

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN

Publisher

JENNINE PERKINSON

Advertising Director

DANIEL WATTENBURGER

Managing Editor

TIM TRAINOR

Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

# Another massacre, another set of clichés

‘Escalating cycle of violence’ has become a cliché — something we skip over on our way to more novel news. Last week’s attack on police in Dallas, close on the heels of video-recorded killings of civilians by police, deserves to wrench our attention back to this complex issue.

It has always been true that the misdeeds of one evil or reckless man can unravel the carefully woven norms crafted by civilization. It was, for example, one assassination that set off the terrible chain reaction that precipitated World War I, killing 17 million.

In the 21st century U.S., the growing cyclone of deadly shootings is in no sense on the scale of warfare. But it is nevertheless deeply shocking and worthy of action.

Last week’s episode was all the more troubling because it again involved slayings by and of society’s defenders, the police. Fatal shootings by police in Minnesota and Louisiana added to the nearly 500 U.S. civilians killed by police in the first half of 2016, compared to 465 in the first six months of 2015. A disproportionate number of those killed are African-American. Even so, many of these killings by police occurred in circumstances that were not considered controversial.

The highly publicized incidents last week initially appear unreasonable, but investigations are still far from arriving at any formal allegations of wrongdoing by officers. The gunman who murdered five innocent officers in Dallas, wounding seven more, said his actions were vengeance for police shootings of African-Americans.

There undoubtedly are racist and trigger-happy police, just as there are flawed individuals in every other profession. On the other hand, few citizens blame police for being on edge.

Last Thursday’s events in Dallas bring the number of American officers killed in the line of duty in 2016 to 58. In 2015, 130 died; in 2014, the death toll was 145.

It would be the worst possible outcome if hateful actions by a few lead to more lives being lost — either civilian or police.

At the same time, this is yet another in a seemingly endless sequence of mass murders, too often committed with weapons originally designed for warfare. It verges on political insanity that we permit such easy access to killing machines by virtually any murderous crank who desires one.

When will enough rational citizens stand up and say we’ve had enough?

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

## Unions aim to answer PERS problem with IP 28

*The Daily Astorian, July 7*

Public employees unions run the statehouse,” said state Rep. Dennis Richardson, during a 2014 visit to Astoria. The unions assert broad influence on the Democratic side of the state Legislature through candidate interviews and campaign funding.

Now the public employees unions are asserting themselves grandly with Initiative Petition 28, the initiative to establish a corporate sales tax on corporations with gross receipts of more than \$25 million annually. Paris Achen of our Capital Bureau reported Tuesday that the farm supplies and fuel cooperative Wilco would face a huge increase in its tax liability if IP 28 passes.

Ballot measures are blunt instruments. They are seldom as simple as their proponents make them sound. So what is the reality check on Initiative Petition 28?

The most correct title for the measure is the PERS Bailout Tax. Financial demands of the Public Employees Retirement System will soon increase the load on school districts and municipalities — causing schools to lay off teachers in order to fund retirement pensions.

Legislative remedies to the PERS dilemma — brokered by former Gov. John Kitzhaber — were thrown out by the Oregon Supreme Court. In the face of the court’s judgment, there was a proposal to require new PERS enrollees to contribute to their retirement, in the manner that is common in the private sector. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown would not support that.

Revenue raised by IP 28 is the unions’ answer to the PERS problem.

Achen reported that the Legislative Revenue Office projects the measure’s effects as follows: a contraction of the private sector and an enlargement of the public sector. Another consequence will be price increases for consumers, as corporations cover their big new tax liability.

Initiative Petition 28 is a reach too far.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email [editor@eastoregonian.com](mailto:editor@eastoregonian.com).



OTHER VIEWS

## A week from hell

Last week was yet another week that tore at the very fiber of our nation.

After two videos emerged showing the gruesome killings of two black men by police officers, one in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the other in Falcon Heights, Minnesota, a black man shot and killed five officers, and wounded nine more people, in a cowardly ambush at an otherwise peaceful protest. The Dallas police chief, David O. Brown, said, “He was upset about Black Lives Matter” and “about the recent police shootings” and “was upset at white people” and “wanted to kill white people, especially white officers.”

We seem caught in a cycle of escalating atrocities without an easy way out, without enough clear voices of calm, without tools for reduction, without resolutions that will satisfy.

There is so much loss and pain. There are so many families whose hearts hurt for a loved one needlessly taken, never to be embraced again.

There is so much disintegrating trust, so much animosity stirring.

So many — too many — Americans now seem to be living with an ambient terror that someone is somehow targeting them.

Friday morning, after the Dallas shootings, my college-student daughter entered my room before heading out to her summer job. She hugged me and said: “Dad, I’m scared. Are you scared?” We talked about what had happened in the preceding days, and I tried to allay her fears and soothe her anxiety.

How does a father answer such a question? I’m still not sure I got it precisely right.

Truth is, I am afraid. Not so much for my own safety, which is what my daughter was fretting about, but more for the country I love.

This is not a level of stress and strain that a civil society can long endure.

I feel numb, and anguished and heartbroken, and I fear that I am far from alone.

And yet, I also fear that time is a requirement for remedy. We didn’t arrive at this place overnight, and we won’t move on from it overnight.

Centuries of U.S. policy, culture and tribalism are simply being revealed as the frothy tide of hagiographic history recedes.

Our American “ghettos” were created by policy and design. These areas of concentrated poverty became fertile ground for crime and violence. Municipalities used heavy police forces to try to cap that violence. Too often, aggressive policing began to feel like oppressive policing. Relationships between communities and cops became strained. A small number of criminals poisoned police beliefs about whole communities, and a small number of dishonorable officers poisoned communities’ beliefs about entire police forces.



CHARLES BLOW  
Comment

We must see all unwarranted violence for what it is: A corrosion of culture.

And then, too often the unimaginable happened and someone ended up dead at the hands of the police.

Since people have camera phones, we are actually seeing these deaths, live and in living color. Now a terrorist with a racist worldview has taken it upon himself to co-opt a cause and mow down innocent officers.

This is a time when communities, institutions, movements and even nations are tested. Will the people of moral clarity, good character and righteous cause be able to drown out the chorus of voices that seek to use each dead body as a societal wedge?

Will the people who can see clearly that there is no such thing as selective, discriminatory, exclusionary outrage and grieving when lives are taken, be heard above those who see every tragedy as a plus or minus for a cumulative argument?

Will the people who see both the protests over police killings and the killings of police officers as fundamentally about the value of life rise above those who see political opportunity in this arms race of atrocities?

These are very serious questions — soul-of-a-nation questions — that we dare not ignore.

We must see all unwarranted violence for what it is: A corrosion of culture.

I know well that when people speak of love and empathy and honor in the face of violence, it can feel like meeting hard power with soft, like there is inherent weakness in an approach that leans so heavily on things so ephemeral and even clichéd.

But that is simply an illusion fostered by those of little faith.

Anger and vengeance and violence are exceedingly easy to access and almost effortlessly unleashed.

The higher calling — the harder trial — is the belief in the ultimate moral justice and the inevitable victory of righteousness over wrong.

This requires an almost religious faith in fate, and that can be hard for some to accept, but accept it we must.

The moment any person comes to accept as justifiable an act of violence upon another — whether physical, spiritual or otherwise — that person has already lost the moral battle, even if he is currently winning the somatic one.

When we all can see clearly that the ultimate goal is harmony and not hate, rectification and not retribution, we have a chance to see our way forward. But we all need to start here and now, by doing this simple thing: Seeing every person as fully human, deserving every day to make it home to the people he loves.

■

*Charles M. Blow is The New York Times’s visual Op-Ed columnist. His column appears in The Times on Saturday.*

YOUR VIEWS

### Air traffic control should not be privatized

Your recent column (“Political Winds Shouldn’t Delay Air Travelers,” 7/1, by Drew Johnson) unfortunately missed some important points about proposals under consideration in Washington, D.C., for privatizing the nation’s air traffic control system.

First and foremost, as much as proponents try to conflate privatization with ATC modernization, the two issues are not the same. Everyone agrees that ATC needs to be modernized with the latest satellite-based “NextGen” technology. To achieve that goal, the U.S. Senate recently passed overwhelmingly bipartisan legislation that would support funding for the continued deployment of NextGen technologies.

Unfortunately, progress on ATC modernization, of the kind represented by the Senate legislation, is being tied up by a distracting debate over the question of whether airline interests should assume effective control over the aviation system, through the creation of a privatized entity.

The answer to that question is no, and here’s why: Under a privatized system, the airlines would be left to handle decisions over consumer taxes and fees, availability of aviation access in small towns and rural areas, infrastructure investment and other important matters.

Under such a scenario, the airlines will most likely decide to pursue not what is in the interest of the public — including the citizens and communities that rely on aviation services other than those provided by the airlines — but instead, what is in the airlines’ business interests. That means, for example, that available funding will be directed toward investments in the big hub airports, which are most profitable for the airlines, at the expense of rural communities throughout Oregon.

This is why concerns over plans for ATC privatization have been raised by members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle, and also by state and local officials around the country, and consumer and rural groups. It is also a key reason why Americans, by a two-to-one majority, oppose privatization of the nation’s ATC system.

Here’s the bottom line: America has the world’s largest, safest and most diverse aviation system. That’s largely because it is operated with congressional oversight, which ensures the system is operated in the public interest — including Oregonians in towns large and small — not one stakeholder’s business interest. It’s important we keep it that way.

Neal White, president  
Oregon Pilots Association  
Salem