

Our View

The odd Olympics

This week the Olympic Summer Games will begin in Tokyo, already a year late and one of the oddest ever to be held.

Thanks to COVID-19, the International Olympics Committee and the Japanese government have banned foreign spectators. The athletes marching in for the opening ceremony will have no one to wave to. No chants or cheers from home nation fans as they compete.

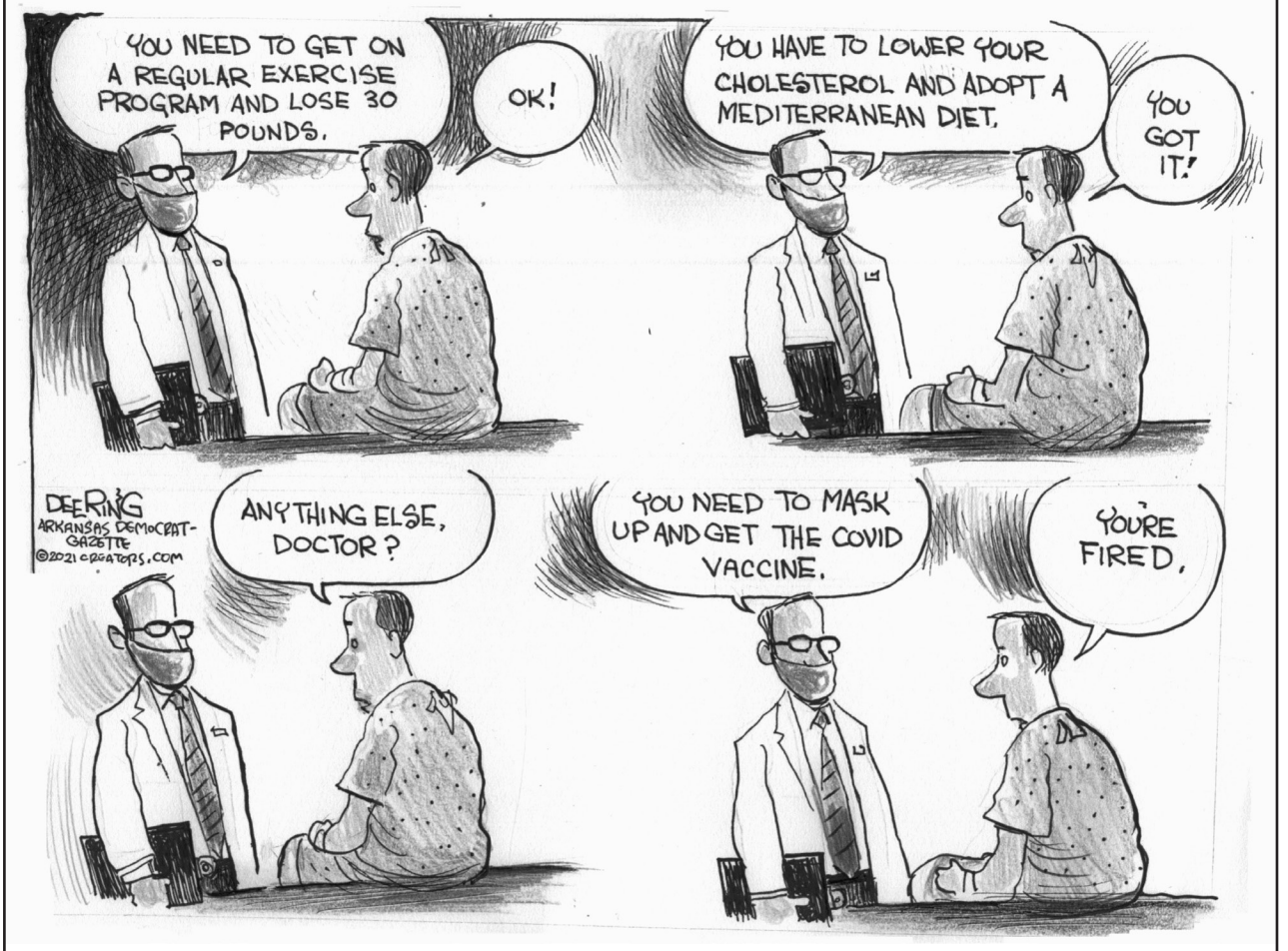
The streets of Tokyo will be empty, without the tourists that are usually expected to boost the local economy and provide a return for the massive investment in facilities that Japan has made.

A vast percentage of a reluctant Japanese population is preparing to battle through the next couple of weeks, hoping that the influx of thousands of athletes and officials that do arrive won't bring more COVID-19 cases to a country that is largely unprotected.

One thing that won't change is that television will bring it to the rest of the world, and will profit greatly, along with the IOC. Television will bring us the competition, the triumphs, the joys and disappointments that seem to matter so much more on the world stage.

One of the joys of the Olympic Games is the way it brings people from around the world together to celebrate athletic competition, to learn a little more about other countries and other people and, for a short while, to dream about a world where we can all get along.

A lot of that will be missing with this year's Olympic games. Athletes will be competing against COVID-19 as well as each other. We hope that COVID-19 won't be able to claim victory at the end.



Truth and COVID-19

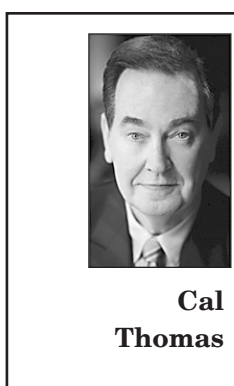
By Cal Thomas

In the 1950s there was a quiz show called "To Tell the Truth." It has been reborn several times but retained its original format. A celebrity panel would try to discover which one of three contestants was telling the truth, as all claimed to be the same person with identical backgrounds.

I thought of that show in relation to the conflicting stories and claims that have come from "experts" during the last 16 months of the pandemic. People, including two U.S. presidents, Dr. Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the president, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director general of the World Health Organization, and Dr. Rochelle Walensky, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have all made statements which, at the time, they claimed were accurate and based on science, but turned out to be inaccurate.

Dr. Ghebreyesus, initially dismissed allegations the virus originated in a Wuhan, China laboratory, as "extremely unlikely." Now, he says, he was "premature" to rule out a lab leak.

Dr. Fauci at first called mask wearing ineffective. In an email to Sylvia Burwell, the HHS Secretary in the Obama administration, Fauci wrote: "Masks are really for infected people to prevent them from spreading infection to people who are not infected rather than



Cal Thomas

protecting uninfected people from acquiring infection." Fauci said the "typical mask" is "not really effective in keeping out the virus, which is small enough to pass through material." Now he says the opposite.

Some people questioned these and other comments. For their skepticism they were banned from social media and called spreaders of disinformation, even kooks.

The UK, which has one of the world's highest vaccination rates in the world, is seeing a surge in COVID cases because of the Delta variant.

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett says the Pfizer vaccine is "weaker" against the Delta variant. This, after we were told — again by "experts" — the drug is effective against this strain. Which is it? No wonder the public is confused.

White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki says the administration is in "regular touch" with social media about what they are allowing to be posted on their platforms. President Biden has

called people who spread disinformation "murderers." Is that true?

The government and the heads of social media companies that contributed large amounts of money to the political campaigns of Biden and other Democrats now claim the ability to distinguish between fact and fiction. Given their track record it does not instill confidence for the vast majority who know little more than the so-called experts. How do we know their future statements can be trusted when previous ones have been problematic?

Granted, there have been people who have irresponsibly spread disinformation, like vaccines cause infertility. There have also been misleading media reports that have added to public fears.

Maybe "To Tell the Truth" could serve as a kind of truth serum. The contestants would be Dr. Fauci, Dr. Ghebreyesus, Dr. Walensky and President Biden. The panel might include Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY), who has been critical of Fauci, Fox News White House reporter Peter Doocy, who has been nearly alone in confronting statements by Biden administration officials, and an average citizen who followed all the guidelines but got COVID anyway and barely survived.

That would be informative as well as entertaining television. We might even discover the truth.

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Letters

Critical Race Theory

To the editor:

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an optional class for college students to take. It should be left there where college students are supposed to be adults and can decide if CRT (theory) is proper. Yes, theory not fact. Bringing CRT to young minds is theory not a fact and they are too gullible to

know the difference. Let's leave it to the adults to decide on it. Do not corrupt the innocent minds with a "THEORY." The USA is not racist like some people think. If it were, why are millions coming here? SAVE THE CHILDREN!

Roger Bauer
New Ulm

Old enough to remember

To the editor:

All the reporting on the COVID vaccine has had me thinking about how much our country has changed. As a registered nurse back in the 1950's, I still have very vivid memories of the polio epidemic. I can still see the rows of people living inside iron lungs at the Sister Kenny Institute in Minneapolis and I remember seeing the crippling effects of polio.

I remember how our whole nation REJOICED when Dr. Salk developed a vaccine. It was an answer to all of our prayers. Vaccines for measles, diphtheria,

mumps, and whooping cough followed. Over the years students received their vaccinations at school.

Politics, controversy, and misinformation NEVER played a role in vaccination and polio was eradicated. Medical doctors and scientists gave us information to make health decisions, NOT POLITICIANS.

It is my hope that cases of COVID caused by new variants don't continue to increase. We've had too many deaths and too many people with long haul symptoms.

Jan Schrupp
Winthrop

Other Editors

Continuing challenges to presidential election

Nine months after the election and six months after the U.S. Capitol riot their rhetoric inspired, many Republicans are still clinging to the Big Lie, including in Pennsylvania.

State Sen. Doug Mastriano last week announced yet another attempt to relitigate the 2020 presidential election, arguing that somehow, through an additional audit, he will uncover evidence that election boards, the Pennsylvania Department of State, the FBI, the Attorney General's Office, and former U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain have tried and failed to discover.

The proposed election audit, inspired by the chaotic undertakings in Arizona, asks for all election materials to be sent to State Sen. Mastriano for a "forensic audit" of the results. Not just ballots, but ballot applications, voter registration system terminals, voting machines, and poll books. It even goes as far as to request logins for the state's voter registration database from employees. It would be expensive and time-consuming. Mastriano's office currently doesn't even have a plan for where to put all this paperwork and equipment if the counties comply.

This audit isn't actually aimed at uncovering the truth about the 2020 election, nor is it capable of finding nonexistent fraud or proving that Donald Trump is the real winner of the election.

The point seems to be jockeying for position in next year's crowded Republican gubernatorial primary. Even the supposed goal of delivering the audit, an unlikely prospect, takes a back seat to fighting for the audit, something that most of Mastriano's competitors, who don't have access to subpoena powers, can't do.

This points to one of the most pernicious aspects of the Big Lie: the way that it traps our political debate in November forever. Constantly fighting for one more audit and one more batch of secret revelations means people never have to accept the truth — that President Joe Biden fairly won the election — because there's always new revelations coming if you wait. The constant drumbeat also helps justify new and unnecessary restrictions on voting.

That's why it is so important that this effort is rejected quickly and firmly. Not just by Democrats and the few Republicans who have consistently opposed this rhetoric from the start, but by senior Republicans in Harrisburg, and Mastriano's colleagues on the Senate Intergovernmental Operations Committee. ...

— The Philadelphia Inquirer

By Diane Dimond

The White House is launching a new assault to bring down the crime rate. As you've likely heard, crime, especially homicide, has exploded in many major hotspot cities over the last year or so. President Joe Biden says he knows what to do, he's been at this for years and he's got a plan ready to launch that includes several definitive steps.

"The first of those that work is stemming the flow of firearms used to commit violent crimes," Biden told a group of reporters as he was about to go into a closed-door meeting with visiting police chiefs and city officials. "It includes cracking down and holding rogue gun dealers accountable for violating federal law."

The new plan includes five new federal strike forces, agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE), which will embed with local police departments in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington, D.C. Their mission is to disrupt gun trafficking coming into those major cities.

The president says he wants to "supercharge" the crime fighting effort, so he's also urging communities to invest some of their portion of the \$350 billion COVID-19 relief fund in policing and to establish more support programs, such as summer jobs for young people.

I wonder if during that closed-door White House meeting anyone broached the subject of the criminals holding those illegal guns the president wants rounded up.

The cold hard fact is this: There are some 470 million guns in civilian hands in the United States right now, with new ones -- including untraceable, homemade ghost guns -- being manufactured every day. Legal, registered gun sales are at record highs. If by some stretch of the imagination we could magically do away with all the guns belonging to criminals, what do you think might happen? Do you believe hardcore lawbreakers would simply shrug, walk away from their criminal life and go get a nine-to-five job? No. They would find other weapons with which to inflict their terror on innocent citizens. Knives, Molotov cocktails, scissors, an ax perhaps. Criminals ar-



Diane Dimond

en't just violent; they are deviously creative.

I read a quote recently from a police officer in the Bronx, where gangs are currently involved in a spate of revenge killings, which said, "Everybody is walking around with a gun because they are more afraid of getting shot than getting arrested."

Wow. What does that say about the in-vogue idea that police should refrain from ever stopping, questioning and maybe frisking a suspected criminal? Removing that tactic from officers is obviously self-defeating if we really want to stem the murder rate.

It's the gang members who fuel much of this nation's violent crime problem. It seems a smart endeavor for the feds and local law enforcement to supercharge an all-out assault on them, instead of the nearly futile attempt to stop the flow of millions and millions and millions of guns.

Please don't make me fall back on that old saying, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." But it does

apply. It's not the number of available guns that matters; it's who holds them. Countless firearms are in the hands of responsible, law abiding, constitutionally protected Americans. They remain safely locked up, away from the criminal element.

Back in April, in a forerunner to the new White House plan, the city of Chicago filed a lawsuit against a Gary, Indiana, gun shop it believes responsible for the flow of hundreds, maybe thousands of guns into the Windy City. The suit revealed that, for years, Westforth Sports has been repeatedly cited by the feds (the same Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives crew now comprising the president's five strike forces) for illegally selling guns to convicted felons and others. And the feds couldn't shut down that gun shop? Let's hope the new five-city strike force effort will be more efficient.

I keep coming back to the idea that concentrating on rounding up the worst of the worst gangbangers would be much more efficient. By anybody's count there are far fewer violent gang members operating in this country than there are guns. Would this get rid of all gun crime? No, but it would make a heck of a dent in it.

Take care of the demand problem and the supply side will surely slow.

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