

ANOTHER VIEW

Democracy's health also must be shielded

Some local governments are charting new territory in their move to electronic meeting forums. It's important that they get this right. They are making changes that go to the very heart of participatory democracy.

First, let's be clear: The COVID-19 health crisis is a serious one, and it demands serious responses. For this emergency especially, the best thing to do for our health is to limit personal contact with one another. From this perspective, then, governments are to be commended for acting quickly and resourcefully to come up with alternative ways of holding meetings.

Second, we are fortunate to be living in a time where such alternatives exist.

Although the interconnectedness of our society is one of the factors that has enabled COVID-19 to spread so rapidly, that same connectivity also gives us the means to devise workarounds. It was not all that long ago when electronic meetings would not even have been possible, much less implemented so quickly and efficiently.

Still, there are some dangers inherent in the switch to electronic meetings — perhaps not in the least because they do seem to be so clean, quick and efficient.

Democracy, as has often been said, is messy. We embrace that untidiness, however, because in the long run it leads to a system in which more people have more say in how their government is run.

Just as complaints have arisen over "elitism" in the move to electronic learning from kindergarten through college, so, too, is there a potential problem with electronic meetings being available only to those wealthy and empowered enough to have access to computers and to the internet.

Access isn't a new issue: Some critics already say that the current system excludes some citizens simply because working people don't have the time or money to show up in person at meetings to make themselves heard.

Who knows? Perhaps those who have electronic connection capabilities at home, but lack the time to drive to and sit through meetings, might eventually benefit from a hybrid system that allows more interactive participation via an online meeting format.

But keep in mind, too, that part of what makes our democracy work is the ability to look our leaders in the eyes and demand answers from them, to insist on personal accountability. It is the ability to see our fellow citizens in action and get a better understanding of their ideas and motives. It is the ability to be enlivened and challenged by the energy of a public meeting, which is always more powerful in person than in an electronic setting.

Taking away these elements may artificially sanitize public meetings and strip them of an element of their humanity. Personal accountability among all of us as neighbors, fellow taxpayers, fellow citizens is just as important as personal accountability between citizens and their leaders. Both types are undermined by the distancing necessitated when electronic meetings replace physical gatherings.

Again, we don't want to negate that necessity, or look for problems where there are none. Emergency measures are needed for now.

There is some indication that congregating in groups intensifies the potential virus load and could make people more vulnerable to infection, so of course responsible leaders would want to mitigate or eliminate that risk.

But while avoiding personal contact is important to our physical health at this time, it is not ideal for the health of our democracy over the long run.

Our leaders must commit to a return to open meetings at shared locations just as soon as the all-clear is given. Electronic meetings might protect them from the discomfort of confronting their critics in person. But democracy cannot thrive in such an environment.

The Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Kelly E. Mirt Regional Publisher
Wendi Craig General Manager
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Steven Doyle Local Editor

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Don't shoot down truth-seekers

In its second season "The Handmaid's Tale," the brilliant series on Hulu, there is an episode in which the handmaid called Offred has fled the bondage of her "Commander" and his wife in an effort to reach her true American husband and freedom in Canada.

She holes up in a corpse of a building that has been the scene of much death and desolation during the siege that destroyed Democracy to transform a portion of the free United States into the repressive Republic of Gilead.

That building is the headquarters of The Boston Globe, obviously emptied in a hurry, with filled coffee mugs and notebooks and vacated computers scattered across its newsroom and newsprint stacked in its warehouse, nowhere to go with no free press to be powered.

As if the Globe building's silence and the metaphor it represents aren't sufficiently frightening, one barren wall of the press room is stained with a lacquer of blood, the floor below splotched with dried pools from the people who obviously were eradicated by a fusillade of bullets that scuffed and scarred that bloody concrete.

"The Handmaid's Tale" is Margaret Atwood's novel about a dystopia formed in the northeastern quarter of what was the U.S., controlled by men, with women indentured in various levels



Steven Doyle

and his barren mate — the name "Offred" depicts an ownership by the Commander, Fred — for ceremonial breeding to create Gilead's most prized natural resource, children to be raised in darkness.

This darkness is scripted by a lethally controlled flow of information. Women aren't allowed to read. Even the Commander Fred's wife loses her pinky for reading the Bible in a society founded on literally quoted Scripture. You better know your Leviticus, just don't pick up the book.

And it's a place where they line up and kill journalists by firing squad to control what everyone knows.

I share this because every day I observe efforts to kill journalists with a fusillade of ridicule fired from lips next to hips.

Please understand I say this not from a point of politics. I'm not attacking any politician. I'm not a Democrat — as you may be predisposed to believe — and I'm not a Republican. I'm not THAT liberal or THAT conservative. I don't care if an elephant or a donkey is standing on stage.

of servitude that peak at the glass ceiling of submissive wife. Handmaids are young and fertile women assigned to a Commander

But I care unabashedly about the principles on which our society and our country were founded and grew, and those constitutionally start with the freedom of the press, the right to hold people accountable for their bald-face lies, their little untruths, their obfuscations, their obstructions and their sleights-of-hand.

Journalists are phlebotomists of truth, tapping around with our questions until we find a hidden, plump vein. We are humans and make mistakes. Not every "tap" is with perfect touch and sensitivity.

But those of us who work for conscientious and non-ideological news organizations tap with unrelenting purpose — all the while facing that fusillade of snide disrespect and ridicule.

I feel the sting daily on social media, in comments from people I love and respect and whose politics I understand. I don't care about your candidate, but I care about what your candidate says and ensuring that you know if that candidate speaks the truth.

I'm not naive. I know politicians bend facts like so many hairpins. I don't expect total honesty from anyone. But if a journalist didn't look for the answers and explain to you those answers, what in fact would you know to be true or untrue?

Are you going to take every

leader's statements as indelible? I think we can agree that would be folly.

But daily I hear the echo chamber of "fake news" — which by definition describes important information or insight from which someone wants to distract your attention — and even pure slander against journalists on the job, working for you, tapping for the truth.

There's much fake about those increasingly popular tactics, and they shouldn't be news. Yet, if a journalist's message is bad for you, your strategy is old: You kill the person who revealed it.

So this is what I want you to know and understand:

You can post your memes and endorse the tactics and adore the individual, but if you put truth, transparency, honesty and rule of law in front of a "fake-news" firing squad, the bloodstains never will be gone.

Dystopia literally means a world in which people lead wretched, dehumanized, fearful lives.

And the first way to get there is with an absence of information, an absence of truth, an absence of accountability, an absence of journalists.

That would leave all of us as somebody's handmaid.

Steven Doyle is Local Editor of the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801 ext. 245. Follow @StevenLDoyle.

MY WORD

Let's all thank a health care hero

By Dale Alward

As we continue to battle with COVID-19, it has been so encouraging to see the outpouring of support from Martinsville, Henry County and Patrick County for Sovah Health. We have always striven to be a place where you choose to come for health care, and we take our responsibility as a community leader very seriously.

As our neighbors have come together to do everything possible to slow the spread of this vicious virus amid unprecedented challenges, we have never been more proud to be a part of this community. It is more important than ever that we all continue to take the important steps necessary to keep our community as safe and healthy as possible,



Dale Alward
Sovah-Martinsville CEO

including staying home as much as we can, practicing social distancing and following sound medical guidance.

Today, I would ask one more thing of our community, including myself: Thank a health care hero.

Some moments ask more of us as a society, as a community and as individuals. Moments like these need heroes. From grocery store employees and delivery workers to educators teaching remotely and those keeping our infrastructure and essential services running, this current moment has no shortage of heroes.

And that includes our heroes on the frontlines of this crisis — our healthcare workers.

Our health care workers are not only a cornerstone of our hospital's mission of "Making Communities Healthier," they are integral members of our community. They are moms and dads. Brothers and sisters. Friends and neighbors.

And today, especially, they are heroes, fighting on the frontlines to provide compassionate, quality care when it's needed most. They come to the hospital to take care of you, please stay at home for them! We are at a critical stage in the COVID-19 battle in our community. Please follow the guidelines from our governor — stay away from crowds.

At Sovah Health, we honor all our providers and employ-

ees working hard to ensure a safe place of care and a healthier community for all of us. I hope you will join me and add your voice to the chorus of appreciation for our community's healthcare heroes by posting your own message of thanks on your favorite social media, with the hashtag #ThankAHealthCareHero.

Let's show our hometown heroes how much we appreciate their incredible and inspiring efforts to keep us safe.

And thank you again for supporting Sovah Health and trusting us with your care as we help guide our community through the COVID-19 situation as safely as possible. We will get through this together.

The writer is the chief executive officer of Sovah Health-Martinsville.

How to submit a letter to the editor

The Martinsville Bulletin invites letters to the editor dealing with issues of local concern. Letters must be typed or written legibly, be limited to 300 words and take as their starting point an article or other item appearing in The Bulletin. Letters are subject to editing and/or rejection. Letters that are factually inaccurate, contain personal attacks on private figures or hate speech are not considered for print. Writers must provide the Bulletin with sources or documentation to verify any facts in their letters. Only letters with an address and phone number for verification purposes will be considered for publication. Only the writer's full name and city will be published. All letters must be signed; no anonymous communication will be published. Email letters to info@martinsvillebulletin.com or mail or deliver them to 204 Broad St., Martinsville, P.O. Box 3711, Martinsville, Va. 24115.

OUR VIEW

Time for our racist relics to go

We've reached that point when it's time to rethink our priorities, about how the future should not be so dramatically and sadly decimated by the past.

Across the nation symbols of inherent racism – some of them unintentional but others erected in ignorance – are being removed. We've watched statue after statue topple in Richmond, where the public has not waited for their elected representatives to debate once again the merits of a monument on public property that celebrates a person who fought a war against our nation with the primary purpose of maintaining the right to indenture people of color and use them in servitude.

We have watched often in horror as civil disobedience has been employed to do the job that those elected have not or would not touch for reasons concentered by politics and disregard and not by logic or love.

Many of you will disagree. You will wag your finger and say this is our history, this is our heritage, that, in some cases, these honor the lives of our family members and loved ones who fought to defend a cause they believed in.

There is no doubt about any of that. But that "cause" was diluted in criminal and moral sin, and that "cause" should not be memorialized in a location where it must be faced daily by those whose family members and loved ones died as victims of that cause.

Racism is not an arbitrary philosophy. It isn't something to debate or consider. It is a deadly undermining of someone whose skin is of a different color, whose heritage is from another place and whose development was thwarted by systems, policies and attitudes designed for those precise purposes.

The Confederacy is as much part of Virginia as cardinals and moonshine. More blood was shed on our soil in the Civil War than anywhere else. But that is not to be revered, although it certainly must be remembered.

The history of the Civil War is our lesson, our mirror that reflects the worst days of our nation. If you don't like what you see in television of rioters and looters who filter into those protesting peacefully for a cause and use that opening to do damage and even harm, then compare that to sending off your children either to die for an immoral cause or survive by killing a friend, neighbor or even relative.

Yes, that history must be preserved, in archives and museums and text books and on video. It must be reviewed and digested and used as a vessel to transport mankind into a better and more worthy place.

But that history must not be emblazoned in plazas or on our prominent buildings, on street signs or in school names or institutions or any place else where they stand as everlasting totems to remind some of us that we weren't considered to be humans for hundreds of years.

NASCAR on Wednesday paid Martinsville a stunning honor by using the evening of its race at its longest-serving track to announce that Confederate flags no long will be allowed at its tracks and during its events.

There will be challenges to this directive. Some will argue free speech and personal property, and still others will share the embarrassing stance of Truck Series driver Ray Ciccirelli, who said he would retire rather than drive on a circuit that would take such a stand. Maybe the fact that he is 50 and never won anything were contributors, too, but quitting rather than considering is a caustic commentary. So let's view NASCAR's wave of a flag not be the crossed bars of hatred but the green flag of go.

Let's use this as a point in time when we start our purge of every monument, name and organization in Martinsville and Henry and Patrick counties that is founded in racism and hate.

Let's make a list, and let's draw lines through those names and elevate new and more worthy legacies to preserve.

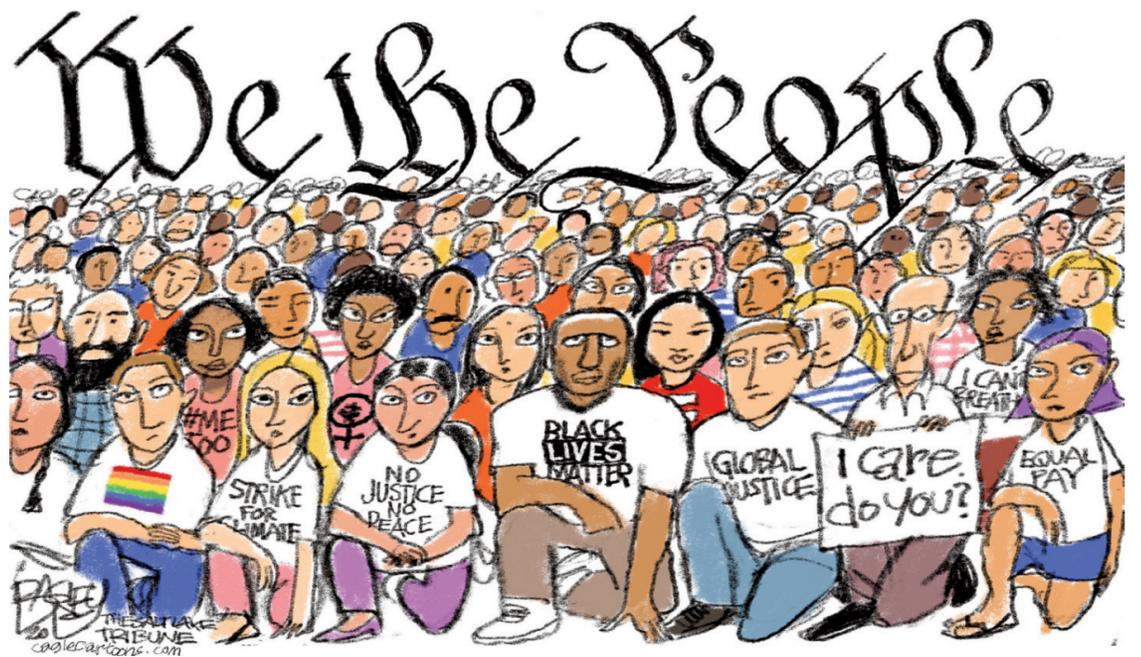
Let's do this quickly, like pulling the bandage off a wound we just never have been able to heal. Let's endure a second more of pain and hope the fresh air of love will cure all and leave behind no permanent scar.

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The last tears of a senior year

The trivial suffering and complaints of disruption required by this pandemic haven't really bothered me. I've been cautious to protect myself and others from infection, but the loss of opportunity and temporary enjoyment have been disappointing, not devastating.

No matter how much I've missed March Madness and my beloved Atlanta Braves and going out for an occasional meal, I've considered myself blessed to be healthy, employed and sufficiently toilet-papered and that my loved ones have been, too.

I sympathize and empathize, but for myself there have been no cries.

That is except for my school-age children and the opportunities that have been swept from them by a virus that was allowed to sneeze its way into our lives by a leader who denied until we were endangered. The byproducts of that myopia have left me in a blind rage.

There surely will be another basketball tournament and maybe another baseball season (I'm not feeling hopeful, though). My newly teen daughter someday will resume her assault on excellence in competitive swimming.

But never will there be a senior year of high school for my son.

And for that I have endured more tears than a man my age should admit.

This emotional storm has built for weeks, since some of my son's best teachers and an assistant principal came to the house and brought him a yard sign and t-shirt and other goodies. His dad stood there on the porch and tried to mumble a thanks for all they had done for him, but it came out as choked syllables that barely formed words. They deserved better.

There was an adopt-a-student program



Steven Doyle

that delivered surprise gifts to porches and not to smiling, thankful faces.

There was a final talent show in digital format that was both stunning and nostalgic but absent merited applause.

Then there were the streamed awards lists and honors for graduates and comments of appreciation from more faculty members.

More views, more heart-stomping sadness, more tears. If his mother and I looked at each other, one of us lost it.

I know this is nothing unique to me or our family or our school. We've seen such parades and muted celebrations and unique moments wholeheartedly generated everywhere. I share my sadness with every senior.

My son attended a performing arts magnet high school with a different environment made up of a diverse group of students who share more fibrous bonds than those teens typically entwined only by geography and tradition.

So on a recent Saturday morning, when they convened in the school's parking lot for their final "commencement," my ever-ready spontaneous emotions really overtook me. These kids hadn't seen each other in months, except for thumbnail shots on a computer screen. The glee that came from their voices as they jumped from cars, wearing robes and masks, was overwhelming. There were semi-hugs and elbow bumps with people whose linkage was about to be rendered without proper formality.

They simply lined up in vehicles, festooned and bedecked and graffitied with names and messages, drove to a spot, got

out, walked up under an awning, were handed diplomas, smiled for the cameras and returned to their cheering and beaming immediate family members.

There was a short processional through a gauntlet of waving and applauding teachers. Yearbooks were distributed, but these never will be signed with "to a great guy" and "never forget the time we..." and "I will remember how you..."

These teachers have been amazing. They taught lessons within their lessons, showing good humor and best intentions and putting their students first. There's a reason this school has been ranked among the top 50 in the country, and it felt insufficient to part with waves and shouts through a window at 5 mph, through a mask, through gritted teeth and filmy eyes.

There was no grand finish, no celebratory outing. Not all grandparents could attend. The seniors couldn't watch one another. Only final roadside photos could be snapped. I guess we should celebrate that no one had to wait outside in the heat until the doors opened to secure a good seat. And there was no long, boring speech to endure.

But there was a final message to be understood.

This virus is killing people and putting them in hospitals rapidly. Our streets are full of tragedy.

And the Class of 2020 is being sent into that world with this: At any moment something can emerge from anywhere and scar your heart permanently. Embrace your opportunities and don't be afraid to cry.

Steven Doyle is Local Editor of the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801 ext. 245. Follow @StevenLDoyle.

Help for small businesses on the way

By **Allyson Rothrock** and **Pete Snyder**

Over the past several months, the COVID-19 pandemic and mandatory shutdowns have wreaked economic havoc throughout America, and our community here in Martinsville-Henry County has been especially hard hit.

Many area small businesses are struggling to make ends meet and desperately need a lifeline to bridge the gap while federal relief funding kicks in and business picks back up. These small businesses are the lifeblood of our local economy. Without them, thousands of jobs would disappear, along with the hopes and dreams of those who have spent years building their businesses. The suffering for Martinsville-Henry County families would be immeasurable, and the economic damage would take years, or even decades, to repair.

That is why our nonprofit organizations – The Harvest

Foundation and the Virginia 30 Day Fund – have teamed up to launch a new and innovative project called Pay it Forward MHC.

While The Harvest Foundation has been well established for nearly two decades, the Virginia 30 Day Fund was launched this April to save as many Virginia jobs as possible in response to the COVID-19 crisis. To date, the nonprofit Virginia 30 Day Fund has raised nearly \$2.8 million, assisted more than 370 at-risk small businesses throughout Virginia, and their model has been deployed in numerous states, including Georgia, Pennsylvania, Mississippi, New Jersey and Colorado, with more states on the way.

Now, with a \$1 million grant from The Harvest Foundation, the Virginia 30 Day Fund is providing even more direct financial assistance to at-risk Martinsville and Henry County small businesses, so they can survive this harrowing time and keep employees

on the payroll.

Here is how one small business owner in Martinsville-Henry County reacted when he found out less than 24 hours after completing an application for the Pay it Forward MHC Small Business Relief Program that he was awarded a \$3,000 forgivable loan: "I was flabbergasted," said Roger Curtis, owner of The Jeweler's Edge, located at 2440B Greensboro Road in Martinsville. "This was hands-down the easiest form we've ever filled out for any type of grant or loan. It was amazingly quick and amazingly direct."

The Jeweler's Edge was one of 20 small businesses awarded a forgivable loan from Pay it Forward MHC within just 24 hours of our launch – and in coming days and weeks, we expect to fund hundreds and hundreds more.

These forgivable loans do not need to be repaid, but if a small business that received assistance feels they have sufficiently recovered and wishes

to "pay it forward" to another at-risk Martinsville-Henry County business, they can work with Pay It Forward MHC to do so.

Eligible businesses include those employing between three and 30 people, businesses operating for at least one year and those owned and operated by a Virginia resident. Apply to Pay it Forward MHC by visiting theharvestfoundation.org and clicking on "How to Apply." Find out more about Virginia 30 Day Fund by visiting va30dayfund.com.

Working together we can save hundreds of Martinsville-Henry County small businesses and thousands of jobs and put our amazing community on solid economic footing for a much needed comeback. To the hard working small business heroes who are struggling right now, help – and hope – are on the way.

Allyson Rothrock is president of The Harvest Foundation. Pete Snyder is the CEO of Disruptor Capital and co-founded the Virginia 30 Day Fund with his wife, Burson.

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OUR VIEW

NCI's 'public' meeting taught us a lesson

The four men who represent Martinsville and Henry County in state government are upset about a lot of things they say are rotten in Richmond for them since the Democrats took control. Yes, state Sen. Bill Stanley (R-Rocky Mount) and Delegates Danny Marshall (R-Danville), Charles Poindexter (R-Franklin) and Les Adams (R-Chatham) have lost clout and committee assignments and board postings, and they understandably aren't happy about this politics-as-usual.

Among those changes was the removal of both Marshall and Poindexter from the board of the New College Institute, a role in which Marshall had served since NCI was born in Martinsville, and replacing them with out-of-the-area Democrats. Stanley and Adams continue on the board, but this change is not a great investment in the area's interests.

But the bigger issue here is the how and not the who: NCI's process for holding the meeting in which these men were replaced formally makes us wonder if anyone is invested in this area's interests.

In case you didn't read Holly Kozelsky's report in the Bulletin last Sunday, NCI's board met virtually via Zoom on June 11 and did all sorts of business, including adding those new legislators, discussing details about their purchase of the building on Baldwin Street and ostensibly adopting a new budget to be enacted on July 1.

All of this happened behind what appears to be a very carefully erected curtain of obfuscation that appears both supercilious and suspicious.

Board Relations Coordinator Chris Niblett told Kozelsky that NCI got some "guidelines from our attorney's office" that were "kind of lax because of the pandemic."

"This was a kind of a last-minute board meeting, to be truthful about it," Niblett said.

To be truthful state law requires a 3-day public notification of a scheduled meeting. The key word is "public." To meet that standard NCI posted the meeting on its website in an obscure manner and not even on its calendar of events. Neither was the meeting listed on a "Commonwealth Calendar" of similar meetings that NCI official Christina Reed said was the "proper avenue."

Also it should be noted that a day after the meeting, when questions were being asked about notification, the announcement was elevated to larger type and placed in a more obvious position at the bottom of NCI's home page.

All of this was exacerbated by NCI's decision to deviate from its traditional practice of notifying media members so they could alert the public and cover the meeting.

In other words, you really weren't invited to attend a meeting that is required to be open to you. This was a vapor of a notification lost in a cloud of something else. NCI Interim Director Karen Jackson: "The reason it wasn't sent out is we aren't required to send it out. I don't remember if it's a change in practice."

We will give her a pass on this, because she has been in her post little more than a year, but we don't accept her logic and can't name a public agency that operates that way, either.

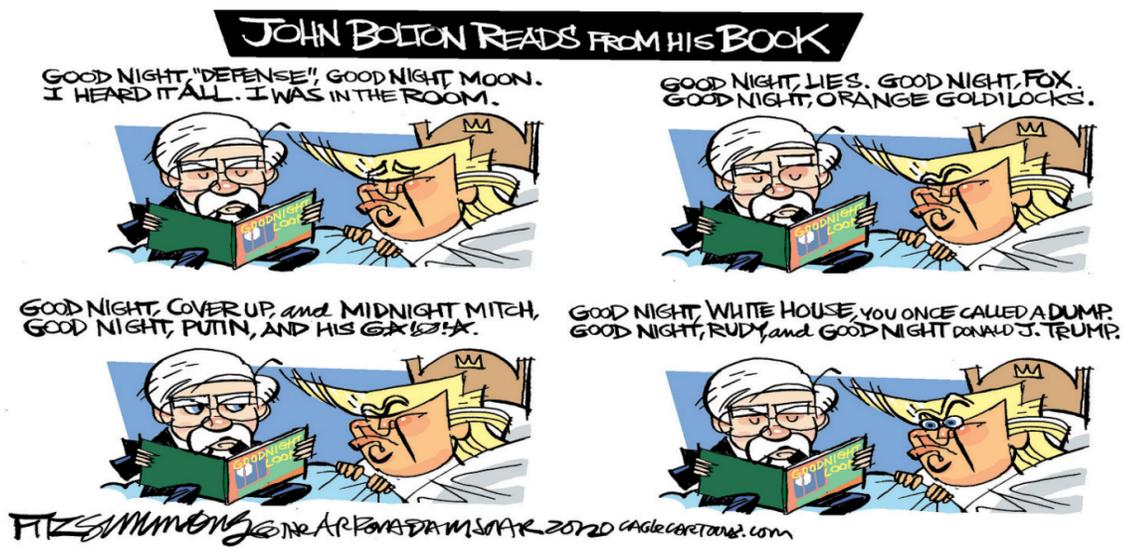
Frankly we find all of this a significant affront to open meetings laws and to you, the taxpayers who pay the bills and count on the education NCI would provide to your students. These were tax dollars allocated in the dark. The defense of that is neither plausible nor palatable. Mr. Marshall allowed that "we certainly want the press to participate. NCI is a state organization run with state money, so I always felt like it was the right thing to do."

"We followed what's required of the state in order to declare it a public meeting: Post it more than three days in advance. Because these are virtual right now, they are slightly different."

But Mr. Marshall knew about the meeting, even if he and Mr. Poindexter were no more invited than were you. And they remain our bullhorns in Richmond, the people we expect to protect the rights of those constituents who elected them, whether they are welcome on the board or not.

To be honest, we don't think so many legislators should be on this board – one would suffice – and that none should be its chair. We want NCI run by academicians not politicians who too often allow their theater to separate them from doing the right thing.

But on strictly academic rubric there was very little right about how this meeting was communicated. NCI is a center of learning, and we certainly were educated about how to wink at the public's rights.



The evolution of enlightenment about equality

As I watch demonstrations, pleas and prayers for our centuries-overdue balancing of the treatment of people whose skin shades are of more varieties than pale and sunburned, I am at once overtaken by anger, sadness and guilt.

I'm angry because we required the inexplicable assassinations of Black men by police officers to open our nation's eyes and ears. I'm angry because so many of our leaders still ignore, abhor and deplore by example and by disassociation from the moral anchorage that is so necessary.

I'm sad because of the people who have died or been injured or lost their homes or businesses or jobs to the fringe of these otherwise peaceful point-makers who are streaming down our streets in search of avenues to equity. I'm sad because I've read this story so many times and never have contributed the right words to the right eyes to make a difference.

Today, I shall try again. Please watch as nouns and verbs trickle from my heart and fingers and across this keyboard and in front of your eyes. May they bore through your pupils and into your brains to fire synapses of recognition and forgiveness and empowerment.

But these words must begin with my guilt because my journey hasn't always been along the path of enlightenment and compassion and often was detoured by ignorance, insolence and intemperance. I did not grow up in an aware times.

I lived in a time when people marched in the streets for these same causes while some resented Martin Luther King and



Steven Doyle

cheered segregationists who blocked doorways and murderers in hoods with clubs and ropes.

I lived in a time when I heard men talking of going to meetings to organize for that purpose, when I heard every conceivable disparaging term uttered by men and women whose hearts I knew to be loving and Godly but whose minds were eclipsed from compassion by fear and foible. I lived in a time when people worked together but didn't eat in the same rooms, when the water was poured into cups rather than passing the jug from lip to lip, when some parts of town were unworldly and even scary.

I lived in a time when I played baseball and basketball against boys of a different color, but I didn't go to the same schools or churches or even really know where they bought their groceries.

I lived in a time when it wasn't until sixth grade that my class included a boy who came from "the city," who, the adults whispered, was a plant by the NAACP to "take over" our schools, as if he were a dark-skinned Communist coming to steal our flag.

I lived in a time when I was in utter shock and trembling fear when that boy befriended me and served God's true purpose of ripping the scales of racism from my eyes and allowing me to see humanity and not heritage.

I lived in a time when I was stunned to see an African-American high school

basketball player I knew with a white girl as his date at a movie we both were attending.

And I lived in a time when whispers and sideways glances greeted the news that a lifelong friend who was white had married a Black man, a union that ultimately lasted decades and produced children.

I lived in a time that not until my freshman year in college, in a small town in perhaps the most racist part of America, that I truly found enlightenment, largely because of two friendly guys who lived next door played hot buttered soul on their stereo and because athletes on the teams I covered invited me to watch games in their dorm and tolerated my clumsy, unenlightened habits by seeing that my heart was neither malice nor callous.

I lived in a time when I spent a summer carrying pipe and pushing wheel barrows of rock for a plumbing company made up of men who didn't understand this long-haired child of the 70s who evangelized to them about acceptance of others.

I lived in a time when those men of plumbing would call me a hippy and a sissy and would promise I would get mine when I had a daughter or son who married someone Black, although their words weren't quite so delicate.

And finally I live in a time when that could happen someday, and I know that would be just fine if it did.

Steven Doyle is Local Editor of the Martinsville Bulletin. Contact him at 276-638-8801 ext. 245. Follow @StevenLDoyle.

MY WORD

Some insights about your child's health

By Stacey Humphreys

Like many aspects of daily life, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed how we think about and access health care these days.

For families, that includes pediatric care for children.

Here are some common questions and answers about how to seek proper care for your child and perhaps answer some frequently asked questions regarding children's health during this time.

Q: Can I still contact my child's pediatrician to talk about a health issue?

A: Absolutely. It is always important and okay for you to contact your child's pediatrician about any health or wellness issues your child may be experiencing, or that you may have questions about – from minor injuries to colds and viruses and other, more serious health conditions. In fact, it's especially important right now to stay alert to your child's health, and call their pediatrician if you think they may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are exhibiting any symptoms you may be worried about. Depending on your child's issue and symptoms, your pediatrician



Stacey Humphreys

Q: Is it okay to schedule an appointment for my child's annual well visit?

A: Yes. Well visits are an essential part of keeping your child on the road to good health. They provide the opportunity for your child's pediatric provider to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, monitor your child's growth and developmental milestones, ensure that they are up-to-date on immunizations and answer any questions you may have about your child's health. Now might even be a particularly good time to schedule your child's annual physical. Pediatric offices are taking extra precautions to protect the health and safety of patients and their families, such as scheduling well child exams in the beginning of the day and sick visits later. Your pediatric health care provider may even have a few more openings for these types of visits than usual. Additionally, scheduling an annual

physical will help your child be ready for the return of school sports and other activities that require an annual physical and immunization updates.

Q: Should my child wear a mask or cloth face covering?

A: Children do not need to wear a mask or cloth face covering if they are at home and not exposed to someone with COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that everyone 2 years and older wear a cloth face covering that covers their nose and mouth when out in the community. Cloth face coverings can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and should be worn in addition to other measures like social distancing, frequent hand-cleaning and other preventive measures. It is important to remember that cloth face coverings are not intended to protect the person wearing the covering. Rather, they help prevent the spread of illness to others and is especially helpful if the wearer is asymptomatic and unaware that they could be passing illness on to others. Based on these recommendations, you may want to consider a mask or cloth face covering for your child. Additionally, if you are visiting your child's

pediatrician, they may ask that your child be masked when they enter the office for their safety and the safety of others. Children under 2 should not wear a mask due to the potential for suffocation. Those who have trouble breathing, are incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove their face covering without help are also exempted from this recommendation. If your child has special health needs and cannot wear a traditional mask or cloth face covering, you should talk to your pediatrician about other safety options.

Q: How can I help my child cope with what is happening right now?

A: Our current events can be a scary and unsettling time for children, but there are some things you can do to help them, including open discussions about what may be bothering them; answering their questions with simple but honest language; helping them stay connected with friends and family through video chats; and maintaining healthy routines at home that reinforce healthy eating, physical activity, learning, and regular bedtimes.

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MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

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The Martinsville Bulletin invites letters to the editor dealing with issues of local concern. Letters must be typed or written legibly, be limited to 300 words and take as their starting point an article or other item appearing in The Bulletin. Letters are subject to editing and/or rejection. Letters that are factually inaccurate, contain personal attacks on private figures or hate speech are not considered for print. Writers must provide the Bulletin with sources or documentation to verify any facts in their letters. Only letters with an address and phone number for verification purposes will be considered for publication. Only the writer's full name and city will be published. All letters must be signed; no anonymous communication will be published. Email letters to info@martinsvillebulletin.com or mail or deliver them to 204 Broad St., Martinsville, P.O. Box 3711, Martinsville, Va. 24115.