

KeizerOpinion

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To the class of 2016 only

Congratulations to those of you who are graduating from high school or college this month. You navigated the journey that at times seemed hopeless or worthless. Now you get to make your own path into the world you feel is not exactly waiting for you with bated breath.

What have we done to our greatest natural resource—our young people? We hope that this year's presidential campaign has not soured you on politics or public service. It would be understandable if the circus that is the campaign thus far turns you off; it turns many adults off, too. It is important to remember, though, that, like it or not, politics makes the world go 'round.

Most of you graduating from or getting ready to enter college are staring large debts in the face. That prospect keeps some from going to college at all. Sure, there are plenty of stories of billionaire entrepreneurs who did not finish college; those stories are far and few between. Unless you are heir to a large fortune, you'll eventually have to rely on yourself to accumulate the things you want: house, nice car, gadgets and vacations to exotic places.

You can attain all the things in life you wish, but you have to put in the time and work first. That can include creating something, working for

editorial

someone or changing the status quo.

Changing the status quo could mean eliminating hunger in the world or ending gun violence. Assault against women, both physical and verbal, might be what you want to see come to an end.

Everyone at one point or another thinks that the work they do is hard. Of course it's hard; nothing worthwhile is easy. Projects and works are especially hard when one fails. Successful people don't let one failure stop them—they learn from them, tinker, recalibrate and try again to succeed. That can be true for anything in any field: athletics, academics, career or personal.

Life itself is hard. And it's not fair. Very few are handed the world on a silver platter. The choices you make now don't have to define you for the rest of your life. You can decide that money and material things are most important to you. Or, you can decide that you want to have a positive impact on the world around you. Regardless of your choice you will have to work hard to attain your goal.

Whatever you decide you want to do or become, you don't have to do that or be that forever. These are your years of discovery. Find your place in the world and make it your own. All it will take is hard work and desire.

—LAZ

Trump's running mate

To the Editor:

As Mr. Donald Trump searches for a running mate, may I suggest a few criteria? He should pick someone equally qualified for the office with good name recognition—from the west to balance the ticket and perhaps, a woman. The only question then is, which Kardashians should it be?

Martin Doerfler
Keizer

Writer's bias is showing

To the Editor:

I have to question Debra Saunder's credibility in her opinion piece on Hillary Clinton (*Hill's emails: lying in plain sight, Keizertimes, June 3*).

Saunders writes the same lies and spews her hatred of Clinton just like the other Clinton haters. What Clinton is "accused" of is not a crime, she has not murdered anyone and did not jeopardize our country.

I heard Colin Powell even say that it is common practice for politicians to use private servers. Why is it some agencies have claimed that Clinton did nothing wrong, but people like Saunders jumps at the chance to use one finding to prove her lack of understanding of what has been common practice for many years. Why is it that with Clinton they want her in prison blues for something that is laughable? She made it quite clear, if everyone is investigated for the same thing, then fine, she will produce everything. But just why is she singled out? Saunders is definitely not a journalist. Saunder's bias is glaring.

Kris Adams
Keizer

Offensive parade entry wasn't okayed

To the Editor:

Keizer is dear to my heart. Like many of you I see it as a place to raise a family, socialize with friends and participate in a great volunteer focused community.

These are my first few weeks as the executive director of the Keizer

letters

Chamber of Commerce; and, from the get-go I was overseeing a handful of fantastic events including the Iris Festival Parade, which is run by volunteers who live and work in Keizer. The parade is seen by the chamber as an

activity that families can come from all over to support community organizations and businesses, a showcase for children to express their pride for what their heart has passion for, many families, including my own have made it a family tradition to attend, and or participate in.

This year there were a couple of parade entries that caught some negative attention. The Chamber and I would like to address the concerns of the many people I have heard from throughout the weeks since the parade.

One of those entries followed the required procedure and submitted a parade entry application and paid the required fee. The other group is a mystery—we believe these individuals entered the parade after it started and departed before the ending point, never actually engaging the required process to participate in the parade honestly. I am choosing to not list their names, as I feel they have received enough attention from the Chamber through their participation.

Both of these entries offended many spectators, and for that I am sorry. All volunteers of the Keizer Chamber work to make events special for all. We are making changes to our planning process to be sure all entries of our parade offer the best of Keizer and its surrounding supporters. We want this event to be remembered for the joy received, not political positions. I will be working closely with our staff, and community volunteers in the coming months to strengthen the parades focus on fun, family friendly floats.

If you are interested in joining us in these efforts I would like to hear from you. I can't undo the damage that was done, but I can promise we will be better, and I hope that is with additional support and participation from many of you.

Danielle Bethell, Executive Director
Keizer Chamber of Commerce

Being the change is harder than it looks

By ERIC A. HOWALD

My 16-hour trip along the outskirts of the criminal justice system began at 9 a.m. Monday morning.

I was waiting in the hallway outside of Marion County courtroom for a man convicted of raping a minor to receive his sentence. It had been a while since I'd seen the inside of a courtroom, but severity of the charges made it one of the more newsworthy ones of my career.

The man spoke on his own behalf before the sentence was handed down. At the end of his time, he knelt before the judge and asked for forgiveness, but I think he meant leniency. That was a first for me and a 27-year veteran of the Keizer Police Department in attendance. I will be in my 60s when he's released back into the world, if he serves the full sentence.

Three hours later, I sat down with the Keizer police chief, deputy chief and a crime analyst to see if the numbers bear out recent social media rumblings about crime spiking in our fair city. Putting natural journalistic skepticism aside, I grew up in a town that is regularly listed among the most violent in the nation. What the local media outlets didn't pick up, I heard rumblings about from my father, a firefighter, who saw it from the ground level. Twenty years after leaving St. Louis, I realize what the city taught me was perspective, something that tends to get lost in large-font headlines. As I suspected, overall crime in Keizer is on the decline.

At 4:30 p.m., I was at the Keizer Civic Center for a meeting of the Mid-Willamette Homeless Initiative Task Force. A deputy district attorney took the floor to detail recent efforts to nudge the judicial system toward harm reduction rather than penalization—particularly as it relates to drug cases.

The hope is that removing the stigma of felonies for first-time offenders, and those possessing trace amounts of controlled substances, will allow them to keep access to a wider range of employment and housing opportunities. I am heartened by this shift in paradigms. I have been part of struggles against substance abuse among my friends and family, and have come to view harm reduction as one of the more humane methods of dealings with these scourges.

I finished my day feeling good about what I saw and learned. Reaffirmed in my enlightenment. Then, at 12:38 a.m. Tuesday, all hell breaks loose.

My wife and I are startled awake by a loud banging at our front door. She's

moments of lucidity

awake before me and I groggily claw my way to a semblance of alertness. There's a male voice coming from outside the

window. All the windows. They're all open, it's still close to 80 degrees in the house, enough to make me sweat under a sheet.

It's hard to make out words, but he obviously thinks he's speaking to someone he knows. We wait for a minute to see if the voice departs, and then I make my way to the front door and discover nothing beyond the peephole.

I go back to the bedroom and find the unknown visitor strolling through our front yard, coming from the side of our house. He's back at the door by the time I call to him through the window asking if I can help.

He's looking for Haley. He left his phone and medicine inside our house. He'll die if he doesn't get the medicine.

I tell him, "There's no Haley living here, I think you have the wrong place."

"Are you sure?" he asks. "It looks the same—even the artwork."

It won't register until later that he must have been peering in windows.

I ask what address he's looking for. He asks, "What address is this?"

I tell him and he begins walking away, toward the end of our cul de sac. "What address are you looking for," I call after him. He continues walking.

A minute or so later, I call 9-1-1, tell them what's happened, give a description of his clothing and suggest he's between the ages of 18-21. They'll send someone, the dispatcher says, call back if he returns.

Five minutes later, he's back and rummaging through our garbage and I'm dialing the phone. He approaches the house again and bangs on the door, calls out angrily that we are keeping him from his stuff.

Then he sits on our small front stoop and tries to hide in its corner, where police officers find him less than two minutes later.

My wife and I listen through the window without looking outside. The guy seems more than a little lost, a lot confused and it turns out he's only 18. An officer places him under arrest for trespassing at another residence earlier in the evening and leads him to a patrol car.

A second officer comes to our window. I tell him I will meet him out front. I'm thankful our 12-year-old daughter managed to sleep through

this mess.

It isn't until the responding officer asks if we want to press charges that everything I think I've learned in the last 16 hours unravels.

Suddenly, crime rates are as high as they've ever been. Anywhere. Ever.

I see our daughter scared in her own home, jumping at the slightest noise.

I have visions of this kid on his knees in front of a judge pleading for forgiveness the court has no authority to grant.

Then I picture him on the streets, unable to find a home, much less a job.

And. And: it's all going to be my fault.

Because, I think, what if this kid. This kid banging on my door in the middle of the night. What if this kid is just having a bad day. I've had bad days. Days when I just want one thing in my whole world to go right, and it doesn't happen. Or I can't see it. Or some mix of the two.

And I look at my wife, and I know my face is saying, "I don't want to do this. I don't want to be the reason horrible things happen to this one person. Not today. Not ever."

And she is anxious, and wound up, and worried about our daughter and wondering if this is just the beginning of something bigger. Something worse.

And ... she defers to me.

The officer, to my great, internal admiration, manages to split the difference. He tells us he'll keep our names and number and call us if the other charges fall through. It's a momentary reprieve, at the very least.

Now, for the last 24 hours, I keep second-guessing myself. I keep following threads of what-if to different conclusions. Keep thinking I know who I am. *Who I was?* And I turned 40 two months ago, and it feels like things are being rewritten. That's scary. And life can be scary, but I am trying to be the change I want to see in the world.

It's not as hard for me as it has been for others who have come before, or those who I am proud to walk alongside, but it is its own version of tribulation. It's trial and error working toward measured responses to the myriad possibilities the world has to offer, both good and bad—and then trying to figure out how to explain all of that to a young girl who is already years ahead of where I was at her age.

Right now, given how fresh all of it still is, I just keep repeating to myself, *Be the change.*

Eric A. Howald is the managing editor of the Keizertimes.

What does *Roots* reboot tell us about now?

I think it would be interesting to have those behind the re-making of *Roots* to confess their motive. *Roots 2*, now available by TV access, is the second go-around adaptation of Alex Haley's novel published in 1976. How much of what he wrote was based in fact about his own family, as he claimed, has been long disputed as his work was later found to be heavily plagiarized from a novel named *The African*. Meanwhile, what I know about slavery is based strictly on what I've read about it, as I wasn't there. But then Haley wasn't either, born in 1912.

Kristi Turnquist wrote in TV Talk in the *Oregonian* that the "new *Roots* is punishing to watch." She wrote also that "it seems to revel in the too-familiar depictions of black Americans as victims, tortured with racist cruelty and violence." She believes that the story deserves more attention. Having now watched the series, I agreed with a lot of Turnquist's assessment, but not the "deserves more attention" part.

Perhaps this is a televised story that those who attend sports events for promises of violence and bloodshed. They watch or attend, in part, at least, hoping that there will be an awful accident with much blood and guts, like in the Indy 500 or NFL games, and about which they get something in red for their greenbacks.

Turnquist says the first chapter is grueling to watch, showing Kunta Kinte in his rich ("rich" in Africa was living under an absolute ruler who could easily be as bad as any slave owner or overseer in America) African culture, raised to be a warrior and eager to honor the family name but was captured, sold into slavery and sent on a terrible voyage under inhumane conditions to Annapolis, Maryland and a plantation run on the backs of African-born slave power. Yet, hints of American mentality are revealed almost immediately in Kunta Kinte who

can only think about freedom while the blood flows most graphically when a demonic white overseer whips

him without mercy because he won't use his slave name. True story? Maybe.

Most viewers just end up hating whites by way of the four episodes. As depicted, all blacks are horribly victimized by white slave owners, white slave catchers, and white landowners who view slaves as their property not as human beings with the same feelings as their white counterparts. What's consequential under these viewing terms is that the mind of the watcher swells with feelings of intense animosity and desires for revenge.

Predictably, a lot of negativity toward whites is stirred up among blacks with this kind of "entertainment," even though no white American slave owner still lives. However, besides the ramped up animosity certain to be aroused by the new *Roots*, a hunch is that

this re-do has to do with ongoing African-American interest in reparations due to unpaid wages for the years of involuntary work as slaves by their forbearers. A decision to impose these payments now would most likely be received badly as so many Americans are similar in background to my wife and me: On both sides, we go back three generations in the U.S. to the 1880s, having nothing ever to do with slavery.

A concluding thought about *Roots* is that if Americans or any other people anywhere on earth want to know about slavery in the U.S., they are encouraged to read about it. After all, there are thousands of published accounts on the subject. That way, if the account was written accurately, the reader can learn what was done and how it was done without having his or her emotions stirred to unhealthy-aroused levels by visceral-inspiring scenes of human men and women terribly mistreated by other human men and women not unlike Hitler's Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia or Idi Amin's Uganda.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly.)

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