

Opinion



Kansas viewpoint

Tragedy highlights need for cooperation

From The Kansas City Star

Once again, an April day has brought horrifying images of panicked students and gunfire victims rushed into ambulances.

Virginia Polytechnic Institute on Monday became the site of the nation's most deadly mass shooting, with dozens dead and injured.

The tragedy will be engraved in the nation's memory as deeply as the senseless killings at Columbine High School in Colorado in April 1999.

Much remains unknown about what happened and why. What's definite, however, is that college administrators, law enforcement authorities and students themselves must take a hard look at safety on their campuses.

Students at Virginia Tech, a stately campus near Roanoke with 25,000 students and a prestigious engineering program, are right to question why many on campus had not learned about a shooting in a dormitory before more gunfire broke out in an engineering building two hours later.

Lynn Bretz, director of university communications for the University of Kansas, notes that most campuses are public places. They have many buildings, often with numerous entrances.

"It's really impossible to screen everyone who's on campus," Bretz said. "You have to have a system in place to respond immediately should there be an event."

Campus security forces must be as well-trained as any city police department. They are often responsible for densely populated communities whose residents tend to move around often and in unpredictable patterns.

Monday's tragedy highlights the need for cooperation between campus security forces and local police agencies.

The immediate response is horror at the extent of the violence, and the deepest sorrow for the loss of innocent lives in a setting meant to prepare students for life, not for death.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.

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Deciding what's wrong and what's not

It's a no-brainer.

Former radio talk-show host Don Imus deserved to lose his job over the racially based insult he threw at the Rutgers' women's basketball team.

Insults, especially racial ones, have been around long enough to upset people. People want information, not accusation. The people who air and televise his shows would have taken on a massive public relations disaster keeping Imus.

Those who attempt to defend Imus using his freedom of speech and or press, have failed to realize how important African-Americans have been in sports so far this year. African-Americans have had their monumental moments in sports, which just intensified Imus' comments.

Remember, this year was the first time two African-American head coaches were in the Super Bowl. The problem with that was much of the national media thought that was the only important part of coaches Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith.

Those two coaches found the right combination of decisions, talent and strategy to make it to one of the biggest sporting events in the country. That is more important than the color of skin.

Imus could not have picked a worse time to say what he said. Sunday, marked the 60th anniversary of Jackie Robinson becoming the first African-American player in Major League Baseball. Select teams across the country held ceremonies before their games.



John Van Nostrand

• Line in the Dust

Imus' comment was not only unnecessary, but downright ignorant, knowing how long African-Americans have been a part of American sports.

Imus' action is another black eye for the media the past years. Former New York Times reporter Jayson Blair started the trouble with his plagiarized stories. Other papers' reporters false stories cropped up after that.

Then there was Janet Jackson's unforgettable wardrobe malfunction during a Super Bowl halftime show and the continual lack of talent by another radio talk-show host Howard Stern. The company that had Stern's show was fed up with his obscene material and let him go.

A newspaper botched John Kerry's running

mate in the 2004 campaign, hours before he made the official announcement of who it was.

I haven't even listed the awful daytime talk television shows like Jerry Springer and Maury Povich and others who continue to churn out the garbage rather than something with intellect.

The challenge for media consumers, and I am one of them too, is knowing what is garbage and what is information valuable enough to use.

What Imus said is garbage but the tendency with all of us is getting upset at people who don't have similar opinions or perspectives on topics. So we think that is garbage too. Nine-point-nine times out of 10 that falls into political-oriented stories.

A loyal Democrat may not like a story about the developments of the Republicans, just because it does not list the growth of the Democrats. Just because someone reads something they do not agree with does not mean it does not have news value.

There is a difference when the media makes a mistake with content and when the media, like Imus, makes a mistake with attitude.

— John Van Nostrand is publisher of the Colby Free Press.

Your turn

Gem residents unhappy about comments

Phyllis Ziegelmeier Gem City Mayor

I wanted you to know that I, along with many other residents of the city of Gem, was very offended by Mr. John Van Nostrand's comments in the Opinion published in your paper on Friday. Once again the facts seemed to have been ignored and the opinion of someone was published for everyone to read like it was gospel.

First of all let me start out with before the April election even took place.

According to the Thomas County Courthouse, they published in the *Colby Free Press* a legal notice of elections stating where different entities were to vote. According to this same source those legal notices indicated that Gem City would vote at the Colby Community building. Despite that notice, the *Colby Free Press* continued to tell us that we would vote in the Rexford High School Gym, causing some to go to Rexford only to be turned away and sent to Colby to vote.

After said election, also from information provided by the Thomas County Courthouse, we in Gem were informed that Phyllis Ziegelmeier would retain the position of Mayor, while Warren Ziegelmeier and Annette Spresser had received enough votes to retain their positions of

Councilmen. About the same time that an issue of the Colby Free Press informed us that there were empty seats on the Gem Council, council members received their certificates of election in the mail.

While there were not any names on the ballot for any of these positions, there were voters who were informed enough to know what the present situation was and obviously enough who believed those individuals were doing a good enough job to be retained in office.

Has Mr. John Van Nostrand ever been to the towns in question? Does he have a clue?

The City of Gem includes a feed store, a tree service, a branch of the Hi-Plains Coop elevator, a post office, a fire department, and a very nice community building that is used by many groups inside and out of the Gem city limits. Whom would he suggest take care of the fire department and the community building?

As to whether we have a town "a traditional town" what does it take to be a town?

Those of us in Gem don't really care whether you call us a town, or a city, or a berg, or whatever, we believe that we have what it takes to be a real community. People who care about each other.

The active Lions Club mentioned as provid-

ing some sort of entertainment or fellowship for Gem people has an annual hog roast in August where approximately 750-800 people have gathered in recent years to enjoy that entertainment and fellowship.

Not bad for a city of about 75 residents. They also hold several other events throughout the year.

We would invite the Colby Free Press to come cover any of those events and see for themselves. Who would take care of the community building so that the Lions Club could continue to host these events?

There are presently five councilmen, a mayor and a city clerk who take care of the business of Gem. Most of these individuals have been serving in these positions for a number of years.

While we have some problems just like any other city, we are still proud of where we come from.

Our community does not consist just of the residents who actually live in the city limits but the surrounding area and we will go on with taking care of the business at hand, despite the opinions of others on the outside, so that we might continue to enjoy our small town life. The reason we live a little town is because we choose not to live in a big town.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



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