



Free Press Viewpoint

'White hope-gate' raises age-old issue

It looks as if Kansas Rep. Lynn Jenkins has her very own -gate style political gaff. With all the political scandals since Watergate that have merited a -gate suffix, the Kansas media seems to want to add a new one: "great white hope-gate."

The issue was this, while speaking at a forum in the north-eastern Kansas town of Hiawatha, Jenkins made the comment that the Republican party needed to find it's "great white hope." A poor choice of words perhaps, especially in today's political climate where every word of every speech, remark or press release is gone over with a politically-correct comb. What she meant was that the party needs to find a new leader capable of defeating Barack Obama in the next election.

The phrase comes from the early 1900s when African-American boxer Jack Johnson exploded onto the previously white-dominated boxing scene, winning the World Heavyweight Championship. The backlash was such that boxing promoters started looking for "the great white hope" who could defeat Johnson. He was defeated in 1915 by a white man, and it wasn't until 1937 that another African-American won the title.

The story was turned into a 1967 play and a 1969 movie, both starring James Earl Jones.

The Kansas media has jumped on the story. The Associated Press had at least four versions of the story, and by the end of that first day, the story on the "Kansas City Star" web page had several pages of reader comments, most skewing toward condemnation of the phrase. There is already a footnote on Wikipedia listing Jenkin's statement.

This situation brings up an excellent question: should we expect politicians to apologize for what they say?

Many people think they should apologize if they say something offensive. Unfortunately what offends us can change on a daily basis. It can change depending on ethnic group, religion, economic status, etc. What offends a white man might not offend an Asian woman, and vice versa.

Speechwriters already make careers out of boiling down an argument into neutral words that won't offend anyone, but they don't get it right every time, and sometimes politicians go off-script. Perhaps, then, we should ask that our politicians apologize for using offensive words unintentionally.

But what if they meant it? We want politicians to mean what they say and say what they mean. We want them to be authentic and honest, to represent their views in an open manner so that we know what they will vote for, what policies they'll enact and generally how they will behave in the position we elect them to. So if that's the case, why should they have to apologize for it? And how would you know one way or the other?

The simple solution for politicians is this: choose your words carefully. There is a middle ground between what you really want to say and what will make people angry. And the sad fact is that almost anything you say will make someone, somewhere angry. You can't please everyone, but you can try to at least not to use language you know will cause a backlash. You won't get it right every time, but you can try.

The simple solution for everyone else is to relax. Not everything is worthy of a public outcry. A congresswoman using a phrase she ought not to have used and probably didn't even think before she said it does not demand she be run out of town on a rail.

In the end, what people say is just words, and the problem with words is they have different meanings to different people. So we should look past her words to the idea, and whether or not you agree with it.

-Kevin Bottrell

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OBAMA FINDS HIMSELF IN A "TEACHABLE MOMENT"...



WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF IN A HOLE, MR. PRESIDENT, QUIT DIGGING.

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KIRK

Change market myth to personal touch

Now would be a perfect time for all of us to take a long hard look at the intellectual and moral culture in our country and ask ourselves if this is really the best we can do?

The nation as a whole looks confused, bewildered and contradictory as of late. We don't seem to know what we want. We fear facts, each other and the unknown.

While the American people have been whipped into a state of hysteria by the federal deficit and health care reform, the status quo in our country has remained relatively unchanged. Pharmaceutical companies, agribusinesses, oil and mining companies and investment banks still pretty much run the country. It seems we have been arguing about freedom while our options keep shrinking because of conglomeration, corporate socialism, cultural destruction and monopolies created by a Darwinistic form of capitalism.

In the past, popular mass movements have risen up to challenge the power of special interests. But since the Reagan years, many people have been convinced that the government is always the problem, so any attempts to lessen the power of elite institutions has failed.

This has been a real boon for the elite few who rule the most powerful institutions in our country, but it has been harmful to our culture and our middle class. A strict adherence to the cold logic of the marketplace has left us with fewer Mom and Pop stores, fewer family farms, more suburban sprawl, more urban decay and violent neighborhoods, less farmland, more paved roads, fewer independent voices in the media, more cultural homogenization, more road repairs, more automobile pollution, more super chain stores and strip malls, more



Andy Heintz

• Wildcat Ramblings

prisons, more materialism, less community, and more greed and cynicism.

The market is good at many things but it can't bring communities together, it can't provide health care to the sick, it can't bring back old-growth forests, it can't measure the community aspect of farmers markets or the beauty of craft stores, it can't by itself provide happiness and it can't replace ethics.

The divisiveness in our country today doesn't even seem to be based on facts. Neither politics nor business will be changed if everyone has a distorted sense of reality. And, the fact is, many people decrying the end of American capitalism fail to understand that most of our most powerful institutions have ridden the wave of corporate socialism for decades.

Many of today's biggest polluters are subsidized by the American taxpayer. In the book "Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution," authored by Paul Hawken and Amory and Hunter L. Lovins, we read, "not only do abusers of ecosystem services get a free ride, but everyone else is forced to subsidize the resulting resource depletion and loss, at an estimated expense to taxpayers of around ... \$1.5 trillion per year."

Our automobiles have been on welfare for the majority of the twentieth century, at a cost

of \$400 billion per year of taxpayer money due to taxpayer funded road construction and the human and economic costs that stem from military spending earmarked to go to courageous soldiers fighting to ensure our country has access to oil in the Middle East. According to the book, between May 1994 and September 1996 the United States honored an 1872 mining law by transferring land containing \$16 billion worth of minerals to private parties for a sum of \$19,190 — nearly a millionfold less. Any downstream damage to streams and rivers was paid by taxpayers who won't get a penny of the royalties.

Over the years the taxpayer has also funded the draining of the Everglades, the damage to wetlands and the Gulf from phosphate and pesticide poisoning, subsidies to tobacco farmer, and subsidies to oil companies making record profits.

The inner cities today are left to crumble and decay, as jails fill up with troubled youth who inhabit these broken neighborhoods. This occurs while farm land is turned into parking lots in order to expand the suburbs into the country. The result of these intertwined issues is more air pollution, more road construction, more jails in our already bloated prison industrial complex, and more cultural destruction all funded by the American taxpayer.

We have to change our mindset in order to truly change our country.

Andy Heintz, a K-State journalism graduate, is sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. He says he loves K-State athletics and fishing, sports and opinion writing.

Supporter says Epp is pro-student

To the Editor:

I am writing this letter as a friend of Rich Epp. However, I am also a former student in the broadcasting department at Colby Community College. While I am very aware that I was nowhere near the "prize pupil," I knew that I was very lucky to have broadcasting instructors like Debbie Schwanke, Rod Thomasson and Chris Thompson. They were very knowledgeable and very committed to teaching their students the broadcasting profession. Even though he was not associated with the college at that time, Rich was the same way.

You recently published a letter that was written about Rich's association with the Colby Community College radio department that says his arrangement with the college "is not fair to the students of the radio program." My association with Rich began at a Lady Trojan basketball game in January of 1998 in Pratt. For some reason, the college station didn't have anyone who wanted to drive to Pratt to do the play-by-play of the women's game, so Rich agreed to help the station out and allowed me to do the color commentary. I had only been a student at Colby and a part of the radio program for a short time, so I was not ready to do the play-by-play. Even though that was my first time on the radio as a sports broadcaster, Rich was very good to me and treated me like a professional.

That encounter began what is almost a twelve-year friendship. After that game, Rich allowed me to do the color commentary with him for several more college and high school



Free Press Letter Drop

• Our readers sound off

games over the next year and a half for his commercial broadcasts. If Rich was unable to do a game due to a conflict or an illness, he allowed me to fill in for him doing play-by-play. In addition, Rich hired me to help with the broadcasts of the area high school football games and the 1999 State Championship Basketball game that aired on KLBY. He also hired me to do onsite interviews and promotional commercials for the wheat harvest reports. That was more than fair to me.

As you can see from my experience with Rich, if a student is willing to actually learn the discipline and amount of work it takes to be a sports broadcaster, there is no better teacher available for the students of Colby Community College. To be fair to the person who wrote the original letter, my guess would be that he only received half of the story from someone who has a grudge against Rich's ability and knack to sell and produce sports broadcasts, but that is complete speculation. I thought that my relationship with Rich would be strictly a professional one, but I was wrong. Rich has also been an influence on me to be a

better person. The students in the college radio department need to use Rich as a resource. I am an example of someone who did.

Thank you for your time.

Yancey Walker, West Plains, Mo.

P.S. To all the patrons of Colby and supporters of Colby Community College Trojan Basketball, get behind Dustin Pfeifer, he's got a lot of energy, a lot of knowledge and he is going to do a great job!

Write us

The Colby Free Press encourages Letters to the Editor on any topic of general interest. Letters should be brief, clear and to the point. They must be signed and carry the address and phone number of the author.

We do not publish anonymous letters. We sign our opinions and expect readers to do likewise. Nor do we run form letters or letters about topics which do not pertain to our area. Thank-yous from this area should be submitted to the Want Ad desk.

Letters will not be censored, but will be read and edited for form and style, clarity, length and legality. We will not publish attacks on private individuals or businesses not pertaining to a public issue.

Before an election, letters (other than responses by a candidate) will not be published after the Thursday before the polls open.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



I'M OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER THE GOOD OL' DAYS...

...WHEN PROTESTERS WERE EITHER RICH, SPOILED COLLEGE KIDS... OR FOLKS BURNING DOWN THE 'INNER CITIES'!

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