

EDITORIALS

Great job, graduates

You'll be riding in cars Sunday afternoon rather than walking across the lush grass of Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

But the setting doesn't diminish your accomplishments, Baker High School Class of 2020. Relish this unique event. Know that even though you're in separate vehicles you're still together. And know that the community supports you, celebrates your achievements and wishes you all happy and successful futures.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

Honoring their valor

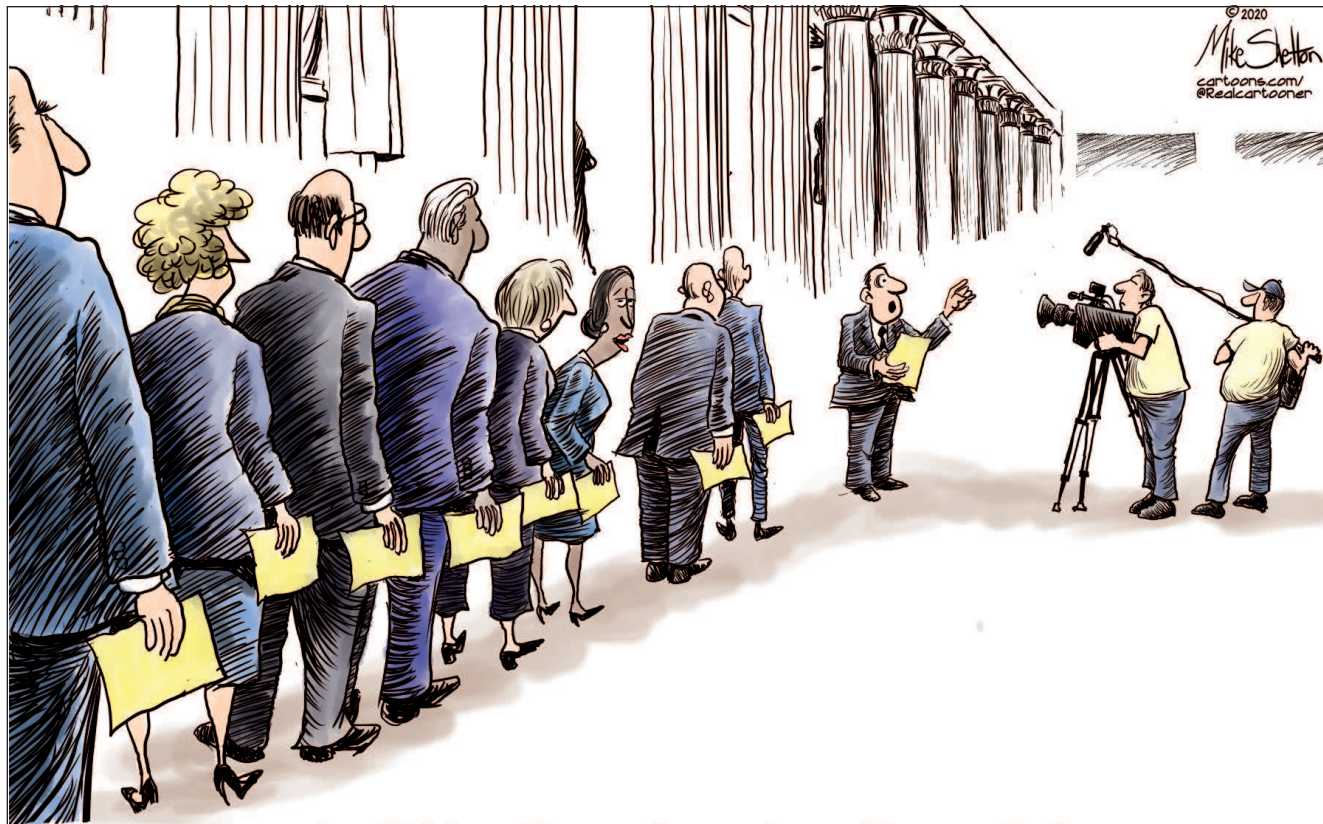
The Bill of Rights has been on prominent display recently in America and we're reminded yet again of the elegance of that enduring document, the great wisdom that went into its creation and that still shines so brightly, more than 200 years later.

We should also remember how many people sacrificed their lives that those rights should remain part of America's foundation. And today, June 6, marks one of the greatest — and terrible — examples of such gallantry.

It was on this day in 1944 that more than 150,000 men — American, British and Canadian — landed on the beaches of Normandy, launching the invasion that would, 11 months later, vanquish Nazi Germany and end World War II in Europe.

We owe them — those who survived that day and the thousands who did not — our gratitude, today and every day.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Democrat politicians line up to condemn Trump photo op...

Your views

Investing in our community, not only in policing

The Baker City Police Department receives the most money from the city budget, with over \$2.3 million appointed in the city's 2019-2020 budget. They repeatedly cite "increased demand" as justification for budget increases. Indeed, they have asked for and received an increase of about \$400,000 in the last three budget cycles alone. But where exactly is the need for more money, more policing in our community?

The population of Baker County has remained virtually unchanged for the past decade. So, the same (if not, fewer) bodies to police. According to city-data.com, instances of crime have also hovered around the same number over the past few years, with

theft being the primary reported crime in the area. These acts are harmful, and do represent a problem in our community, but the solution may not be as simple, as inhumane, as putting someone behind bars.

With a critical eye and compassionate hearts we can come to understand that many people steal due to issues tied to addiction, poverty, lack of funds to provide stable housing and a consistent source of food. These are systemic issues which are not fixed by jailing someone, and criminalizing people with these needs further disenfranchises them, which keeps the cycle repeating in perpetuity. Police do not make communities safer, better economic policies and support programs for folks who are vulnerable and in need do that.

As we buckle down to try and face some of the emotional and financial challenges of COVID-19 together, many of us have had to slow down and notice more thoroughly the intricacies and challenges within our communities. We've come to better appreciate parks, walking paths, and places where we can be safe, socially distant, and in community.

The Baker City Community Development budget approved for this fiscal year is just over \$99,000, or 4% of what taxpayers are paying for police. What might it look like to use some of our money to reinvest in our communities together, rather than pay to police it using the status quo as a benchmark?

La'akea Kaufman
Baker City

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the

accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.

- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do

not include this information cannot be published.

- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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Changing hearts, minds harder than changing law

The struggle that black Americans endured to achieve basic civil rights was long and bloody, a period marked by some of our country's greatest moments, and some of its more shameful.

There was the majesty of Martin Luther King Jr.'s rhetoric.

And the simple dignity of Rosa Parks.

But also there was the horror of Emmett Till's murder, the brutal stupidity of Bull Connor's fire hoses and attack dogs.

And yet, more than half a century after such landmarks as Brown v. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act, I wonder whether America's current challenge with racial injustice isn't even more daunting than what King and so many other brave and dedicated people confronted in the 1950s and 1960s.

Here's why I wonder:

Their goals included specific legal milestones, and that made it comparatively easy to measure progress. A law either exists or it does not.

But the problems that continue to plague America are problems that lurk in the hearts and minds of people, and those have proved to be remarkably resistant to legal remedies no matter how well-conceived or rigorously enforced.

Before Congress passed the Civil Rights Act in 1964, black Americans and other minorities could be legally banned from public accommodations and discriminated against when they looked for work.

The federal law changed that. Before the Supreme Court ruled



JAYSON JACOBY

in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, public schools could be legally segregated.

The court's ruling changed that. Before Congress approved the Voting Rights Act in 1965, it was relatively easy, and legal, to suppress voting by requiring, among other obnoxious practices, some voters to pass literacy tests before casting their ballot.

I don't mean to imply that these laws and legal precedents immediately solved the problems that prompted their creation, or have had that effect in the years and decades since.

But they were still significant steps.

They created a legal framework for people to challenge, and sometimes to triumph over, those people and institutions that continued to try to discriminate against citizens.

Yet for all the progress we've made in the pages of statutes and in the annals of court decisions, the stain of bigotry still mars the fabric of American society.

And rarely if ever over the past half century has that stain been as conspicuous as during the days since Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt on George Floyd's neck for more than 8 minutes during a May 25 arrest, killing Floyd.

In some important ways this has been decidedly different from, say,

the Rodney King episode in Los Angeles in 1992 with its inexplicable acquittals of police officers who beat King.

Chauvin, by contrast, was fired almost immediately. He was arrested soon thereafter, charged initially with third-degree murder and then, on Wednesday, with second-degree murder. The more serious charge was expected, as the video of Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck, combined with the autopsy findings that his death was a homicide, constitute compelling evidence that this was far from an unavoidable accident resulting from the proper use of police tactics. The three other officers involved in Floyd's arrest were also fired, and on Wednesday all three were charged with aiding and abetting second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

But the swiftness with which the justice system has moved against Chauvin and the other officers didn't assuage the anger that has prompted demonstrations in cities across the country.

Protesters — and I distinguish between the majority who pursue a righteous cause and those who pervert that cause by using it as an excuse to burn, pillage and steal — have raised legitimate concerns that highlight the still yawning racial divide in America.

At the heart of this divide is the reality that black Americans are disproportionately affected by a myriad of societal and health problems, ranging from arrest and incarceration rates to the incidence of diabetes and heart disease.

But those are mere statistics. They are only a numerical way to

restate the problem.

I don't believe it's possible to conclude, with any sort of precision, how much of this problem is caused by a pervasive, even institutional, racism.

It's obvious, however, that many Americans do believe wholeheartedly that the situation is causal rather than correlative — that racism continues to erode the principles on which our nation was founded, as acid inexorably weakens even the strongest steel.

The vexing question then, it seems to me, is how we as a society can address that situation. Repeating the problem will keep the flames of anger flickering but it does nothing to proffer a solution. And that brings me back round to my comparison between laws on the one hand, and hearts and minds on the other.

I'm skeptical that we can pass laws which could conceivably prevent the next Derek Chauvin from slamming his knee down on the next George Floyd's neck.

Indeed, we already have laws against such crimes — laws that led to the murder charge against Chauvin.

But how do we change the hearts and minds of people who believe that black Americans, or gay Americans, or any other group that is a minority solely because of their race or gender or preferences in wholly private matters, is somehow less than equal, less deserving of the same treatment under law that's supposed to be guaranteed to each of us?

How can we know who those people are? Moreover, how can we

begin to gauge the extent to which their personal beliefs — which in many cases surely are intensely private beliefs, ones that people would never admit even to their confidantes — are contributing to the flaws of a society in which Derek Chauvin kneels on George Floyd's neck?

Perhaps police departments can change their recruiting policies to improve the odds of identifying the likes of Chauvin before they don a uniform.

We certainly should try to take such concrete, life-saving steps.

But even if we can weed out some police officers who might be prone to acting murderously, we will hardly have changed society at the fundamental level, as many people contend we should do.

If this noxious infestation has as deep a taproot as some believe, then I doubt it will succumb to half-hearted measures any more than a dandelion will yield to a gentle tug.

For this immense challenge I have no answers.

No solutions.

What I can do is what I have tried to do, which is to instill in those few people over whom I might have some lasting influence — my children — the notion that we are all equal.

That each of us has a name and a favorite color and a preferred flavor of ice cream, and that all of those things, and thousands more besides, are infinitely more important than the amount of melanin in our skin.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.