

EDITORIAL

The word of 2020: canceled

It was another disappointment in a season of disappointments.

No Miners Jubilee 2020.

The list of traditional spring and summer events in Baker County that have been canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic is, sadly, considerably longer than the list of events that will still happen.

Two-wheeled gatherings — the Hells Canyon Motorcycle Rally and the Baker City Cycling Classic — have been no more immune to the pandemic than four-legged ones — the Baker City Bronc and Bull Riding competitions.

Flea markets have been affected — among Sumpter’s trio of celebrations of quirky commerce only the Labor Day weekend is still a possibility — and so has football, with the East-West Shrine All-Star Game, a major fundraiser for the Portland Shriners Hospital for Children an early casualty of COVID-19.

Friday’s announcement by the Baker County Chamber of Commerce that Miners Jubilee was canceled was hardly a surprise, meager solace though that may be.

As Chamber director Shelly Cutler pointed out, with a limit of 250 people on public gatherings likely to be in place for some time, it’s simply not feasible to try to rearrange Geiser-Pollman Park to satisfy that limit and still put on a recognizable event the third weekend in July.

But summer, which is just 3 days old, can still be salvaged.

The Haines Stampede Rodeo is set for July 3 and 4, and fireworks shows are planned in Haines and Halfway.

The Baker County Fair will happen Aug. 3-7.

And though we’ve done without flea markets, the Baker City Farmers Market is happening every Wednesday at the Court Avenue plaza.

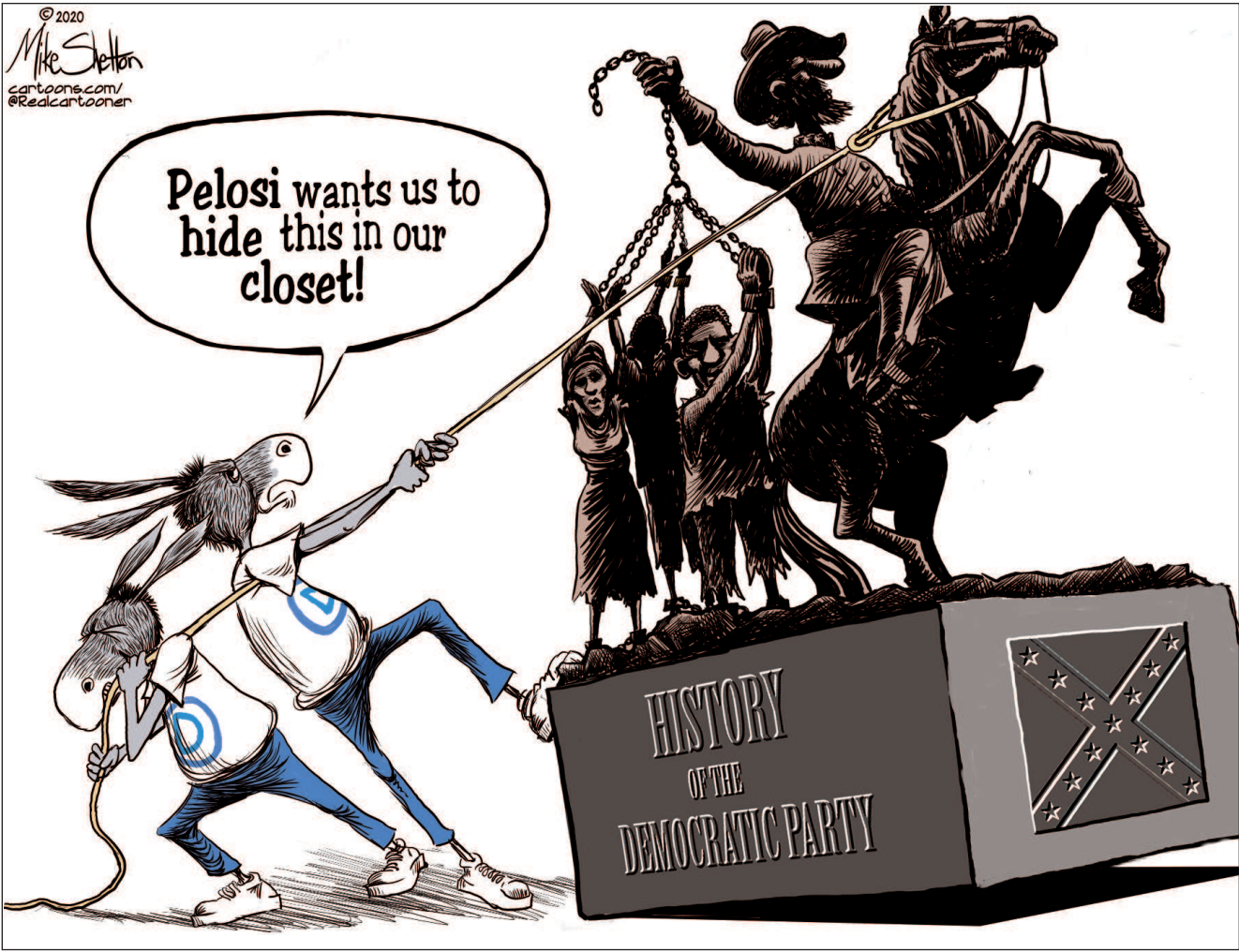
The cancellation of so many major events during the height of Baker County’s tourist season constitutes major harm to local businesses that have already suffered.

We won’t be welcoming as many visitors as in summers past, and that means local residents, and local dollars spent at our businesses, will be more important than ever.

The events, we can devoutly hope, will return in 2021 as society adjusts to the new threat posted by the coronavirus.

But businesses once lost can be difficult to replace.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Context and the Confederacy

The impulse is commendable. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ordered Thursday that portraits of four of her predecessors be removed from the U.S. Capitol because they were part of the Confederate cause during the Civil War.

At a time when much of the nation is questioning certain monuments and memorials, it’s good that Pelosi is directing her gaze around the Capitol. But the issue of the speakers’ portraits is more nuanced than the controversies surrounding statues and other memorials to Confederate generals and secessionists who took up arms against the United States government.

And Pelosi ought to rethink what she’s doing.

The portraits of four speakers are in play: Robert Hunter, a Whig from Virginia; Democrats Howell Cobb of Georgia and James Orr of South Carolina, who were speakers of the House before the Civil War; and Democrat Charles Crisp of Georgia, who rose to that post after the war’s end. All four men served in the Confederacy, although Hunter, Cobb and Orr did so after their tenures as speaker; Crisp was elected to the House well after a general amnesty issued by President Andrew Johnson in 1868.

But here’s the problem: None of those men’s portraits are hanging in the Capitol because of their Confederate roles. The portraits are not intended to celebrate their personal acts of rebellion, but to place them within their historical context as leaders of the United States House of Representatives.

Context is key here. Much like memorials to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, who were both

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slave owners, these portraits hang not because the subjects fought in a war against their own country, but because of their roles in governing that country.

That Washington, Jefferson and other early national leaders were part of, and profited from, slavery is important knowledge for framing how we view them today, and should not be overlooked or downplayed.

But the nation did not erect memorials to them, or place their images on currency, because of their embrace of slavery. They are feted for their contributions to the country. And if, say, it turns out the Jefferson Memorial was built to celebrate Jefferson’s ownership of slaves, I would say remove it.

Defenders of the symbols of the Confederacy — such as the statues of Gen. Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis, the one and only president of the Confederacy — argue that to remove those memorials from public spaces is to whitewash history.

It is not, as I’ve written before. Those memorials were erected as part of campaigns to rehabilitate the image of the South and to cast the Civil War as a romantic defense of states’ rights and the Southern way of living — which in fact was based on the brutal subjugation and enslavement of people because they were Black.

They do not belong in the public square. Private museums? Sure. Private lots? Fine. But not on public land, where they stand as insults to Black Americans whose own histories may include enslaved ancestors, and who can see in public veneration of the

symbols of white supremacy a societal disregard for their equality.

Unfortunately, in this instance Pelosi actually is whitewashing history. She’s removing depictions of people who preceded her in the speaker’s chair for reasons that have nothing to do with why their portraits are there in the first place. The proper corrective would be through informational plaques (if they aren’t already in place) addressing that history.

Something Pelosi should push, though, is getting rid of the system under which Congress allows each state to emplace two statues that they feel reflect themselves. So we have under the roof of the U.S. Capitol statues of Lee, sent by Virginia, and Davis, sent by Mississippi.

California, to its own embarrassment, sent a statue of Father Junipero Serra, who under the Spanish crown established the mission system that enslaved and brutalized Native Americans. Not exactly a good representative of California (former governor and eventual president Ronald Reagan is the other California statue).

We need to look at what we commemorate and why much more closely than we have in the past, and work to remove from public places Confederate memorials that were erected as propaganda.

But we also must make certain we don’t overreach, and we must make certain not to cross the line between correcting representations of history and erasing them.

Scott Martelle, a veteran journalist and author of six history books, is a member of the Los Angeles Times editorial board.

OTHER VIEWS

Congress needs to finally deal with the Dreamers

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

A significantly fractured Supreme Court on Thursday shot down the Trump administration’s efforts to undo the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, concluding — without ruling on the merits of the policy itself — that the government’s order canceling DACA was “arbitrary and capricious.” But the president’s efforts also were cold, heartless and counter to the nation’s best interests, so it’s encouraging that the court allowed the program to continue.

But DACA survived on a technicality. Had the administration taken the time to lay a proper foundation for its impulsive action to withdraw the protections for the Dreamers, this decision could have gone the other way. So as heartening as the court’s decision might be, it does not resolve the underlying issue.

DACA is, at best, a temporary solution to a broader problem, and it’s one of the more frustrating aspects of our long-running political impasse over immigration reform. Reasonable minds — and a majority of Americans regardless of political affiliation — recognize that the Dreamers stand in a

unique position not of their own creation, and justice and fairness dictate that they receive some accommodation. Yet DACA, which is a policy decision that is demonstrably susceptible to political vagaries, doesn’t do that. It just delays the crafting of a real solution.

The Obama administration crafted DACA in 2012 after a bipartisan proposal in Congress was scuttled by the deep partisan divisions on immigration policy. It provides temporary protections against deportation for people who meet specific criteria based on their arrival and length of residence in the United States, who have led productive lives through jobs or schooling, and who have not had significant run-ins with the law. Most of the Dreamers bear little responsibility for their presence here since they were brought as minor children by parents or guardians.

It would be manifestly unfair, as the anti-DACA folks demand, to uproot them from the only country most of them have ever really known and send them off to places that are not only foreign to them, but where in many instances they don’t speak the language. The hardship such deportations would create on

people who are Americans in all but legal standing far outweighs any purported gain in hard-line enforcement of immigration laws.

There are other pragmatic reasons for finding a better solution to this problem. Those who qualify for DACA include parents of about 250,000 children born here in the U.S. What purpose is served in disrupting those families or, even worse, forcing parents to leave the country with children who are U.S. citizens? What sense does it make to force American children to pay a penalty for the long-ago misdeeds of their grandparents?

Further, the DACA-eligible folks have been educated here by U.S. taxpayers, contribute to the economy, and play significant roles in their communities. The Center for American Progress estimates that more than 200,000 DACA recipients are essential workers — including first responders, front-line health care workers, and food producers and distributors — during the coronavirus pandemic. The nation should reward them by kicking them out?

The solution here is clear: An overwhelming majority of Americans, including Republicans,

believe the government should leave the Dreamers alone and craft a path to citizenship. That can be done only by Congress.

President Donald Trump has been an unreliable figure on this issue, saying at one point that he would support legislation to help the Dreamers, but then holding the issue hostage to his own dreams for a border wall with Mexico. Whether Trump would do the right thing now as he campaigns for reelection is anyone’s guess, but Congress should make the effort and force the issue. And if Trump successfully vetoes it, the nation can hope that the next president could fix it come January.

At a base level, it’s troubling and dysfunctional that a relative handful of xenophobes among Trump’s base can in effect block a sensible humanitarian act supported by the vast majority of their fellow citizens. That is the antithesis of a healthy democracy. And in this instance, it has a drastic impact on the lives of people caught up in circumstances created by others. Congress needs to get its act together and take an obvious step in the national interest.