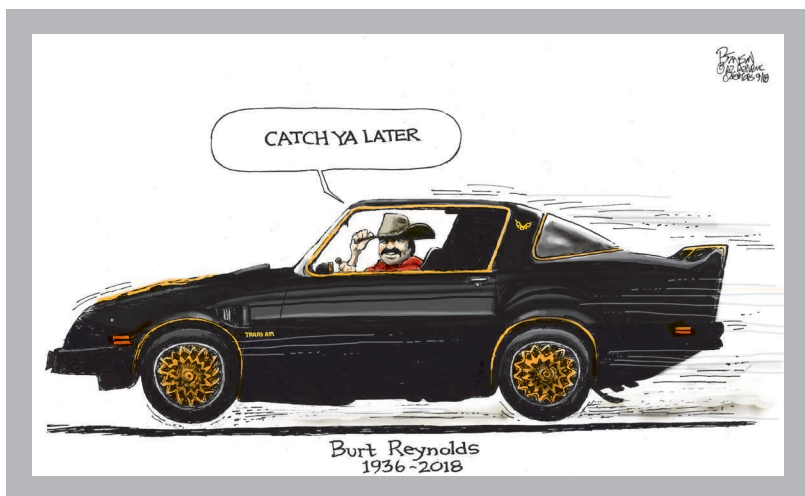


KeizerOpinion

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Consider the source

Alex Jones, Charles Johnson and Lara Loomer, three self-proclaimed pillars of conservative thought online, spent last week on the sidelines of congressional intelligence hearings on social media's role in election meddling.

They hoped to garner attention and support from congresspeople after getting suspended or banned from a variety of social media platforms. Depending on where you get your information, the trio are either white supremacists contributing to the spread of unfounded conspiracy theory or the last bastions of conservative free speech.

Regardless of why they were suspended or banned, the more pertinent line of inquiry is why corporations should care at all about suspending or banning anyone for any reason at any time. The platforms belong to the parent corporations and courts have bestowed on corporate persons, as an entity apart and separate from the people who run them, most of the rights granted to those of us who arrived through the birth canal.

The journey to corporate personhood began in 1868 when headnote attached to a Supreme Court decision claiming the Court felt corporations fell under some of the equal protection rights granted by the 14th Amendment — an amendment meant to redress some of the most egregious echoes of slavery. The court affirmed the concept two years later, has reaffirmed it repeatedly ever since and, more recently, started down a path of more expansive corporate liberty. In 2010, the Supreme Court decided corporate political speech is protected and, in 2014, provided for corporate exemptions when regulations are deemed offensive to the corporation's religious beliefs.

Some of the rights were needed to facilitate business, but the ever-widening gyre of corporate personhood

makes it difficult to comprehend what standing anyone banned from a social media platform has to appeal such decisions. The corporations can and do enact policies in attempts to mold how their platforms are used, but with so many 1s and 0s flying through the ether at any moment, there is only so much any corporate person can do to separate the wheat from the chaff. They could choose to refrain from such activity completely and there would be relatively minimal repercussions from a legal standpoint.

The humans employed by the corporate persons have taken to likening social media to the new "marketplace of ideas," albeit one that grew corrupted through the concerted efforts of some users — and their bots — who discovered how to game the system.

However, given that corporate speech is now protected, so is the corporate right to be biased. Shutting down any type of speech a corporate person rules unprofitable is well within its rights on any platform it owns. Legally, it's no different than an individual choosing Fox News over MSNBC, or vice versa.

All of this sharpens the irony of Jones sitting in the audience quietly pleading for help. During the last campaigns for president, one of the more popular InfoWars merchandise items, the site run by Jones, depicted Hillary Clinton in Joker-esque make-up with the caption "What difference does it make?"

Wherever you fall on the political spectrum, it should make a difference where you get your information. It's critical to making informed decisions about who you want running government because, one day, you might want them to defend your right to access a marketplace of ideas no matter who owns it.

—Editorial Board

our opinion

debra j. saunders

Many question integrity of anonymous op-ed author

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

An anonymous Trump administration official confessed in an opinion piece published last week that many senior officials "are working diligently from within to frustrate parts of his agenda and his worst inclinations. "I know. I am one of them."

There are many ways to react to the anonymous piece published by *The New York Times*.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., offered one take. He told CNN that in his world, people don't care much about what runs in *The New York Times*. Fair enough.

Others questioned the author's integrity or credentials.

Ari Fleischer, press secretary for President George W. Bush, tweeted, "Support the President or don't work there."

Jennifer Palmieri, former communications director for President Barack Obama, noted that "this person could easily be someone most of us have never heard of"—, for example, a deputy of a department most voters don't know.

Fox News host Tucker Carlson berated the unknown official's presumption for bashing the anti-free trade positions that Trump promised Americans as he campaigned for office. Ditto Trump's attempts to make nice with Russia, which the author said steady hands in the bureaucracy have undermined.

Carlson found the notion that staffers would try to sabotage an elected official's policies downright anti-democratic.

First lady Melania Trump had a message for the author: "To the writer of the op-ed, you are not protecting this country, you are sabotaging it with your cowardly actions."

Indeed, the piece seemed written deliberately to send the president down a nasty rabbit hole with rants and recriminations—the exact behavior to which the unknown author objected.

President Donald Trump's reaction was a combination of rage and self-pity.

The president addressed a group of sheriffs gathered in the East Room shortly after the *Times* posted the piece. "A lot of times you're looked at and you're scorned," Trump told the room, scorned, that is, by "the media because the media is very dishonest."

Trump then offered that the men and women in uniforms were "I guess, a little bit like me."

Trump cited the good economic news under his watch—4 million jobs created, 400,000 new manufacturing jobs and record unemployment—all claims that were close enough to accurate and worthy of praise. And he was right that he does not get enough credit for the strong economy.

Then he called the unknown au-

thor's piece "gutless," and later tweeted, "TREASON?"

The White House press corps' reaction was to ask every administration suit who walked near a camera if he or she wrote the piece. Cable TV could not get enough of the story. Pundits were demonstrably unperturbed at having to rely once again on an anonymous source.

The story had every element that many Americans hate about the news media: a backstabber hiding in the shadows, palace intrigue in lieu of policy and a reward for lack of loyalty.

Like the anonymous author, I support Trump's commitment to deregulation and increasing military spending. I strongly approve of his Supreme Court picks, his decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem and his decision to reach out to Egypt after President Obama.

Still, I believe that there are people in the administration toiling to protect the president from himself and the country from the president's worst impulses. And I believe that one of them snapped.

After the story appeared, Vice President Mike Pence's office and members of Trump's Cabinet tweeted denunciations of the "gutless op-ed" and declarations denying authorship.

But I believe the anonymous official in *The New York Times*, however high or low that person might be. I believe it because I've read the president's tweets.

(Creators Syndicate)

A passion for social justice

By MICHAEL GERSON

Since the Council of Nicea, Christians have been prone to issue joint statements that are designed to draw the boundaries of orthodoxy—and cast their rivals beyond them. Another one, not quite in the same league, was recently issued by a group including John MacArthur, a prominent (and very conservative) evangelical pastor and Bible teacher.

The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel claims that social justice is not, in fact, a definitional component of the gospel, and that it is heresy to elevate "non-essentials to the status of essentials." As you might expect, the document affirms traditional beliefs on same-sex relationships and "God-ordained" gender roles. But it seems particularly focused on rejecting collective blame in racial matters. "We deny that ... any person is morally culpable for another person's sin," the statement argues. "We further deny that one's ethnicity establishes any necessary connection to any particular sin."

In case this wasn't clear enough, the document goes on: "We reject any teaching that encourages racial groups to view themselves as privileged oppressors or entitled victims of oppression. ... We deny that a person's feelings of offense or oppression necessarily prove that someone else is guilty of sinful behaviors, oppression or prejudice." Christians, in the view of MacArthur and his fellow signatories, must condemn both "racial animosity" and "racial vainglory."

By way of background, it seems that this statement was created in outraged response to another group of evangelicals—the Gospel Coalition—that

held a conference on the 50th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death. MacArthur clearly wants to paint the participants, including prominent pastors Tim Keller, Russell Moore, Thabiti Anyabwile and John Piper, as liberals at risk of heresy.

Where to start a response? First, there is the matter of judgment. MacArthur surveys the evangelical movement in 2018—increasingly discredited by rank hypocrisy and close ties to an angry, ethnonationalist political movement—and concludes that its main problem is too much ... social justice. It is a sad case of complete spiritual blindness.

Second, there is a matter of history. Elsewhere MacArthur complains that evangelicals have a "newfound obsession" with social justice. This could only be claimed by someone who knows nothing of the evangelical story. In the 19th century, northern evangelicalism was generally viewed as inseparable from social activism. Evangelist Charles Finney insisted that "the loss of interest in benevolent enterprises" was usually evidence of a "backslidden heart." Among these enterprises Finney listed good government, temperance reform, the abolition of slavery and relief for the poor. *The Gospel*, preached abolitionist Gilbert Haven in 1863, "is not confined to a repentance and faith that have no connection with social or civil duties. The Evangel of Christ is an all-embracing theme."

But most damaging is the MacArthur statement's position on racial matters. What could a group of largely white evangelicals, many of them southerners, possibly mean by criticizing "racial vainglory"? Is it vanity to praise the unbroken spirit of Africans

in America during more than four centuries of vicious oppression, which was often blessed by elements of the Christian church? Is it vanity to recognize the redemptive role played by African-American Christianity in calling our nation to the highest ideals of its founding?

The purpose of "The Statement on Social Justice and the Gospel" is clear enough. It is, as one prominent evangelical leader put it to me, "to stop any kind of real repentance for past social injustice, to make space for those who are indeed ethno-nationalists, and to give excuse for those who feel Christians need only 'preach the gospel' to save souls and not love their neighbors sacrificially whether they believe as we do or not."

The MacArthur statement is designed to support, not a gospel truth, but a social myth. America, the myth goes, used to have systematic discrimination, but that ended with the Civil Rights Act. Now racism is purely an individual issue, for which the good people should not be blamed. This narrative has nothing to do with true religion. It has everything to do with ignorant self-satisfaction.

It is neither realistic nor fair to ignore the continuing social effects of hundreds of years of state-sponsored oppression, cruelty and stolen wages. It is neither realistic nor fair to ignore the current damage of mass incarceration and failed educational institutions on minority groups. Prejudice and institutional evil are ongoing — deeply engrained in social practice and ratified by indifference. Repentance is in order — along with a passion for social justice that is inseparable from the Christian gospel.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

other voices

gene h. mcintyre

Hate art is a step too far

To the Editor:

Well, the *Keizertimes* has truly reached a new low with their recent despicable artwork which will certainly serve to fan the flames of hatred in this community.

I find it shameful that you would feature the ugly face of hate in this way when a different approach to the

letters

issue might have been much more convincing on the front page.

How about showcasing some of the more successful stories of inclusion, if that is your goal.

This kind of current coverage is not the answer.

Geoffrey Smith
Keizer

KEIZERTIMES.COM

Web Poll Results

How long is your commute to work?

10 to 30 minutes - **50%**

Less than 10 minutes - **35%**

More than 30 minutes - **15%**

Vote in a new poll every Thursday!

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