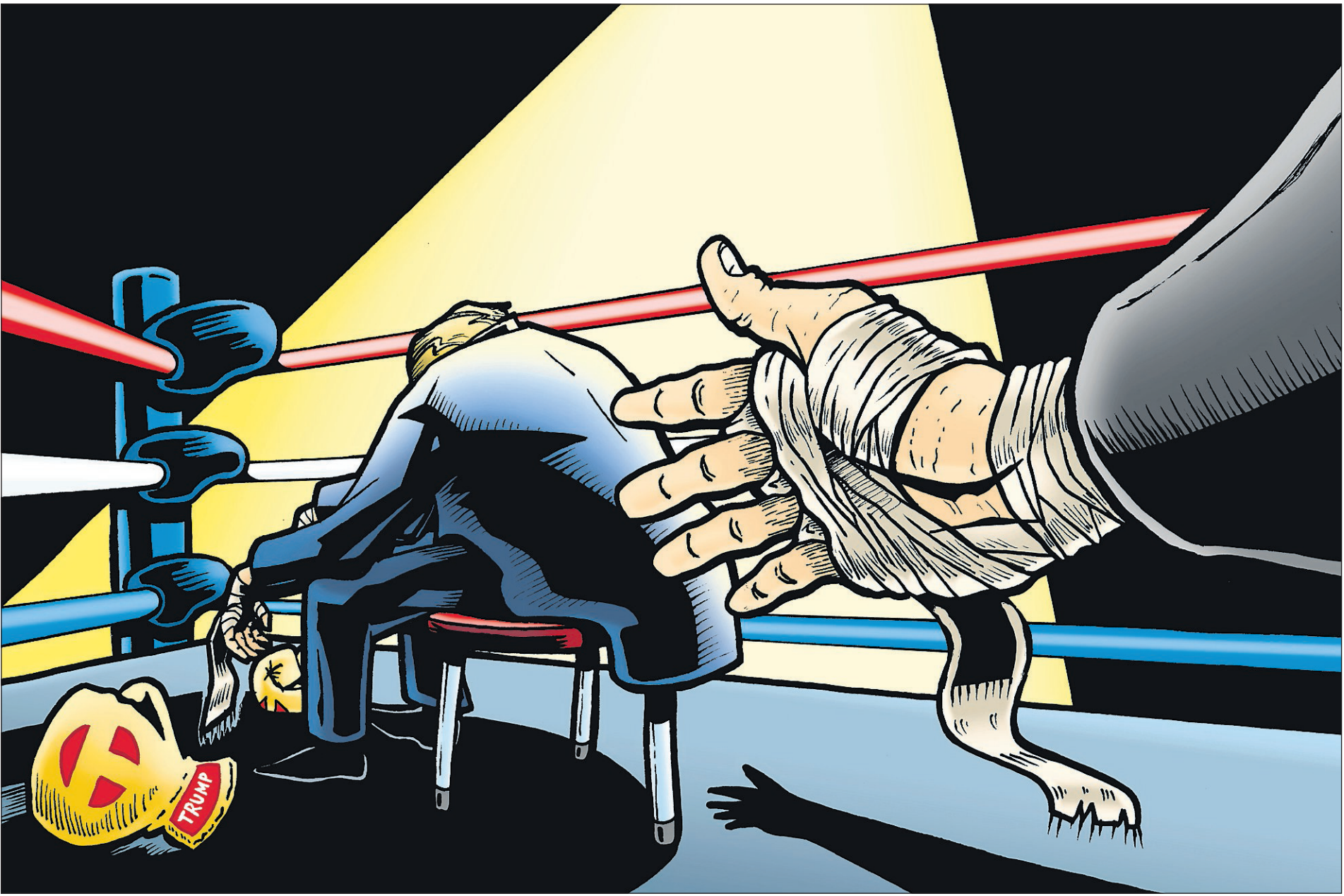


LESSONS LEARNED FROM 1971



DWAYNE CARPENTER/TIMES-DISPATCH

The fight of the century

He made unprecedented use of the media and public spotlight to energize his supporters, engage the masses and attract a record turnout.

His narcissistic arrogance complemented an infectious charisma that he exuded among cheering crowds at every appearance and rally. His prediction of certain victory was buoyed by his love of the camera, his name and face in print, and the unfettered adoration from his fans.

And as the climactic contest finally got underway, it looked like a victory. But there came a devastating final-phase surprise, and he was vanquished.

No, not Trump-Biden, but Ali-Frazier: March 8, 1971, 50 years ago, Muhammad Ali lost to Joe Frazier in “The Fight of the Century,” thanks in large part to a last-round knockdown.

I saw it live via closed circuit at



John Bryan

the Charlotte Coliseum. Sports Illustrated still calls it “The Biggest Sporting Event in History.” Through all of these years, I often have wondered whether that event would have any enduring relevance.

And then came Donald Trump. And his campaign against Joe Biden. And its aftermath.

We learned a few things from “The Fight of the Century” and its aftermath — learnings that perhaps can benefit us today.

First, we learned that a single person with a big enough voice and ego and charisma can energize unparalleled numbers of participants (300 million worldwide viewers then, 160 million voters now) and transform a previously routine event into one that seems existential.

Those viewers from a half-century ago — many who, like me, were first-time boxing enthusiasts — stuck around for years and produced a fresh heyday for boxing. Just four months later, Ali crowded the Hous-

ton Astrodome for his fight against sparring partner Jimmy Ellis.

Record turnouts for other fights, even without Ali and Frazier, continued for many years. Might the wake of Trump-Biden include record voter participation for many years to come, even for nonpresidential elections? The record turnout for the Georgia U.S. Senate runoffs might be a leading indicator.

Second, we learned that lesser-used methods of participation (closed-circuit viewing, mail-in and advance voting) dramatically can enhance an event’s reach.

Closed-circuit viewing of Ali-Frazier, and mail-in and advance voting for Trump-Biden, newly were expanded with fresh bells and whistles and reached vast new audiences. Ali-Frazier taught us that expanded participation methods can endure and be productive and make things better for everyone. Might the same now be true for expanded voting methods?

Third, we learned from Ali-Frazier

and its aftermath that intense polarization can dissipate and even disappear. Ali used unbridled vitriol to castigate the soft-spoken Frazier. Half the nation viewed Ali as a radical, loudmouthed, hate-spewing Muslim, and Frazier as the embodiment of decency and patriotism.

Communities everywhere bristled with intense arguments, and it was impossible to find an unbiased opinion. But during the following years, the polarization lessened and eventually disappeared — all coinciding with Ali’s own gradual abandonment of inflammatory speech. Might it be possible for former president Trump to likewise defuse today’s polarization?

Fourth, that 50-years-ago event taught us that it’s possible to be a good loser — even when the loser has bet everything on the event. There indeed was room for Ali to claim that The Fight was rigged, that it had been stolen.

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COVID-19 VACCINES

Differences and a brief history of development

With three vaccines now being administered across the country, it’s important to understand the fundamentals of how they work, the differences between them and the history of vaccine development.

The rapid development of COVID-19 vaccines is a modern scientific marvel. The Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines were the first treatments the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorized to help prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).

These new vaccines were developed in under a year because of intentional partnerships between scientists working in the pharmaceutical industry and the federal government. The mumps vaccine was the previous record-holder for development time,



Jon Dattelbaum



ALEXA WELCH EDLUND/TIMES-DISPATCH

Nurse Karen Schricker prepared to administer a shot during a vaccine drive at Richmond Raceway in February.

which took four years to develop and test in the 1960s.

Since then, the tools for vaccine development rapidly have advanced, enabling scientists to super charge the response to our current global pandemic.

More recently developed vaccines (chicken pox, HPV, etc.) haven’t had the level of urgency and public health crisis that moved the level of investment in vaccines forward

so fast.

While the authorization of the COVID-19 vaccines might seem fast, scientists used a foundation of knowledge built over decades of biomedical research to develop these new treatments to help end this pandemic.

Way back in 2003, the world experienced the first severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV-1). It

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RACIST ROOTS

A Richmond coffee shop eliminates tipping



Michael Paul Williams
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Alchemy Coffee served up the hot news in a social media post on Martin Luther King Jr. Day in January.

“During his last year, Dr. King advocated for the Poor People’s Campaign. To honor his legacy we’re announcing that our minimum wage will now align with what’s widely considered a livable wage: \$15/hr.

“How will this be possible? We are simultaneously eliminating tipping. While so many of you generously give, we would rather that our employees have a dependable wage than rely on compensation from our customers. Tipping has a unique role in our country and is often linked to racial oppression. It’s time for it to end.”

Our moment of reckoning on



ALCHEMY COFFEE

Eric Spivack owns The Lab by Alchemy Coffee, which has eliminated tipping and pays employees higher wages.

race has folks looking at old institutions with new scrutiny.

Tipping is one of them.

Tipping, not unlike policing in America, can be traced to this nation’s history of enslavement, pursuit and control of Black bodies.

“After the Civil War, white business owners, still eager to find ways to steal Black labor,

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