

# Opinion

## Your Views Count

- Letters

### You did it so professionally

To the Colby Free Press:

Leilani Thomas of the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau, who also serves as our vice president, sent me a copy of the full page ad in the Colby Free Press on July 21 concerning our recent garage sale, 130 miles long and yards and yards wide.

We were certainly impressed with your fine lay-out which gave your readers a feel for this event. In one quite simple, yet information-packaged page, you covered it all. By noting that you were donating the space, its importance to the area in general was underscored. We couldn't ask for a better endorsement!

We particularly appreciated the mention of the Great Plains Indian Highway. Our group hopes to convince Kansas authorities to extend this designation from the Nebraska State line to Colby during your next legislative session. Our goal is to attract visitors to our route, a direct link between Interstates 70 and 80. A rich Indian background is common to the whole area. The sands of time quickly covered this era much like Egyptian sands enveloped ancient civilization.

We will invite history buffs to dig into our history instead of our soil.

Thanks again for that outstanding page.

Promotionally yours,

**Bill Sullivan, President  
Highway #25 Association  
Wallace, Neb.  
(Letter # 62)**

#### Letter policy

The Free Press encourages and welcomes letters from readers. Letters should be typewritten, if at all possible, and should include a telephone number and an address. Most importantly, all letters must include a signature. Unsigned letters cannot be published. We reserve the right to reject letters deemed to be of no public interest or considered offensive or libelous.

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**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124

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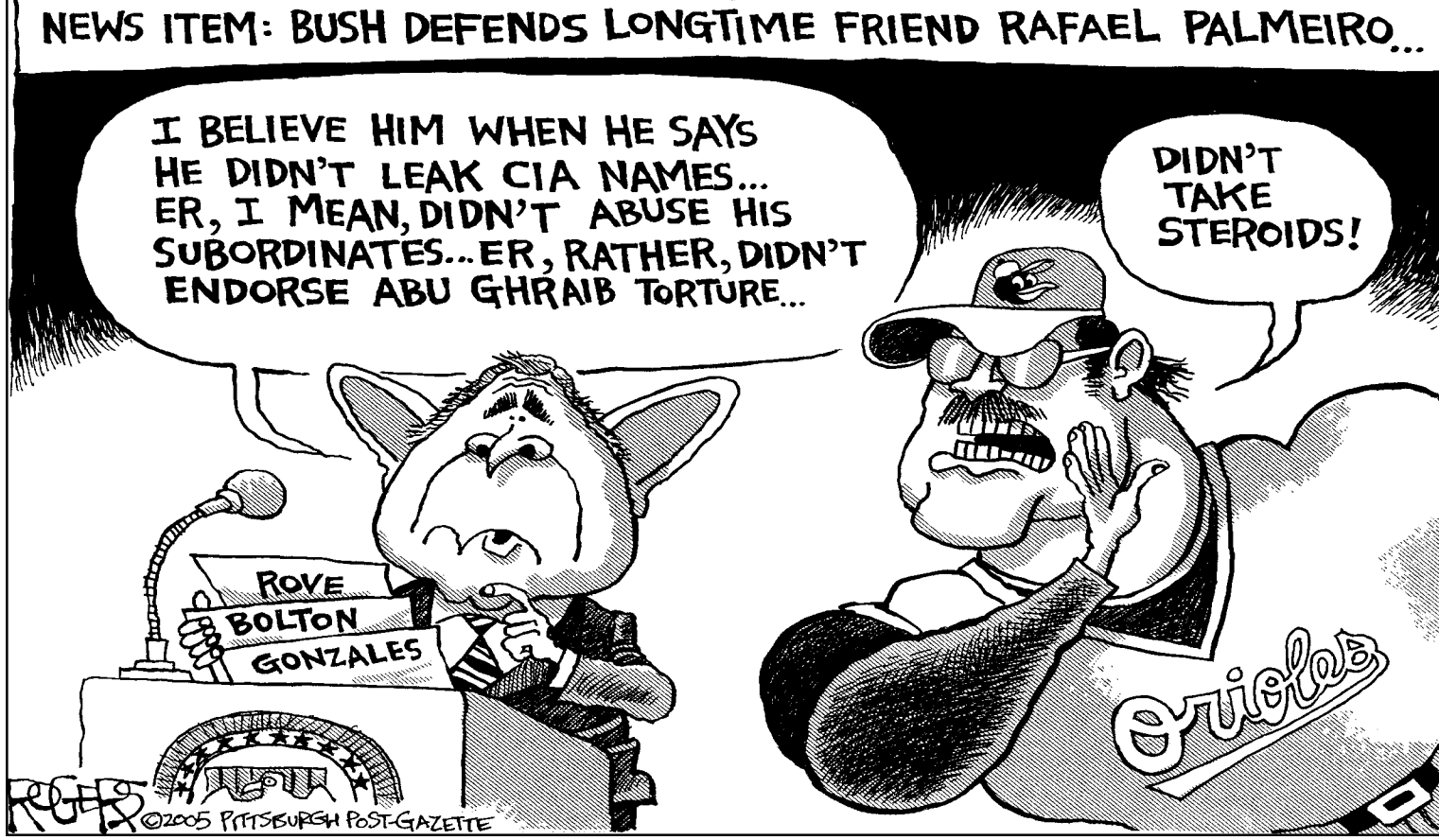
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## Cause and effect

Sometimes in one's life it's hard to figure out the cause for certain likes or dislikes. Or in my case, the mania I've suffered for almost half my life now.

This summer, I had an epiphany resulted in forehead-smacking and the exclamation of "That explains that!" (Know the cause, treat the problem.)

My first re-read of a book I haven't picked up in almost 15 years was the epiphany and reminded me of a few things I haven't thought of lately.

Summer 1989. Took a trip with parents to Las Vegas that went through the American Southwest.

Release of "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" several weeks before that.

Coupled with later that year, during school, reading Louis L'Amour's "The Haunted Mesa" and flipping over the book to the back cover. There was a picture Mr. L'Amour. Standing in the foreground was the author and over his shoulder was a ruin. An Anasazi ruin. An Anasazi ruin out in the open. And one I had never heard of before.

That was the first time I ever saw the words Hovenweep, Colo.

"Intrigued" doesn't even begin to cover it.

Fascinated? Obsessed? My interest then fell somewhere between the two. It's since cooled somewhat but is still a fascination.

It is nice to be able to trace that back though.

Someone might ask "what's the big deal?"

About 900 years ago, the people who later became known as the Anasazi up and vanished. At least that's what people like to believe. As usual, there are many conflicting theories as to what really happened.

### Marc H. Morial

#### • Guest Commentary

Two developments this month concerning the impact of incarceration in America — one in Iowa, the other in New York City — have dramatized the steady, if still far too slow, turning of the wheel away from America's foolish addiction to incarceration, and the great need for more and faster progress.

In Iowa, Governor Tom Vilsack issued executive order to restore voting rights to all Iowans who've been convicted of a felony and have completed their sentences.

"When you've paid your debt to society, you need to be re-connected and re-engaged to society," the governor said. "The right to vote is the foundation of our government and serves as a symbol of opportunity for our citizens."

This policy transforms one of the nation's most restrictive felony disenfranchisement laws, making an estimated 80,000 ex-felons in the state eligible to vote.

Earlier this year, Iowa's Great Plains neighbor, Nebraska, repealed its law imposing a lifetime voting ban on ex-felons, replacing it with a two-year waiting period after release.

The states' actions exemplify the revamping of these laws throughout the country, which, by depriving ex-felons of their right to vote after they've served their sentences, violates two fundamental notions of American society: the ideas that the right to vote belongs to all law-abiding citizens, and that once persons convicted of crime have served their sentences, they've paid their debts to society.

Iowa's action leaves four states — Alabama, Kentucky, Florida and Virginia — with lifetime voting bans for ex-felons. Laws in the nation's other states differ in how and when they allow ex-felons to vote again.

Given the hugely disproportionate number of incarcerated African- and Latino-Americans, there is, not surprisingly, a stunning and worri-



### Tisha Cox

#### • Off The Beaten Path

The facts are a drought drove them away from the canyons and mesas they had called home for many years and forced them to find new ground.

Some, I know, were probably assimilated into the Hopi and other tribes in the area.

I hear recent evidence discovered by archaeologists hints at cannibalism as a possible explanation as to what happened.

I learned a long time ago there were the remains of ancient, permanent human habitations in the Four Corners area.

I guess Hovenweep caught my interest because it was so different. Up to that point, I had only known about the cliff dwellings. A whole new world opened up after that.

My first introduction was even earlier than that — a childhood trip to the Cliff Dwellings Museum in Manitou Springs, Colo. I understand the ruins were moved there and later restored to their current condition and it's now a popular tourist destination for people in the Springs area.

But back to Hovenweep. It is different than other Anasazi ruins, with square and round towers and other structures built out in the open.

The "classic" cliff dwelling is usually built into a canyon alcove, like those Mesa Verde National Park is known for.

Now that I'm older, I still read up occasionally about what's going on with the research associated with the Anasazi, which by the way, is the Navajo word for "ancient enemies."

After all, at one point, I did intend to become an archaeologist and study the ruins for a living.

More importantly, I still find thoughts of these abandoned, beautiful places as an inspiration. Strange, I know, but it inspired me to learn more about something I never even thought I could have an interest in.

Half my lifetime later, I'm still learning. About that and other things. But in that vein, I later learned that not only were there the Anasazi that built cliff dwellings, there were other people that came after and at the same time that also built similar dwellings.

They were Mogollon and Sinagua of Arizona and New Mexico. Also the Hohokam who made pottery similar to that of the Anasazi.

I know most people probably wouldn't care about people that have been dead and gone 900 years. Then again, everyone has their interests and their quirks.

Call it a quirk of mine, a strange interest. But I'm glad I have it.

I'm glad I remembered what caused me to scour sections of the library I never ventured to before.

It reminded me of why I still love to learn and what I enjoyed about learning. I hope I don't lose that again.

\*\*\*\*\*

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcox@nwkansas.com.

## These things must change

a callback, seven white men with convictions also did. However, for every 10 black men without criminal records who got callbacks, only three with convictions did.

Both New York City's corrections commissioner and the chairwoman of its Commission on Human Rights labeled the report a call for action and pledged to explore ways to eliminate the racial opportunity gap for ex-offenders.

These two developments underscore the importance of the National Urban League's plan to launch a national commission examining the successes and challenges facing black boys and men. The five-year effort, to begin next year, will recommend solutions to problems afflicting black males in numerous fields.

Certainly, a primary area of concentration will be black males' negative involvement with the criminal justice system (while not ignoring the fact that the negative involvement of women, particularly black women, has become increasingly serious as well) and the extraordinary burden that imposes on African-American families and communities.

That burden, and the growing movement to reform felony-disenfranchisement laws, too, is dramatic evidence that we ignore the need to equip ex-offenders with two fundamental rights of a democracy — the right to vote, and a job — at their peril, and ours.

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Marc H. Morial is president and CEO of The National Urban League. He succeeds Hugh B. Price as the League's eighth chief executive. Morial served two distinguished four-year terms as Mayor of New Orleans from 1994 to 2002. During that time, he also served as president of the United States Conference of Mayors in 2001 and 2002. This column was distributed by MinutemanMedia.org. The opinions expressed are solely those of the writer.

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**NEWS**

**Patty Decker - Editor**  
pdecker@nwkansas.com

**Tisha Cox - General Assignment**  
tcox@nwkansas.com

**Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter**  
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

**ADVERTISING**

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