

KeizerOpinion

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Yet another conversation

Here we go again. A community conversation, co-sponsored by the Keizer Chamber of Commerce and the city's Community Development Department, will be Wednesday, Feb. 28 to discuss the future of River Road.

We've been here before. The last time was the River Road Renaissance Advisory Committee in 2012, led by a high-priced consulting firm out of Portland. What came out of that endeavor was the creation of five districts

along River Road. From that came a short-lived project of beautification, adding meandering sidewalks, bioswales and native plants. Unfortunately, the Renaissance Project was stopped short when the Urban Renewal District funds were used to pay off construction overruns of Keizer Civic Center and making up for shortfalls at Keizer Station.

The 43-page report from the initial River Road Renaissance discussions haven't been sitting on a shelf for six years. The report gets perused from time to time. It is one of two reports about Keizer that gather more dust than attention. The other is the Keizer Compass report, a community project that set out to design what the city should look like in the 2020s.

Yet, here we are, getting ready for another discussion about River Road. If you are talking about something you can say you're doing something. Not in our book. Talk is cheap, we've talked and talked before. Let's implement.

We urge the facilitators of the upcoming Community Conversation to keep the discussion on track and not let it turn into a bitch session about what the city is doing wrong.

Their words still resonate

Millions of Americans will have a holiday on Monday, Feb. 19, known as President's Day—to honor both Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. They and millions of their fellow American residents will use that day to sleep in, enjoy a hobby or go shopping.

As with any holiday that honors a person, we hope that at least a bit of time is spent to think about Lincoln and Washington, specially, what they said. Lincoln was our most quotable president; what he said resonates to this day.

Some of his nuggets: "Whatever you are, be a good one."

"Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the Earth."

"Do I not destroy my enemies

If there must be another conversation about River Road let it be one that answers the primary question: what kind of city/River Road corridor do the residents of Keizer want? It is a basic question, one that needs to be answered before a shovel of dirt is turned or a zone is changed. If the majority of people do not want to expend public money to turn Keizer in general and River Road specifically into a dense, commercial center, then the conversation ends and we should move on.

It is important to remember that iterations of reports about the future of Keizer were the work of a very small number of residents. To make credible policy one should rely on more than the opinions of less than 1 percent of the citizenry.

When having a conversation about River Road specifically, though, it is important to have all those affected. That includes not only the people who own a business along the city's main thoroughfare but the people who own the properties. A lessor has only so much leeway to make major structural or landscape changes. If we're going to talk, let's be sure all the players are at the table.

The community conversation about River Road may very well hinge on a few narrow topics such as sign and landscape codes. We can have that conversation but the city and its people will be best served if a consensus is reached to give the Chamber of Commerce and the city a direction.

After this discussion we want to see action, as do most of the people interested.

—LAZ

our opinion



Only the comfortable can retreat from justice

By MICHAEL GERSON

For some years, the main political project of the right has been to take control of the government while denigrating the government. Donald Trump drew this strategy to its logical conclusion during his presidential campaign, asserting as a kind of refrain: "Our politicians are stupid."

Which came to mind following the revelation that chief of staff John Kelly had kept Rob Porter in a sensitive position (White House staff secretary) after being informed by the FBI that there was a protective order against him. As it came to mind when Michael Flynn was elevated to national security adviser following repeated FBI warnings that he might be compromised by the Russians. As it came to mind after the elevation of Anthony Scaramucci to, well, any position of public trust.

I have to admit that the Trump administration has acted with a certain consistency in these matters. Trump and his team accused the government of being corrupt—and have proved it beyond reasonable doubt. They alleged that the government was brimming with stupidity—and took it as a kind of recruiting challenge. Across the executive branch, it is a golden age for the unqualified and unfit. This is the natural outcome of contempt for professional experience, contempt for governing skill, contempt for government itself.

Democrats seeking to take control of the House and deny re-election to the president—along with the conservatives resisting Trump—will be

sorely tempted to run with the theme: *Trump and his political allies are stupid.* This would be a variant of Trump's strategy to win power by promoting contempt for those who hold power. It might lead to a shift in partisan control. It would do little to recover our national spirit. Someone, from left or right, must restore respect for the enterprise of governing as a source of national unity and moral aspiration.

Is this even remotely possible in our fractured republic? As a homework assignment, prospective leaders might read the speeches of Robert F. Kennedy. The late 1960s were a time not only of division but of political violence. Kennedy accurately described Americans as inhabiting different, unconnected islands.

His response? During his (tragically brief) presidential campaign, Kennedy urged Americans to look beyond mere economic measures of national success and to focus on cultural and spiritual excellence—"the intelligence of our public debate," on the "integrity of our public officials," on our "courage," "compassion" and "devotion to our country." He challenged traditional ideological divisions, calling for a "better liberalism" that "knows the answer to all problems is not spending money" and a "better conservatism" that "recognizes the urgent need to bring opportunity to all citizens." And he confronted a politics premised on conflict. "Some look for scapegoats," Kennedy said. "Others look for conspiracies, but this much is clear: Violence breeds violence, repression brings retaliation, and only a cleaning of our whole society can remove this

sickness from our soul." Kennedy talked of politics as the realm of urgency and necessity. At any given moment in a democracy, great issues of justice and morality are at stake. The claim that politics is dirty and irrelevant is an argument only comfortable people can make. If you were to live in a neighborhood plagued by poverty, dominated by gangs and served by failing schools, the effectiveness of government would matter greatly to you. Retreating from the cause of justice is only conceivable for those who have few needs for justice themselves.

Kennedy also talked of politics as the realm of nobility. At its best, government is about the right ordering of our lives together. It can't be unimportant because justice is never unimportant. Political rhetoric and ideals can raise the moral sights of a nation and point men and women to responsibilities beyond the narrow bounds of self and family.

And Kennedy understood that criticizing the corruption and stupidity of those in power is not a politics sufficient to a great country. "We can perhaps remember," he said, "if only for a time, that those who live with us are our brothers, that they share with us the same short moment of life. ... Surely this bond of common fate, surely this bond of common goals, can begin to teach us something. Surely we can learn, at the least, to look around at those of us, of our fellow men, and surely we can begin to work a little harder to bind up the wounds among us and to become in our hearts brothers and countrymen once again."

(Washington Post Writers Group)

other opinions

Trump should forgo military parade

On July 14, 2017, President Donald Trump was in Paris on Bastille Day to join French President Emmanuel Macron on his reviewing podium to observe representations of that country's military might. We Americans learned that Trump was deeply impressed and wants a similar military parade here on July 4 of this year.

Bastille Day honors the thousands of Parisians who struck back against a monumentally corrupt Louis XVI, his family and friends after years of having their fellow Parisians thrown into a cesspool of a place whose name was the Bastille where they typically were beaten and tortured for transgressions such as stealing a loaf of bread. French men and women were fed up with their treatment and turned to revolution, including the beheading of their king and members of his court.

We've now got tens of thousands of Americans whose financial and general economic circumstances are so bad their living conditions have come to homelessness while thousands of others have mainly lost everything, including health care for themselves and their children, about whom a threat continues that every final safety net will be taken away and the last hope of avoiding destitution will be lost.

Although discontent represents a common view among these and other Americans, a full-blown revolution here appears unlikely now, but not unthinkable. Regardless of numbers of Americans living wherever, President Trump wants a big military parade estimated to cost in the seven

figures, delivered by U.S. armed forces in Washington. This writer likes the idea of a parade but not one that glorifies U.S. killing machines.

A military parade would pay tribute to Trump while in fact he's advised to get a grip on where this nation's people live and breath and cancel such an outlandish extravagance to advertise the U.S. military, a military that's already so large and bloated in manpower and materials that every other country in the world knows full well it has no chance against it. Meanwhile, our military is rife with waste and corrupted by fighting unnecessary wars. Further, such a parade will simply enrage and further upset those Americans who directly struggle and those who've lost that struggle and now inhabit our sidewalks, our parks and private property.

No, instead, since large numbers of those Americans with excessive control over money, money that fifty to sixty years ago was generally more evenly spread throughout the American population, we should have a parade that recognizes them. So, the American version of a Bastille Day parade would simply show how disproportionately rich our wealthy have become. In a word, America's "one percent" could display their collections of material goods.

Their displays could include signs that inform the parade goers as to what amount they will receive every year in future by way of the tax reform bill passed last month by Republicans in Congress and signed into law by President Trump. Also, miniatures or models of their many homes could be set

up on traditional floats like those in Macy's Thanksgiving Parade. Then, too, their fleets of super expensive domestic and foreign cars could be lined up behind floats driven by their private chauffeurs.

President Trump could still receive accolades by way of high praise and recognition for his wealth accumulations. Should he wish to do so he could wear a generalissimo uniform and stand or sit at the head of the parade displaying floats with replicas of his New York City tower, his hotels, his private homes and his resort golf courses, as well as every achievement of his as a business deal maker.

Oh, sure, of course, there could be a few M1 Abrams military tanks and LGM-30G ICBMs in the mix of floats. After all, we formerly were proud as a peaceful people intended to resemble ancient Athens, not entirely given over to a Sparta-look-alike! The result of the rich showing their wares? Perhaps the American people would awaken from their long slumber to vote persons into federal public offices who will keep their jobs because they design and pass legislation into laws that begin to help to address and reverse the democracy-disabling disparities in U.S. pay and salaries, living standards, opportunity, and chance to embrace the American dream.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

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Keizertimes

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year: \$25 in Marion County, \$33 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

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