

COMMENTARY



BRIAN FAIRRINGTON/CAGLE CARTOONS

This nation needs great leadership

President must communicate effectively, unite all sides, end negative attacks

After an embarrassingly dishonest and juvenile debate on an issue of profound importance to America's future, our nation's debt ceiling will be increased by another \$2.4 trillion while the United States borrows another \$3 billion every day.

America is sickened and frightened by our nation's inability to properly address its fiscal challenges. Our two-party political system appears broken beyond repair. No corporation, community, family or personal relationship could survive similar gridlock, mired in conflicting ideologies that prevent civil conversation or any semblance of mutual respect, thus blocking any substantive reforms.

This failure is the result of decades of political gerrymandering and anti-business rhetoric from the media and academe, resulting in a too-often misinformed, confused and deeply divided America.

The only winners in the dialogue were the tea party and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla. The tea party forced D.C. to at least discuss much-needed spending cuts, framing the debate for the 2012 elections. Rubio distinguished himself as a youthful voice of reason in a sadly dysfunctional Congress. Otherwise there were only losers, and America finds itself more dangerously divided than at any time since the Civil War.

On June 16, 1858, Abraham Lincoln addressed 1,000 Republican delegates in the Illinois Statehouse. As he accepted the nomination as candidate for the U.S. Senate to run against Democrat Stephen

Douglas, Lincoln delivered his momentous "house divided" speech, establishing the choice of slavery versus emancipation as the framework for what followed.

For months Lincoln and Douglas crisscrossed Illinois participating in seven scathing face-to-face debates before large crowds.

Douglas pictured Lincoln as an extremist "Black Republican" who wanted to incite civil war, emancipate the slaves and make blacks the social-political equals of whites. Lincoln countered by insisting that all Americans were equal in their right to life, liberty and the fruits of their own labors. He argued that slavery, unless abolished, would ultimately reduce all laborers, white and black, to a condition of virtual servitude.

Illinois residents were unable to vote for either candidate because state legislatures, rather than individual voters, elected U.S. senators back then. In the final balloting, the Republicans outpolled the Democrats. But the Democrats had skillfully gerrymandered the voting districts, kept control of the Legislature, and Lincoln was defeated.

Regardless, Lincoln's Senate campaign catapulted him into the spotlight and to the White House in 1860, leading to the abolishment of slavery.

The most memorable part of Lincoln's "house divided" speech, and its relevance to America's current class warfare, should be pondered again today. Let's play with Lincoln's words just a bit, replacing "slavery" with "socialism" to reflect today's chasm:

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this govern-

ment cannot endure, permanently, half on productive taxpayers and half on government welfare. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved — I do not expect the house to fall — but I do expect it will cease to be divided.

"Either free enterprise or socialism will triumph. Our nation will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of socialism will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is on the course toward ultimate extinction; or the advocates of socialism will push it forward, till it shall become alike and lawful throughout the States."

We face another historic choice today. The recent debate was not really about raising the debt ceiling. It was and remains about class warfare: individualism versus collectivism, free enterprise versus the nanny state.

To resolve this clash we need strong leadership from the president. We need a uniter, not a divider, in the White House — because a house divided cannot stand.

America's best hope rests in the 2012 elections. But we need a candidate to emerge who can excite and unite a significant majority of Americans behind the core principles on which our nation is founded. This candidate must reject vitriol and negative attacks against his or her opponent in favor of a clear vision of the American dream and the preservation of that dream for future generations.

Jack Tymann, retired president, International, of Westinghouse, lives in Pelican Bay.



JACK TYMANN
GUEST COLUMNIST

Domestic violence continues, ignored

There's a pandemic in our country, and the death toll continues to mount.

Every day, four more women in the United States die not from some rare disease but from domestic violence. On any given day, about 61,000 victims require services from agencies dedicated to assisting them.

And the band plays on. Day in, day out, this pandemic continues. It ends or disrupts lives, decreases productivity in the workplace and accounts for millions of dollars in health care costs. In fact, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians, the No. 1 reason females ages 15-44 visit emergency departments is domestic violence.

And yet, it is not discussed. We don't want to acknowledge or talk about it. It makes us uncomfortable. Some of us may be guilty of various forms of it. Some of us may justify it based on our cultural or religious belief system. Some may deny it could happen in our community, congregation or family.

But the statistics, which are generally accepted to be an underrepresentation of the real numbers, continue to bear out the horrific deaths and incidents. The poor economy and drinking, may contribute to the increase that we are experiencing, but they are not the cause. The cause is power and control, plain and simple.

Domestic violence is not only a "women's issue;" it is everyone's issue. The victims are our daughters, sisters, mothers, friends, co-workers. They are everyday people who are subjected to emotional,



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psychological, sexual, financial, or physical abuse ... not from strangers, but from their partners!

Where is the outrage? I've witnessed more outrage over blown or missed calls at football games. Why do we ignore this blight on our society, maybe shake our head in disbelief or disgust at the statistics, or maybe even rationalize its occurrence, and then do nothing?

Now is the time for good men to stand up and voice outrage over the violence aimed at females and support the cause of ending violence toward women. We need good men to lend their names, their reputations, their support toward this cause — now.

I ask that you join me for SafeSpace's Walk A Mile In Her Shoes event. The walk will be Oct. 1 in downtown Stuart; Oct. 15 in St. Lucie West and Oct. 29 in Vero Beach.

All men who are appalled, disgusted and outraged by what is happening in our society, please join us in making a statement in support of women everywhere. Let's have all good men make a stand against domestic violence.

You may contact Art Ciasca, SafeSpace director of development, for more details at 772-528-8081 or aciasca@safespacefl.org.

W. Clark Beckett, M.D., is a vascular surgeon in Vero Beach.

Rearview

FLORIDA

In 1983, Guion S. Bluford Jr. became the first black American astronaut to travel in space as he blasted off from Cape Canaveral aboard the Challenger.

ELSEWHERE

In 1862, Union forces were defeated by the Confederates at the Second Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, Va.

In 1967, the Senate confirmed the appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1997, Americans received word of the car crash in Paris that claimed the lives of Princess Diana, Dodi Fayed and their driver, Henri Paul. (Because of the time difference, it was Aug. 31 where the crash occurred.)

ON THE LEFT

To best honor King, don't sanitize his words

WASHINGTON — We tend to honor the Martin Luther King Jr. we want to honor, not the Martin Luther King Jr. who actually existed.

We forget the King who at the time of his ministry was labeled an "extremist," who explicitly called out "moderates" for urging African-Americans to slow down their march to justice, who quite brilliantly used the American creed as a seedbed for searing criticisms of the United States as it existed.

The postponement of the planned ceremonies dedicating the new memorial to Dr. King did not come in time to stop the tributes from flowing in advance. This was a blessing. But some will always try to domesticate him into a self-help lecturer who'd be welcomed at the local Chamber of Commerce or even a Christian Coalition meeting.

That we have failed to live up to King's calls for economic justice — a central commitment of his life's work — is one tell-tale sign of our tendency to hear King's prophetic voice selectively. But selectively hearing him is better than not listening at all, as long as it doesn't

lead to a distortion of what he believed.

One of the many things King understood was the always-incipient radicalism of the American idea. At a time when paying homage to our nation's origins seems far more a habit of the tea party than of progressives, King, like Abraham Lincoln before him, threw our founding documents in our faces and challenged us to take them seriously.

His "I Have a Dream" speech was an extended and impassioned essay on the American promise. The civil rights movement's demands, he insisted, arose from American history's own vows.

"When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence," King proclaimed, "they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the 'unalienable Rights' of 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.'"

One of the most dramatic moments in the speech



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came next. "It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned," King said. "Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'"

This is the wonderful paradox of King: A Christian preacher, he understood the power of rooting arguments in a tradition. But this did not make those arguments any less radical.

This focus on calling out injustice — pointedly, heatedly, sometimes angrily — is what the people of King's time, friend and foe alike, heard. It made many moderates (and so-called moderates) decidedly uncomfortable.

We have rendered Dr. King safe so we can honor him. But we should honor him because he did not play it safe. He urged us to break loose from "the paralyzing chains of conformity." Good advice in every generation — and hard advice, too.

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ON THE RIGHT

King's memorial suits his place in pantheon

WASHINGTON — It is one of the enduring mysteries of American history that it should have produced, at every hinge point, great men who matched the moment. A roiling, revolutionary 18th-century British colony gives birth to the greatest cohort of political thinkers ever: Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Hamilton, Washington, Franklin, Jay. The crisis of the 19th century brings forth Lincoln; the 20th, FDR.

Equally miraculous is Martin Luther King Jr. Black America's righteous revolt against a century of post-emancipation oppression could have gone in many bitter and destructive directions. It did not. This was largely the work of one man's leadership, moral imagination and strategic genius. He turned his own deeply Christian belief that "unearned suffering is redemptive" into a creed of nonviolence that he carved into America's political consciousness. The result was not just racial liberation but national redemption.

Such an achievement, such a life, deserves a monument alongside the other miracles of our history — Lincoln, Jefferson

and FDR — which is precisely where stands the new Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. It opened Monday on the Tidal Basin, adjacent to Roosevelt's seven acres, directly across from Jefferson's temple, and bisecting the invisible cartographic line connecting the memorials for Jefferson and Lincoln.

The King memorial has its flaws, but any artistic deficiencies are trumped by placement. You enter the memorial through a narrow passageway, emerging onto a breathtaking opening to the Tidal Basin, a tranquil tree-lined oasis with Jefferson at the far shore. Here stands King gazing across to the Promised Land — promised by that very same Jefferson — but whose shores King himself was never to reach.

Behind the prophet, guarding him, is an arc of short quotations chiseled in granite. This is in keeping with that glorious feature of Washington's monumental core — the homage to words (rather than images of conquest and glory, as in so many other capitals), as befits a nation founded on an idea. Troubling, however, is



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the philosophical narrowness of the selected quotes. Missing is any sense of King's Americanness. Indeed, the word America appears only once, and only in the context of stating his opposition to the Vietnam War. Yet as King himself insisted, his dream was "deeply rooted in the American dream." He consciously rooted civil rights in the American story, not just for tactical reasons of enlisting whites in the struggle but because he deeply believed that his movement, while adversarial, was quintessentially a profound vindication of the American creed.

And yet, however much one wishes for a more balanced representation of King's own creed, there is no denying the power of this memorial. You must experience it. In the heart of the nation's capital, King now literally takes his place in the American pantheon, the only non-president to be so honored. As of Aug. 22, 2011, there is no room for anyone more on the shores of the Tidal Basin. This is as it should be.

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