

KeizerOpinion

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A good start

Last week, a *Keizertimes* reporter was invited to be part of the Keizer Police Department's Deadly Force Review Board and then write about the experience for newspaper readers. While the invitation was accepted quickly, it led to a lot of soul-searching soon after.

Every time a police officer uses deadly force — even when there is no fatality — a review board is assembled to determine whether the officers involved acted within department policies. The incident under review last week was the first time a Keizer officer's actions resulted in a death. It stemmed from the armed robbery of a River Road business in March that turned into a vehicular chase that turned into a standoff in a residential neighborhood. The officer had already been cleared of wrongdoing by a Marion County grand jury. The Deadly Force Review Board was assembled to determine whether department policy had been followed and if the policies in place needed to be updated as a result of the shooting.

After making the decision to take part in the process, we considered questions such as: the ability for the paper to continue reporting objectively on police activities; the motivation of the Keizer Police Department in extending the invitation; and what to do if questions we had during the review went unanswered.

We understand that readers might have different answers than the ones we arrived at — and we probably agree with many of them — but we also felt the downsides were outweighed by one aspect of the discussion: this was the first time a civilian, much less a representative of the media, had been given access to the process the Keizer Police Department follows after using deadly force. That is a good start.

The review board worked primarily from a summary report, but had access to notes from the original investigation, crime scene footage and photos, testimony from multiple officers in front of a grand jury and autopsy reports. Throughout the process, the four members of the Keizer Police Department on the review board answered questions or accessed relevant information from a voluminous stack of paper and video record without hesitation.

Given that police departments are generally viewed as having a "blue wall of silence" regarding actions members of the public could find questionable, the transparency on display was commendable. It appears, in this instance, the officer not only met but exceeded many of the guidelines set forth in policy. However, the one unanswered

question is how much of the information had been reviewed by other officer-members of the board prior to extending the invitation to the newspaper. While the representatives of the department, aside from the board chair who assembled the summary document, appeared to be reviewing much of the information for the first time, we are simply not certain.

Regardless, this is a good start. Inviting members of the public to have a voice in reviewing instances when deadly force is used is essential to maintaining the trust of the people whose faith in officers' intentions is what gives the department, as a whole, its power. While this instance appeared to our reporter to be in accordance with department policy, there may come a day when an officer's actions are not so clear-cut. Allowing civilians, not necessarily media, to have a voice in reviewing the facts of such a case might have negative consequences in the short-term, but it could also help turn the tide of negativity that often follows closed-door processes. Law enforcement officials must also be open to adjusting policy in the aftermath of questionable findings.

Moreover, members of the Keizer Police Department should be talking about the outcomes of this process with their brethren and sistren in blue. Police departments around the country are feeling extra pressure these days as a long string of seeming abuses of power fill local and national media streams. We know this takes a toll on police officers equal to the frustration felt by the public. It is quite likely that Keizer Police Department administrators are hoping that this is one small step in reversing that trend. It is. But Keizer Police Chief John Teague is a highly-respected, and involved, figure at the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training that every Oregon officer and administrator turns to for establishing and learning best practices. It is incumbent upon him and his department's employees to motivate other police departments to follow KPD's lead.

No one begins life distrusting law enforcement officers. It is an attitude cultivated through experiences lived, shared by others and in the absence of information to the contrary. Just as we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, the entirety of the law enforcement cannot be judged solely by bad actors within the ranks. Opening up the deadly force review process to civilians at Keizer's police department is one way to counteract the swell of negativity, but it cannot be the end.

our opinion



Inside immigrant detention

I met Helena once. We sat on opposite sides of a long table, a small wooden partition separating us. I introduced myself as from a nonprofit that organizes visits to people in immigration detention. And then, she told me her story.

Her birthday was coming up. She is from Cameroon; the Central African country is on the brink of civil war. She fled the country after being targeted for her involvement in the independence movement. She came to America to seek asylum, to be safe.

And then we locked her up. I don't know what happened to Helena. I wrote her after our visit, wishing her a happy birthday. She wrote back, but after that I didn't hear from her again. I hope we granted her asylum, let her start her life again. I hope we did the right thing. I hope.

Not enough is known about immigrant detention. People who come to this country without proper documentation often find themselves detained, either because Immigration and Customs Enforcement picked them up after years of living in the U.S. or because they surrendered themselves to Border Patrol upon

reaching the border, hoping America would be the home of the free, the brave, and the merciful.

We disappoint them.

Immigrants spend months in detention, waiting for hearings about their asylum applications and their deportation appeals. Detention is not for criminals—any immigrant, documented or undocumented, will end up in regular prison for criminal offenses. Detention is for those waiting to see if they can stay in the country. But they're treated like criminals—held in the same facilities, dressed in the same jumpsuits, fed the same food. Except, because they're not citizens, they retain no right to a lawyer. Detention is not supposed to be punitive. But it is. You can see it on the tired, pleading faces of those who have to endure it.

In detention, we treat immigrants like the world's trash, unwelcome both in their home countries and in the U.S. We justify this treatment in the rhetoric we use to talk about immigrants. Dehumanizing terms like "illegal alien" allow us to distance ourselves from the human lives at stake. I mean, what is an illegal alien? That term doesn't conjure a picture

of your next-door neighbor. We talk about undocumented immigrants like they're little green men who were too lazy to apply for a visa. But that's just not true. Undocumented immigrants are human beings with lives and families and stories we can't even imagine, and who just couldn't wait 20 years for their visa application to be processed. When human lives are in the balance, we need to think past "legal" and "illegal." We need to think in terms of kindness and justice.

I'd like to believe the human spirit bends toward empathy. I'd like to believe we can fix this. I'd like to believe we can treat humans as humans and burn the paperwork. But that's not the national trend as of now: A system that already detains hundreds of thousands of people every year, according to the Detention Watch Network, is expanding under the Trump Administration. That's why you, registered voter, need to educate yourself. Learn more about what immigration detention is, how much of your tax money goes to fund it (hint: a lot), and what alternatives to detention exist for those between legal statuses. FreedomForImmigrants.org is a good start. Now please, go and be kind.

(Casey Chaffin is interning with the *Keizertimes* this summer.)

casey chaffin

gene h. mcintyre

Failures of leadership

Our presidents, one after another, have demonstrated lack of sufficient ability to handle the awesome burden to which they were elected. Meanwhile, this writer is not convinced that it's a woman as U.S. president who'll necessarily save us. Perhaps the most able computer in America should be programmed to build a robot that could succeed where mere mortals have failed.

The way we're being led now is simply not working. As far as the current president is concerned, the media should be advised to give up the pretense of treating his behavior as something to analyze on anything resembling rational grounds. Having watched and listened to Donald Trump for the past 16 months has led to the conclusion that his behavior results from a serious personality disorder. Reporters should back off from their amateur psychiatrics and avoid any further nonsense.

There was much less of the phony Freudian stuff during Obama's two terms as he patently revealed himself as one who wanted to be loved too much by all members of Congress while the nation's racists prospered

mostly undeterred. Obama could have worked to slay the beast of intolerance but chose to turn a blind eye to prejudice that most Americans would prefer to see as gone as the KKK and the oft-used Red Scare lies.

Previous presidents have also let us down. George W. Bush was ruled by a hawk vice president and other hawkish members of his cabinet. Bill Clinton found more time to dally in extra-marital affairs than pursue the nation's festering issues. George H.W. Bush made promises he couldn't keep. Jimmy Carter chose to work alone without members of Congress and thereby was ineffective. Ronald Reagan was more interested in getting even with progressive-minded Americans he viewed as his enemies so became an engine that delivered America's 19th century-minded-ultra-conservatives into power. Richard Nixon was power-crazed and sought absolute control at the price of seriously threatening the U.S. democracy. And so on.

The current president has become a textbook study in what looks an awful lot like mental illness. President

Trump's facts-free, self-centered, self-aggrandizing, dangerous and pathological narcissism appear to be getting progressively worse. His reality was recently exposed in the Singapore summit meeting with North Korea's Kim Jong Un and found wanting in the extreme. Hence, the nation is rapidly escalating into a high-risk place as the president's grandiosity and paranoia gather more and more steam to reach what may be nonstop levels of rule by authoritarian means. His repeated praise of Kim Jong Un for total subservience by his subjects and that he's a smart and great leader does nothing but alarm.

We play in this country now with an all-consuming conflagration that could burn this country to charcoal on barren ground. Why more among us do not demand a person in the White House who proceeds with thoughtful and exhaustively prepared decisions in concert with counsel from the best minds among our 320 million citizens, leaving the use of tweets to the silly and mindless wit nothing better to do, leaves this writer to conclude that it matters not to many among us whether our ideal of liberty and justice for all can survive here.

(Gene H. McIntyre lives in Keizer.)

Bring back cursive

To the Editor:
A recent study found that many young school kids cannot read the Constitution as it was written. They also could not read a letter sent to them that was written in "longhand". In other words, a young person would not be able to read a letter written to them by their grandmother because they can't read or write cursive. They call it "that strange writing."

Ending the teaching of cursive was an unfortunate decision and there is plenty of blame to go around. The tech industry told educators that young people will not need cursive in the future. After all, they will have their devices. Our legislature failed to insist

that cursive be preserved and taught. And with little resistance from law makers, school districts saw the elimination of cursive from the curriculum as an easy target. Lastly, we the tax payers failed to provide sufficient funding for schools to keep teaching cursive.

Cursive reading and writing is good for the young developing brain. In learning cursive, a young person develops a unique and formal style that remains with them for all of their life. There is a certain beauty to long-hand.

Older people who were taught cursive generally remember it as one of the more enjoyable periods in the school day. The lesson provided immediate tangible results and reward. And it was fun!

Education (school) should be about preparation for the many aspects of life and not just job and career skills. Let's ask our legislature to bring back cursive. And if a dedicated and focused tax is necessary to fund it, let's all be willing to pay for it.

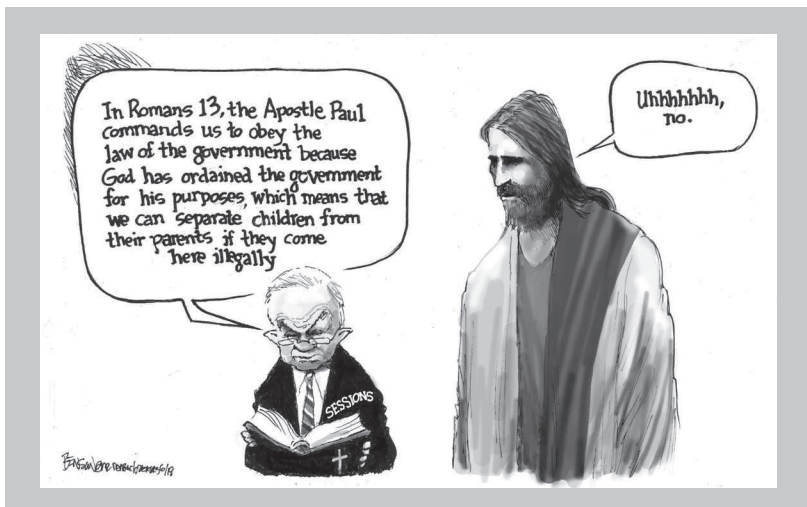
Jim Parr Keizer

Thanks to everyone

To the Editor:
Truth Tabernacle Church and Truth Tabernacle Christian Academy would like to express our gratitude to the communities of Salem and Keizer for their donations to our 19th annual 30 Kilometer Bike-A-Thon that was held on May 12. It was a tremendous success and we thank you for your support.

Jessica Anderson, secretary Truth Tabernacle

letters



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