

KeizerOpinion

KEIZERTIMES.COM

The GOP vulgarians

By E.J. DIONNE JR.

It was William Bennett, education secretary in the Reagan years and the Republican Party's premier moralist, who embedded a phrase in the American consciousness when he bemoaned the fact that "our elites presiding over an unprecedented coarsening of our culture."

Well, to borrow another famous phrase, it is Bennett's party and two of its presidential candidates in particular, Donald Trump and Marco Rubio, who are merrily defining our politics, our discourse and the American presidency down. The 2016 Republican primary campaign is now on track to be the crudest, most vulgar and most thoroughly disgusting contest in our nation's history.

A policy wonk who has spent nearly two decades in politics was watching last Thursday's GOP debate with his two teenage daughters and was horrified when one turned to him and asked: "Is this what you do?" The dad, who didn't want to be named because he didn't want to embarrass his daughters, said their acquaintances had higher standards than the debaters: "They would be humiliated if their friends talked to them that way."

Call me old-fashioned or even a prig, but I have a rather elevated view of what politics can be and what it can achieve. For decades, in good political moments and bad, I have repaired for inspiration and comfort to the political philosopher Michael Sandel's description of politics at its best. "When politics goes well," he wrote, "we can know a good in common that we cannot know alone."

In the GOP right now, it's not going well.

You can place a lot of the responsibility for all this on Trump and, yes, the media. As I was writing this, MSNBC (for which I've worked over the years) and CNN were simultaneously broadcasting live the same Trump speech. Welcome to Trump State Television. Broadcasters have reveled in the ratings to be gained from airing Trump's stream-of-consciousness (if politically effective) rants, and the coarser the better.

We might let the blame settle there, except that Marco Rubio got frustrated. The man the party's leaders keep saying is the real challenger to Trump despite his early difficulties in winning actual contents decided that to beat Trump, he had to join him.

Thus began his own rants that reached a low point when he de-

other
views

clared of Trump during a rally last month in Virginia: "I don't understand why his hands are the size of someone who's 5-2. Have you seen his hands? They're like this." Here, Rubio held his thumb and fingers closely together to depict something very small indeed. He added: "And you know what they say about men with small hands."

My naivete extends to the fact that I did not know that small hands are often equated to diminutive endowments elsewhere. But Trump, obviously more worldly than I, went all defensive at the debate, held out his arms and declared: "Look at those hands, are they small hands? And he referred to my hands -- 'if they're small, something else must be small.' I guarantee you there's no problem. I guarantee."

Now we know. Then there was Trump's response earlier in the day to the attack on him by Mitt Romney. Trump had a point that Romney was happy to seek his endorsement in 2012 (and to ignore Trump's birtherism and his other racially and religiously tinged comments about President Obama). But here is how Trump put the matter: "He was begging for my endorsement. I could have said, 'Mitt, drop to your knees.' He would have dropped to his knees."

We expect Trump to be loutish. Worse is Rubio's refusal to take responsibility for the course he has chosen. Explaining that he would truly prefer to be talking about issues, Rubio went for the devil-made-me-do-it defense. "But let's be honest too about all this," he explained. "The media has given these personal attacks that Donald Trump has made an incredible amount of coverage."

Yes, let's be honest: He's right about the media, but since when is it credible, responsible or, for that matter, conservative to blame someone else for what comes out of your own mouth?

By comparison, John Kasich and Ted Cruz are looking almost as issue-oriented and responsible as, well, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. But the whole Republican race is now a moral and electoral wreck, a state of affairs that one conservative after another mourned during and after Thursday's encounter.

For decades, conservatives have done a great business assailing liberals for promoting cultural decay. Sorry, guys, but in this campaign, you have kicked away the franchise.

(Washington Post Writers Group)



The effect of Trump on Republicans

What kind of Republicans are in Keizer? There could be Trump Republicans, Cruz Republicans, or Rubio Republicans. Maybe Keizer leans more to Reagan Republicans, or Hatfield, McCall and Packwood Republicans.

If you live in Keizer your interests in both the Oregon Senate and House of Representatives are championed by a Republican. Both Bill Post and Kim Thatcher seem too decent and true to be Trump Republicans. I hope that is the case.

There was news of a small riot near Disneyland in Anaheim last week in one of those little wire service stories tacked on to the end of longer stories to fill the needed column inches. Six Klu Klux Klan members showed up in a black SUV for their advertised rally carrying "white lives matter" signs. Protestors protested and windows were shattered. The black SUV quickly retreated, leaving three unlucky KKK members stranded to fend for themselves. Luckily there was a metallic American Eagle on the end of their flagpole with which they were able to stab several of the counter-protestors in "self-defense." Counter-protestors were then seen stomping two of the KKK members. If we leave out the use of the flagpole as weapon, this is a good represen-

a box
of
soap

tation of the current state of political discourse in our country.

Republican "debates" featuring

language, lies, uncontrolled temper, and rudeness that you wouldn't allow from your children or in a high school debate are now becoming the normal tenor of the party and degrading all of American politics. Regardless of the vile accusations they have leveled at each other they've all pledged to support the last candidate standing. Now that's integrity.

Stephen King, a horror expert, has this tweet attributed to him: "Conservatives who for eight years sowed the dragon's teeth of partisan politics are horrified to discover they have grown an actual dragon."

Congressional Republicans have been content to keep their hands clean by letting Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, Michael Savage, and even Fox News inflame their base and corral voters. Now Donald Trump is the found voice of that anger and old line Republicans are panicked at their loss of control. There is a desperate "Anyone but Trump" scramble threatening to split the GOP, driven

by a very reasonable embarrassment at having Donald Trump be the face of the party.

Trump seems excused from any standards of decency, honesty, or civility. No candidate has ever before boasted about his private parts. There were no Muslim throngs celebrating 9/11 in New Jersey. His black-on-white crime claims are completely wrong. Mexico will never build and pay for a big wall on the border. Mexican immigrants are not rapists and thugs. If he "brings back" all those jobs lost to countries with cheaper labor you should prepare to spend more for electronics and manufactured goods. If we had been willing to pay that price, those jobs would never have left.

Does the political divide in Keizer have to look like this? I am at ease being represented by Sen. Thatcher and Rep. Post even though I'm a wild-eyed liberal. If they share Donald Trump's agenda then I'll actively work against them. Even if Trump loses, and he must, he will still have some supporters in this community. I'm not sure if compromise is possible with these true believers, or if there is reason to attempt it.

(Don Vowell gets on his soapbox regularly in the Keizertimes.)

Other people help to make us a success

Lately, I've been writing around on this opinion page, screaming the equivalent of "The British are coming!" It's time to take a break from such mental meanderings and talk about a topic that's much more calming.

This topic has to do with a Harvard research discovery about the one thing most everyone needs to lead a happier, healthier life. The journalist writing on what was found is Colby Itkowitz of *The Washington Post*.

Itoowitz begins by commenting on what her grandmother passed along to her about a visit to her doctor where she moved her large purse out of the way, remarking how heavy it was. "You must be very rich," the doctor is reported to have said. She replied "Yes, I am." Yet, says Itoowitz, his grandparents lived modestly in a two-bedroom rowhouse they moved into after he returned from WWII and raised a family there. We're told they did not eat lavishly, travel widely or shop at the finest department stores. Nevertheless, grandmother considered herself rich because she had a husband, children and grandchildren, all of whom she valued and adored.

Conclusion: grandma knew what Harvard researchers have confirmed: Relationships are the key to a happy life. The Harvard reference has to do with a 75-year-long Grant Study that, more recently, the fourth person to run it, Robert Waldinger, a Harvard psychiatrist, decided to publish the findings that the federal government has spent millions of dollars to fund, starting in 1938 and following the lives of Harvard University men, because he realized that most Americans want to know what constitutes a good life.

Among those chosen were John F. Kennedy and Ben Bradlee and every aspect of their lives and the others in the study was tracked. This study was teamed with a similar one that had been following a group of young men from inner-city tenements since the 1940s. This teamwork effort al-

gene h.
mcintyre

lowed them to contrast social status and upbringing, although otherwise, everyone in the study is a white male.

The men's physical and emotional well-being and genetic testing were periodically assessed. Many conclusions have been reached from studying their lives. Yet, Waldinger and his associates were able to realize a unanimous verdict: The happiest and healthiest participants in both groups were those who kept close, spiritually intimate relationships. Eventually, marital partners got involved so the impact of marriages on physical health was included and the finding was that those satisfied in their relationships were happier and healthier.

Waldinger commented from the decades-long study that "People who are more isolated than they want to be from others find that they are less happy, their health declines earlier, their brain functioning declines sooner and they live shorter lives than people who are not lonely." Further, "good, close relationships seem to buffer us from some of the slings and arrows

of getting old." Wealth, fame, career and success don't bring health or happiness but it's the work they put into maintaining people connections with other persons.

Looking into the lives of the men in the two studies has inspired Waldinger to make changes from near exclusive attention to his research and publishing to more emphasis on his role as a teacher: the connection between mentor and student that has been found for him to be more satisfying. He's also done more about reaching out to friends who are sick or are struggling. Relationships are messy and complicated, he says, and require tending to but the effort is highly rewarding to the giver.

The bottom line is that devoting as much time as possible to family, friends and even strangers is the best way to establish and maintain one's health. It may be bold and reckless to take time away from one's business matters and tangible rewards may not always be realized as quickly as one would hope but the real advantages to operating this way, while subtle and hidden, are internally enhancing and the most direct path to health and happiness.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the Keizertimes.)



Have an opinion?

Email letters to the editor (300 words) by noon Tuesday. Submitted letters must be accompanied with writer's name and address.

Email to: publisher@keizertimes.com

Keizertimes

Wheatland Publishing Corp. • 142 Chemawa Road N. • Keizer, Oregon 97303
phone: 503.390.1051 • web: www.keizertimes.com • email: kt@keizertimes.com



EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com

NEWS EDITOR
Craig Murphy
editor@keizertimes.com

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Eric A. Howard
news@keizertimes.com

ADVERTISING
Paula Moseley
advertising@keizertimes.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER
Andrew Jackson
graphics@keizertimes.com

LEGAL NOTICES
legals@keizertimes.com

BUSINESS MANAGER
Laurie Painter
billing@keizertimes.com

RECEPTION
Lori Beyeler

SUBSCRIPTIONS
One year:
\$25 in Marion County,
\$35 outside Marion County,
\$45 outside Oregon

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY
Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER
Send address changes to:
Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303

Periodical postage paid at
Salem, Oregon

facebook

facebook.com/keizertimes

twitter

twitter.com/keizertimes

