

People of color, indigenous people and white people must come together to take on forces that believe justice involves burning down buildings of innocent shopkeepers and otherwise destroying what others have spent their lives and their resources building.

**Why it matters:**

More rioting and looting came to Minneapolis last week based on a false rumor that another Black man had been killed by police.

Minneapolis and St. Paul were on fire again last week. Rioting and looting enveloped Nicollet Mall, giving the statue Mary Tyler Moore throwing up her hat a backdrop of a panicked city and fearful citizens. And it was senseless. It was provoked by a lie that spread like wildfire on social media that police had shot another Black man. It took hours before the truth was understood: One Black man killed another and before police could apprehend him, he shot himself.

But the lie was already half way around the world.

Those destroying property are not protesting injustice. They are lawless looters who see opportunity in the genuine anger of race inequality that bubbles beneath the surface of every American city.

It's a depressing world of affairs when police have to release video of a suicide to communicate via social media that something didn't happen. Bullhorns were deployed in an attempt to tell the truth. But the rioting and the looting continued.

Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey were forced to call in the National Guard to safeguard the property of ethnic restaurant owners and neighborhood barbers.

While the civil disobedience of Martin Luther King Jr. is often invoked in shadow of burning cities, it is not often engaged. Anger can only solve so many problems. Then it becomes fuel to the fire.

And those would profit from that fire, white politicians seeking endorsement of white police union leaders touting a law and order platform, are a barrier to peace and justice.

It's no one's right to tell people who have endured injustice for centuries when to stop being angry, but even the angry have a moral duty to ensure that the injustice inflicted on them does not carry like a fueled fire to others.

OTHER VIEW

# Pandemic will force useful innovations

The Columbian (Vancouver, Wash.)

Eventually, some good will come out of the coronavirus pandemic. Crises inevitably spur innovation that eventually works its way into our daily lives, and there are signals that COVID-19 will have that exact impact.

Presently, those innovations are secondary to immediate concerns about slowing the virus, finding a vaccine, caring for those who have fallen ill, assisting displaced workers and rebuilding the economy. But in looking to the future, it is easy to see that the pandemic will transform American society in ways we cannot yet fathom. Innovation, after all, always has been a cornerstone of capitalism and the American economy.

As Vox.com wrote in July: "It might seem that COVID-19 abruptly disrupted work and leisure, but in many ways, the pandemic simply has led to quicker adoption of technology that was already making inroads in both the business and consumer worlds."

One obvious example is the growth of remote meetings. From the start of the outbreak, companies have embraced platforms that allow employees to work remotely and remain engaged with co-workers and customers. Years from now, it is conceivable that working at home will be the norm, reducing the need for office space and transforming American cities. There is no need for a 15-story office building if your employees can be just as productive working from home.

Remote connectivity also quickly expanded to education and health care, and it likely will generate long-term changes in those fields.

All of that highlights the need for municipalities to develop robust, reliable telecommunications systems.

Whether in technology or education or health care, there is no telling what kind of innovation will receive a push from the pandemic.

Necessity, as they say, is the mother of invention, and the necessity for innovation has rarely been so clear.



# Homeless project part of public service

Public service remains a hallmark of Free Press journalism, and we see it as an even more important mission now as communities grapple with social and economic upheaval in the era of COVID-19.

589 people experiencing homelessness in 20 area counties in 2018.



JOE SPEAR  
Managing Editor

Before COVID hit here in March, The Free Press had been engaged in a public service journalism project for several months. About a year ago, reporters and editors met with leaders of agencies, volunteer organizations and faith groups that served the homeless to find out what we could do as public service for our community to address the homeless problem.

We've made good progress shining light on the problem, but our journalism also has supported real community results.

We led off our "Address Unknown" series just before Thanksgiving in 2019 with an in-depth story on the scope of the homelessness in the Mankato region. We tried to quantify the number of homeless people in the region and found that wasn't an easy task. Homeless people don't sign up to be counted.

But we did find numbers from homeless shelters such as the Welcome Inn and Connections Shelter. The Mankato Area Public Schools also track the number of students who are homeless as does the Wilder Foundation.

The first story, written by reporter Brian Arola, found that 120 students in Mankato schools were considered homeless, about 20 percent higher than in the recent past. The Reach homeless resource center for youth had 315 visits in October alone, far above the typical 250.

We found the waiting list to get into the Welcome Inn and Theresa House homeless shelters could be three to nine months, with average stays of 60 to 65 days. The two shelters average about 32 people a night. Connections housed about 20 people a night, while Salvation Army had 10 and a St. Peter shelter housed 15 per night.

The Wilder Foundation reported

We also profiled a number of homeless people and families to understand the circumstances that made them homeless. They didn't fit the stereotype of the street-corner panhandler. Some had escaped abuse and others lost housing to circumstances beyond their control like a fire. There were singles, married couples and families.

The Rev. Erica Koser of Centenary United Methodist Church, who is co-director of Connections Shelter, told us our coverage made a difference.

"The Free Press has been instrumental in helping get the word out about Connections. I think the feature pieces that were run brought a significant amount of awareness in the community about homelessness and also helped us providers to see where some of the gaps continue to be as well as where we are doing things well," she wrote in an email.

"Anytime Connections has a feature article, we see a bump in Facebook page interaction as well as a bump in donations. That awareness is crucial to us, especially right now."

A second story in December focused on how resources for the homeless programs are always stretched thin and gave insights into the efforts community members and organizations have made to support the homeless.

Partners for Affordable Housing, which operates the Welcome Inn and Theresa House, continues to be at capacity for all its shelters and housing, said Jen Theneman, executive director. The COVID pandemic prevented the group from holding two fundraisers this year, and federal funding for transitional housing remains flat year after year.

She said The Free Press shed light on the problem that many people didn't think existed in Mankato. Our stories also shattered some stereotypes of homeless people.

The Free Press Editorial Board also

advocated in an editorial for the community to support organizations that serve the homeless.

Examining those affected by homeless, we published the story of young single mom and her baby who were assisted by housing programs and The Reach.

As the COVID crisis hit in March, our staff was redirected to the hundreds of pandemic-related stories that awaited us, and we had to put some homeless stories on the backburner.

But homeless advocates continued to work toward solutions and were happy to announce a new plan for a homeless shelter for this winter at the First Presbyterian Church. Connections will be adding 10 beds in its new space and opening Oct. 5. The Salvation Army also agreed to partner with Connections Shelter for a "day and night coverage" shelter plan for the upcoming winter.

These are tremendous accomplishments that represent significant progress in addressing the region's homeless problem.

But there is still much work to be done, as Koser notes:

"We need a year-round shelter. Summer provides a big challenge to our homeless population as shelters are closed, and right now many of the resources that they normally rely on (the library, the Sal, cafes) are not available for respite during the day. "Connections is working to be able to provide a year-round shelter, but to get there, we need to raise a considerable amount of money and will need continued community support. COVID has allowed us to work more closely with the city and county and I am hoping that partnership continues as we continue to move forward."

The Mankato area community has made this happen, and The Free Press has been a willing and able partner. We look forward to continuing our efforts in public service journalism working with a community that cares.

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YOUR VIEWS

# Rioting, vandalism unacceptable

Black Lives Matter signs are visible all over TV news reports these days. And as I drive around Mankato and North Mankato I see many Black Lives Matter yard signs. I unequivocally agree with the words on those signs.

Being curious, I decided to go to the Black Lives Matter Foundation, Inc. official website to learn more. When reading their "WHAT WE BELIEVE" section the declaration: "We disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement ...", gave me cause for concern.

Something I had not heard or read about in the mainstream media. I choose not to follow social media misinformation.

My understanding is a nuclear family consists of a father, a mother and their minor children all in one household dwelling. So if disrupting the nuclear family is a Black Lives Matter organization objective I strongly disagree; whether it relates to White nuclear families, Black nuclear families, Brown nuclear families, mixed race nuclear family's and/or same sex nuclear families. In any case rioters, looters, vandals and violence — by

antifa and others — infiltrating Black Lives Matter peaceful protests, or any peaceful protest, is unacceptable. At age 83 I consider myself sufficiently woke to recognize that is antithetical to social justice.

Bob Jentges  
North Mankato

## Adopt strategy for screening polling calls

I must write to thank Barbara Keating for her illuminating letter to the editor that put me on alert for polling calls.

Indeed, it is the season for a bombardment of calls as we approach the November election, so her letter was very timely. It was so timely, in fact, that I received a polling call the same night that the letter appeared in The Free Press.

Because I had been alerted to a "push poll," which is not so much soliciting my opinion but instead is manipulating me to favor a particular candidate based on how the questions are formulated and information is supplied.

When the pollster called, she po-

lately asked if I would participate in a poll. I asked two questions: how long will it take? and who is paying for this poll? It was to take about 10 minutes, but she didn't know who was sponsoring the call.

I then stated that if I sensed that a bias was being presented in the questions, I wanted her to know that I would just hang up. She then politely thanked me for my time and hung up. I imagine this pollster was being paid for each completed survey, so she didn't want to waste her time on me. Perhaps others would like to adopt this strategy for screening polling calls.

Linda Good  
Cleveland

## Voters should be wary of getting fooled again

The following adage came to me while watching portions of the Republican National Convention the last four nights:

Fool me once, shame on you  
Fool me twice, shame on me.

Phyllis Wisen  
Eagle Lake

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.

STEVE JAMESON, Publisher

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