

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

Rising to the level of middle schoolers

When my daughter was in middle school, she would take umbrage when I said that politicians or others engaged in public discourse were “acting like middle schoolers.”

“Dad,” she would say, “we don’t act like that.”

Fair enough. So, let’s just say that a whole lot of actors on the public stage lack the maturity of middle schoolers.

Last week, Fox News commentator Laura Ingraham was forced to make a public apology after sponsors started fleeing her show because she thought it was appropriate to publically mock 17-year-old David Hogg because he didn’t make it into several of the universities to which he had applied. Hogg is one of the more vocal activists from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, whose fellow students were murdered in a mass shooting in February.

Now, Hogg is not off-limits. His opinions should not be held sacrosanct and treated as unchallengeable simply because he and his fellow students went through a traumatic event. He has entered the public arena and he should be ready for pushback. But pushback should come in the form of challenging his opinions and his policy prescriptions, not in the form of public mockery at the hands of a cable TV commentator over his college admissions travails. That is just shameful.

Closer to home, a friend was recently accused of employing “subtle racism” in an

essay on Oregon Initiative Petition 43 and former Justice John Paul Stevens’ call to repeal the Second Amendment. Challenged to substantiate this inflammatory accusation, the accuser simply made things up that were not to be found anywhere in the text. The “racism” was so “subtle” that it wasn’t even there. The accuser essentially boiled his assertion down to the logically and ethically bankrupt notion that, since progressives oppose racism, if you oppose their agenda in whole or in part, you must be a racist.

In 2018, an accusation of racism is not merely means of shutting down debate, but an active attempt to do harm. It’s hanging a scarlet letter on the accused. Shameful.

We can point a finger at a lot of contributors to this corrosive trend: the freedom from accountability people feel on social media; the embarrassing example of a president who delights in calling people names (and whose opponents often indulge in the same pastime in return); a general breakdown in manners at all levels. Perhaps we could all use a little of the intolerance represented by former Texas Ranger Woodrow Call in Larry McMurry’s “Lonesome Dove”: “I hate rude behavior in a man. I won’t tolerate it.”

Or, in this tamer, more ill-mannered era, we might at least try to reach the maturity level of middle schoolers.

Jim Cornelius
Editor in Chief

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:

Your editorial, “Nobody is coming for your guns?” misses the mark and endorses the false premise that the real agenda for common-sense gun reform is to “disarm law-abiding Americans”.

Oregon Initiative Petition 43 is an attempt to manage the burgeoning private ownership

of weapons of war, firearms specifically designed to kill the maximum number of victims quickly and efficiently. Guns used for hunting and individual self-protection are not addressed in OIP 43. There is no hidden agenda here to remove such firearms from

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Chance Rain 57/35	Rain 56/39	Chance Rain 59/41	Rain Likely 54/32	Chance Showers 49/30	Mostly Cloudy 55/39

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Robert C. Koehler

The cries of loss and anguish become public, at last. A million young people seize the truth: “Half of my seventh-grade class was affected by gun violence. My own brother was shot in the head. I am tired of being asked to calm down and be quiet.”

I was one of the thousands of people who endured a bitter cold morning in Chicago to be part of this emerging movement, this burst of anger, hope and healing.

The Chicago march was one of more than 800 marches throughout the U.S. and all across the world. In Washington, D.C., Emma Gonzalez — a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida — read out the names of the 17 people shot and killed at her school last month, then stood in courageous silence for six minutes and 20 seconds: the length of time the gunman’s killing spree lasted.

The cry of anguish across this planet, for all the lives that have been needlessly cut short, will reverberate for as long as necessary: until this country’s politics catches up to the will and the awareness and the suffering of its people.

The focus of the moment is tougher gun-control regulations, such as banning the sale of assault weapons. And three days after the marches, retired Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens (not a young person) published an op-ed in the *New York Times*, calling, my God, for the repeal of the Second Amendment, which he called “a relic of the 18th century.”

The marches, he wrote, “reveal the broad public support for legislation to minimize the risk of mass killings of schoolchildren and others in our society.”

I would add that they also reveal much more than that: public support, public demand, for a society that values life. This is not a simplistic demand. It is furiously complex, and pushes public policy well beyond the current status-quo thinking that’s perfectly OK with a near-trillion dollar military

budget, endlessly expanding wars across the planet and, uh, nuclear weapons.

This emerging movement must address the whole spectrum of violence. As Rev. John Dear put it: “That means ending gun violence — but also racism and mass incarceration but also executions, drone attacks and trillions spent for war, and so also, the ongoing U.S. bombing raids and wars and the development and threat of nuclear weapons, and our mortally sinful corporate greed and of course, the destruction of the environment and all the creatures.”

The word that ties it all together is: dehumanization.

The ability to dehumanize certain people — because of their race, their nationality, their gender, their politics, their place of work or learning — has no end. When a mass murderer does it, it’s called mental illness. When a soldier or cop or the president does it, it’s called national security.

“How,” asked Stephanie Van Hook, executive director of the Metta Center for Nonviolence, “could one forget the humanity of another and what does it tell us about who we really are?”

“For insight into these questions, we might first explore the basic dynamic of conflict escalation. . . . Conflict escalates — that is, moves increasingly toward violence — according to the degree of dehumanization in the situation,” she writes, summarizing a point made by Michael Nagler in his book “The Nonviolence Handbook: A Guide for Practical Action.” “Violence, in other words, doesn’t occur without dehumanization.”

I believe this insight is at the core of what March for Our Lives is about. Gun regulations, even repeal of the Second Amendment, are bandages over the wound. The uncontained force behind the national murder rate is dehumanization, and as this movement grows, it must — it will — look institutional dehumanization straight in the eye.

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