

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

The best of us

It's been a rough August in Sisters. Smoke from wildfires as far away as Canada was already impacting the area when the Milli Fire broke out and turned into a 26,000-acre conflagration. The smoke has been terrible. The effects of the fire have kicked people out their homes for days and disrupted business during the height of the busy season. The health impacts range from irritating to downright dangerous. People's nerves have frayed.

And yet we can all be grateful that we're not in Houston, which is enduring biblical tribulations.

What we've seen both here and in Houston in the midst of all these trials is the best of us. We are constantly surprised and amazed at the power of the human spirit to overcome and set aside petty differences and pull together in times of need.

In Sisters, people have opened their homes to evacuees and stranded hikers, provided shelter for displaced pets, and fed firefighters, while in Houston ordinary citizens are taking

extraordinary measures to help strangers, without question and without hesitation.

It's so easy to get caught up in the sturm and drang of the big, noisy world and forget who we really are. We're sold false notions of identity, where whom we vote for president defines who we are, where disdaining just the right people in just the right way, using just the right words becomes a litmus test for virtue.

Ultimately, though, we are defined by what we *do*. And when push comes to shove, when we're called upon to step up and act, what we *do* shows that what we *are* is pretty damn impressive.

The smoke will dissipate in Sisters and the flood waters will recede in Houston. But maybe we can hold onto a little of the spirit we've all partaken of this August of 2017 and carry it as we return to the day-to-day.

It's the best of us.

Jim Cornelius
News Editor

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Craig Rullman, columnist for *The Nugget Newspaper*, thinks that America is not institutionally racist and that "America continues a historically remarkable record of self-correction in the matters of race." Using some twisted logic, he believes the real tragedy of Charlottesville will be used (if it's further exploited) to suggest otherwise.

If you call yourself a Nazi, you're a racist. I think we can all agree on that. I believe Trump is racist. But what Trump did in his role as President of the United States, by using his office to pardon racist ex-sheriff Joe Arpaio, is the perfect example of institutional racism. Arpaio, in his role as sheriff, targeting Latinos at traffic stops whether or not they committed a traffic violation, is another example of

institutional racism.

The group Black Lives Matter is a direct response to institutional racism in the police force.

The right-wing media, especially Fox News, basically a State-sanctioned organization, perpetuates institutional racism by, for example, making the claim of moral equivalency between white supremacists and counter-protestors or claiming that if you agree that the statue of Robert E. Lee is offensive, you must also believe that all other statues you don't approve of should be taken down. These are false choices.

I agree with John Mapes that one of the United States' most admired principles, that all people are created equal, is under attack.

Terry Weygandt

Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Haze/Partly Sunny 89/57	Smoke/Cloudy 78/51	Smoke/Partly Sunny 77/46	Haze/Smoke/Sunny 78/44	Haze/Smoke/Sunny 83/45	Haze/Smoke/Sunny 86/54

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Jonah Goldberg

Even hurricanes have a silver lining: The downpour washes away a lot of bull.

Don't get me wrong. This is a tragedy for untold thousands of people. And no upside could possibly balance the scale against the downside. The full human toll of Harvey, now a tropical storm, remains to be determined, but it's already steep. As of this writing, the official count of fatalities was up to 14, and that number will probably rise. The economic cost will take a long time to calculate. And the emotional price—lost homes, heirlooms, pictures, worry, stress—can never be calculated.

And yet, I couldn't help but notice that there is a "feel good" aspect to the whole catastrophe. The best example is the hyper-viral story of two men loading up their boat and driving into the storm. CNN's Ed Lavandera found them under a highway overpass readying the vessel.

"You guys just jumping in to help out?" Lavandera asked.

"Yes, sir," says one of the men.

"What are you going to do?" Lavandera asks him.

"Go try to save some lives."

That man was African-American. His partner appeared to be Caucasian or maybe Latino. But it doesn't matter at all. We don't know if they're Republican or Democrat, pro-Trump or anti-Trump, NRA members or fans of gun control. All they wanted to do was help.

All weekend, TV and social media highlighted stories like this. Granted, there were plenty of attempts to politicize the storm. Some had superficial legitimacy. Did Texas officials — particularly the Democratic mayor of Houston and the Republican governor of Texas — drop the ball in not ordering a mandatory evacuation? But even these debates lacked the bitter vitriol that marked coverage of Hurricane Katrina or even Hurricane Sandy.

Other attempts to bend an apolitical event to a preferred political narrative were more desperate and despicable. The Twitter account for an outfit called Charitable Humans

unleashed a Cat-5 gale of schadenfreude at Houston's woes. Over a satellite image of Harvey: "Texas has been bitten by Karma, but they still have a huge debt to the bank of Karma." "I just can't bring myself to even consider providing aid to any red state, let them clean up their own mess."

To its credit, the organization later deleted its account and released an apologetic statement saying its leaders were "horrified" by their social media coordinator's actions.

But the point was already made. We live in an ugly, tribal moment in American history. Indeed, the more representative story of the weekend came out of Berkeley, where "antifa" goons beat up nonviolent protesters they unilaterally deemed to be fascist.

By comparison, despite the terrible plight of its victims, Harvey was the happy story, at least in one narrow respect. Politics is becoming a substitute for identity, even religion, for millions of Americans. How you vote, what team you root for on the cable shout shows, is becoming a signifier of who you are. The media fuel this attitude, in large ways and small, by turning the news into "narratives" of good people and bad people. This is an unhealthy development, regardless of which ideological uniform you wear.

But politics and ideology are, or should be, downstream from all of the most important things in life, at least in America. Under normal circumstances this can be hard to see, never mind appreciate, because we are lucky to live in a fabulously rich and free society where people can afford to make politics into a sport or fashion statement.

Most of us can see this within our own networks of friends and family, where political differences rarely trump more meaningful bonds. But on a mass scale, it becomes apparent only in dire circumstances, like when floodwaters wash away the nonsense and reveal the decency of the American people.

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