

OPINION

Watching Fireworks Would Have Been More Fun

My Broken Heart

BY DONALD KAUL

I celebrated the Fourth of July this year by having a heart attack. All things considered, watching fireworks would have been more fun.

I woke up at 2 a.m. on July 5th with raging pain in my chest and both arms. I was bathed in a cold, clammy sweat, and my breath was coming short. I was slightly nauseous.

"Gee," I said to myself. "I wonder what's wrong?"

Apparently I was waiting for a Western Union messenger to come to the door and say: "You're having a heart attack, stupid. Call 911."

It went on like that for a few hours until my wife woke up too and con-

vinced me to get help. An ambulance brought me to the emergency room, where a team of doctors, nurses, attendants, and God-knows-who else was waiting for me.

It was like being sent through a cardiac car wash. I went in on one end with a heart attack; I came out the other an hour later with an unblocked artery, a stent, and an optimistic prognosis.

They told me they expected me to return to close to 100 percent. (This was particularly good news as I haven't been close to 100 percent in years, if ever.)

I'm told that my reluctance to seek immediate help is fairly typical of men. Even male doctors often go into a state of denial when confronted with symptoms that can only be a heart attack. They wait. It's a guy thing.

If you take only one thing away from the newspaper today, let it be

this:

If you start showing symptoms of a heart attack, even if they're not as dramatic as mine, don't screw around. Call 911 and have an ambulance take you to the hospital. The treatment starts in the ambulance.

As a cardiologist friend told me: "They say time is money, but in my business time is muscle." The longer you take to get treatment, the more heart muscle is destroyed — permanently.

The upshot of this is that I've suspended writing this column indefinitely. (I can hear the moans of anguish across the nation now.)

And there's a real question as to whether I'll start writing it again when I feel better. (I can hear the cheers and shouts of triumph drowning out the moans.)

I'm now 77 years old. I've been doing this — writing columns — for nearly 50 years, 35 years of it in

Washington. I can tell you that things have changed, and not for the better.

I've covered fools, crooks, and charlatans over this half century. But for the most part, they had some sense of seriousness about them — an appreciation for the national interest as they saw it. Even rogues like Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon did.

The current bunch of miscreants is nothing like that. Centrist Democrats, who talk a good game but don't do much about it, are battling increasingly radical Republicans, a fierce tribe of Bible-thumping know-nothings fueled by money from modern Robber Barons who want to sell the country off by the board foot and metric ton for their personal profit.

Thus we approximate the times described by the Irish poet W.B. Yeats:

"The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."

Does that describe Congress or what?

Do I want to spend my time left deciphering such people, trying to decide whether the Republican leaders are as stupid as they sound or merely willfully ignorant?

We are well on our way toward becoming a nation on the colonial model, where a few people own everything and the rest of us play the lottery and watch football. That's not the America I grew up in. It's not the America I spent my life writing about.

I have to figure out whether I want to spend my last years writing about this new country.

I'll let you know.

In Other Words Columnist Donald Kaul lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.

Restore the Soul of Democracy

Our voice and vote is needed

BY M. LINDA JARAMILLO

In the last few decades, we watched the long lines of millions of voters waiting their turn to cast their vote in places like South Africa, Chile, Nicaragua, and The Philippines. Just recently, the same happened in Egypt.

It seems that the new energy and enthusiasm to vote in these nations followed a struggle with oppressive control of the electoral process. In many of these nations, voter's identification credentials were rejected. Cases of ballot box controls were later revealed. Thousands of votes were left uncounted. In the U.S., being a nation built on the values of democracy, the experience of these nations should be a wake-up call to us right now.

Recent developments of states unilaterally purging election rolls should raise red flags of concern. The fact that state after state in this country is imposing very rigid election requirements should stir us out of our apathetic slumber.

Over 24 states now have some form of ID requirement, 11 of them during the last two years. Their explanation is that we need to guard against voter fraud; however, the data does not prove that fraud is a major issue. In fact, the average fraud persecution of the last decade is one per state per year, and those were vote buying schemes paid for by wealthy investors.

The real result of these new requirements is that they exclude persons who do not typically have a government issued ID card. Those most experiencing this lock out of democracy "of the

people" are the elderly, the poor, and persons of color.

Just one example is a couple nearing 90 years old arrived at their polling place only to be told that their ballot was provisional because they did not have proper ID. They knew the staff at the polls very well, but they did not know of the new law. They got to submit their temporary ballot, but later learned that their votes were later rejected.

Similarly, hundreds were blocked from voting in states like Georgia, Tennessee, and Indiana in the recent primary election season. When any one person who is eligible to vote is turned away, every single person should be worried.

We can almost understand why people get discouraged and quit participating. However, we cannot let this stop us; we must revive our democracy and energize voters once again. We must turn the tide of indifference and protect the rights of every single person who is eligible to vote.

The need is great to equip ourselves and our communities to make informed, thoughtful decisions about those who will lead us in the future. We each play a unique role in this election cycle, by encouraging civil, respectful dialogue that builds community and a hope-filled vision of the future that includes all people.

We can and should participate in voter education and empowerment programs that help us reflect on our collective life and the common good through the political process. It is our fervent hope that you will connect with members of your local church and community this year through the Our Faith Our Vote Our Voice Campaign.

The stakes are as high as they have ever been. Now, more than ever, our vote and voice is needed. Together, we can help to restore the soul of democracy.

M. Linda Jaramillo is a minister for Justice and Witness Ministries for the United Church of Christ.



Letter to the Editor Civil Rights Fountain

I am the chief executive officer for the Rosa Parks Memorial Association of Portland. We want to dedicate a civil rights fountain and Rosa Parks monument in downtown Portland at Waterfront Park and the Transit Mall.

Our motivation is to honor the civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks following her recent death and the 51st anniversary of her December 1, 1955 arrest in Montgomery Ala. when she refused to relinquish her seat on a segregated bus and the bus boycott that followed.

"Rosa is a legend of her time and changed the course of history. We will dedicate the civil rights fountain to her for the benefit of the community". This will build the better future for Oregon and America by bringing us together as one nation under God.

We are asking the city of Portland and city commissioners to donate a grant or gift of \$300,000 for the monument to extemporize the African-American community in Portland and throughout the state.

By honoring Rosa Parks and keeping her memory alive, we are asking that the site be slated downtown instead of Peninsula Park in the Piedmont neighborhood of north and northeast Portland, where 95 percent of residents and visitors never travel. I cannot say it enough, African-Americans have been left out in the cold in every case; and we need a change here in this city now.

I have worked on the Rosa Parks Project for close to eight years and it is my will to see this event come to light.

We are asking for your support in this task and appreciate any assistance that will expedite the event. Please feel free to contact me via e-mail at WillieBanks@RosaparksFoundation.org or by telephone at 503-702-2011 or 503-877-9346.

Dr. Rev. Willie Banks

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