

viewpoint

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Hemming Park is better, but more work remains



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times-union columnist

Eight-thirty Friday morning. Downtown Jacksonville. Hemming Park.

Two steps forward. One step back.

The regulars had gathered. Many of them knew each other by name.

Some carried backpacks. Others had duffel bags stuffed with clothing.

Some would assume they are homeless, but that's not the case for most of them.

It was people who looked like these who had given a bad reputation to the park that serves as the front door to City Hall when it was known as Hemming Plaza.

And they were the main impetus behind the effort by a special City Council committee that met for more than a year to find ways to reclaim the park.

The answer was to turn over operations of the park to a private entity that could better regulate who used the park.

It turned out that power wasn't available to a private group because it was still a public park that all citizens should have

access to.

The private entity that stepped up to take on the park's woes was Friends of Hemming Park, which has been criticized in recent weeks about how taxpayer money set aside for the park had been spent.

At a City Council Finance Committee meeting last Wednesday, frustrations were voiced about people using the park who some would consider less than conducive to a family atmosphere.

There have been complaints about profanity and urinating in public.

In the more than an hour that I was at the park Friday morning, there was nothing like that.

The park rules, which are prominently displayed, forbid disturbing the peace and indecent exposure.

Those two rules should cover both of the above offenses. Enforce the rules.

There was supposed to be an increased police presence in the park.

Councilman Bill Gulliford has hinted more than once about his displeasure with what the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office is doing in the park.

During the Finance Committee meeting, Gulliford said that he has seen police

officers in the park doing what can be "best described as just sitting around BS-ing."

Friday morning, JSO had no police presence in the park except for two brief appearances on the park's perimeter as two officers on bicycles pedaled by while patrolling downtown.

The bottom line is that behavior in the park can be controlled by proper enforcement, and all people have a right to be in the park if they follow the rules.

Like all big cities, Jacksonville is full of diversity. They are all people. Get over it.

Steps forward for the park were evident, including the food trucks and live music scheduled for noon Friday. Signs also advertised an upcoming beer festival and a music and dance festival later in August.

Such events didn't take place in the park on a regular basis before Friends of Hemming Park came along.

Clearly mistakes were made in how some of the city money was spent, but the Mayor's Office could have done a better job of monitoring what a new organization with growing pains was doing.

Some City Council members are not

happy that more emphasis hasn't been placed on events that would bring families with children to the park.

At the Finance Committee meeting, Gulliford and Councilman Greg Anderson said some of the fault for the dissatisfaction with Friends of Hemming Park belongs to the council.

"Much of the fault is we didn't clearly define success," Anderson said.

Friends of Hemming Park had asked for \$500,000 from the city in next year's budget. The Mayor's Office is instead recommending \$250,000 for six months with the administration monitoring expenditures monthly.

That makes sense.

The park has made positive strides under Friends of Hemming Park. Its appearance is much improved, and there are many more events there. As always, there is room for improvement.

One suggestion that has been made by critics is to turn the park back over to the city's parks and recreation department.

We all know how well that worked in the past: Hemming Plaza was a disaster.

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Smug Cruz can bid farewell to political future



patrick buchanan

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The self-righteousness and smugness of Ted Cruz in refusing to endorse Donald Trump, then walking off stage in Cleveland, smirking amidst the boos, takes the mind back in time.

In San Francisco in July 1964, Gov. Nelson Rockefeller, having been defeated by Barry Goldwater, took the podium to introduce a platform plank denouncing "extremism."

Smug and self-righteous, he brayed at the curses and insults.

He would never win the nomination.

Richard Nixon took another road, endorsed Goldwater, spoke for him in San Francisco, campaigned for him across America.

And in 1968, with Goldwater's backing, Nixon would rout Gobs. George Romney and Rockefeller — and win the presidency twice.

Sometimes, loyalty pays off.

CRUZ WON'T BE THE 2020 NOMINEE

Cruz will not be the nominee in 2020. If Trump wins, Cruz is cooked. If Trump loses, his people will not forget this Brutus.

Something larger is going on here.

The Goldwaterites were not only dethroning the East Coast liberal establishment of Rockefeller but saying goodbye to the Republicanism of President Dwight Eisenhower.

What was being born was a new Republican Party. It would be dominated after Nixon by conservatives, who would seek to dump the "accidental president," Gerald Ford, in 1976.

They would recapture the party in 1980, and help elect and re-elect Ronald Reagan.

Vice President George H. W. Bush won in 1988 through the exploitation of cultural and social issues.

The crisis of today's Republican Party stems from a failure to recognize that America has new challenges.

A NEW DAY

By 1991, America's border was bleeding. Thousands were walking in from Mexico every weekend. Soon, these immigrants would begin voting for the welfare state on which their families depended and support the party of government.

By 1991, free trade had begun to send our factories and jobs overseas and de-industrialize America.

By 1991, with the collapse of the Soviet Empire, the Cold War was suddenly over.

America had prevailed.

What paralyzed the Republicans of a generation ago? What blinded them from acting on the new realities?

Ideology, political correctness, a reflexive recoil against new thinking and an innate inability to adapt.

The ideology was a belief in free trade that borders on the cultish, though free trade had been rejected by America's greatest leaders: Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

The fear of being called racist and xenophobic is so overpowered that some Republicans would ship the entire Third World over here rather than have it thought they would ever consider the race, ethnicity or religion of those repopulating America.

With Trump's triumph, the day of reckoning has arrived.

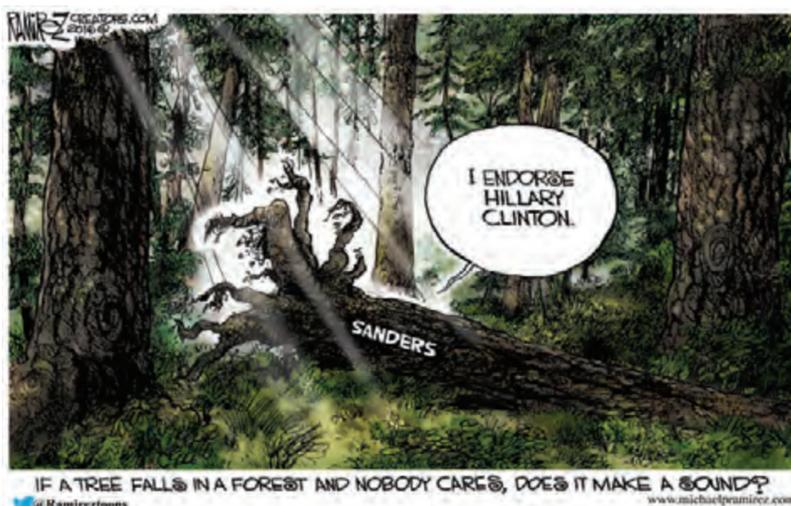
The new GOP is not going to be the party of open borders, free trade globalism or reflexive interventionism.

The self-righteous folks are all getting eviction notices.

Another view: R.J. Matson Roll Call



Another view: Michael Ramirez Creators Syndicate



Environment is endangered

point of view

lisa rinaman

At a time when South Florida waterways are covered in toxic green sludge, our Florida Department of Envi-

ronmental Protection is proposing to increase the allowable limits of numerous toxic compounds discharged into our state's waterways.

Required to update its human health-based criteria to protect human health from exposure to surface water chemical contaminants, DEP was presented with a choice.

The agency could follow the more conservative recommendations of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and potentially tighten regulations on chemicals or it could choose a less protective route that would be more favorable to industry and agriculture.

CHOOSING INDUSTRY OVER PEOPLE

It chose to favor industry, and higher pollution limits are now being proposed for more than half of the 43 toxic substances currently regulated by DEP, many of which are carcinogens.

As a result, millions of Floridians could be exposed to higher concentrations of potentially dangerous chemicals and a higher risk of cancer. This will only benefit the bottom line of polluters.

Fish consumption is one of the primary pathways to exposure to these dangerous chemicals, and Floridians are eating a lot more fish than originally estimated when the current criteria were developed. The more fish we eat, the more chemicals we ingest.

Raising the pollution limits for dozens of chemicals, as DEP is proposing, will only further increase our chances of cancer and other health problems.

In addition, DEP failed to consider the potential health effects from exposure to

more than one chemical. Unfortunately, we're all exposed daily to a toxic soup of chemicals from multiple sources.

Exposure to more than one contaminant at the same time can "produce a cumulative or even synergistic toxicity."

According to the DEP, "A chemical-by-chemical assessment of risk, as conducted in this analysis, could underestimate risks from more than one chemical in combination."

A recent international study concluded that even some chemicals considered non-carcinogenic may increase cancer risk when present in the environment in certain mixtures with other chemicals.

To make matters worse, the Environmental Regulation Commission, the seven-member board that will make the final decision on DEP's proposed rule changes, currently lacks representation from two key positions — the environmental community and local government. These two seats have been vacant for more than a year.

Despite these critical vacancies, DEP plans to present its proposed criteria to the board on July 26.

The bottom line is that DEP has made the regrettable decision to accept a higher level of risk and disregard key factors that impact our health, resulting in proposed regulations that will expose Floridians to higher concentrations of chemicals.

As a result, the final decision must be postponed until:

- Gov. Rick Scott has filled the vacancies on the Environmental Regulation Commission.
- DEP has revised its proposed criteria to be more protective.
- The residents of Florida are clearly the beneficiaries of the regulations — not the polluters.

Lisa Rinaman is the St. Johns Riverkeeper.

Rage takes us to the point where no lives matter



leonard pitts jr.

mclatchy newspapers

How can anyone ever explain this to Mason? He's only 4 months old.

Still, at some point someone will have to tell him how his dad was shot to death for being a police officer in Baton Rouge.

Mason's father was a murdered cop with the maddening and paradoxical distinction of being an African-American man killed in protest of police violence against black people.

He left a Facebook post that gave a glimpse into how frustrating it was to be both black and a cop — and therefore doubly distrusted.

"I swear to God," he wrote, "I love this city but I wonder if this city loves me. In uniform I get nasty hateful looks and out of uniform some consider me a threat."

"Please," he pleaded, "don't let hate infect your heart."

Nine days later, he was dead.

Counting two New York City police officers murdered in 2014, this makes at least 10 cops randomly killed in the last two years by people ostensibly fighting police brutality. But those madmen are traitors to that cause.

One is reminded of something Martin Luther King Jr. said the night before his assassination when he explained "the problem with a little violence."

Namely, it makes itself the focus. King had been protesting for striking sanitation workers in Memphis when unruly young people turned his march into a riot. "Now ... we've got to march again," he said, "in order to put the issue where it is supposed to be."

Instead of discussing the violence of police, we are now required to discuss violence against police and to say the obvious: These cop killers serve no cause, nor does any cause justify what they did. They are just punk cowards with guns who give aid and comfort to those who'd rather not confront the issue in the first place.

But if we don't, then what?

One often hears men like Rudy Giuliani and Bill O'Reilly express contempt for the Black Lives Matter movement; one is less likely to hear either of them specify what other means of protest they would suggest for people whose concerns about racially biased and extralegal policing have been otherwise ignored for decades by government and media.

If not Black Lives Matter, then what? Patient silence?

Acceptance of the status quo?

That isn't going to happen, and the sooner the nation understands this, the sooner it moves forward. Sadly, that move, whenever it comes, will be too late for Mason and dozens of others left newly fatherless, sonless, brotherless, husbandless and bereft. Still, we have to move. The alternative is to remain stuck in this place of incoherence, fear, racial resentment ... and rage. Always rage.

But rage doesn't think, rage doesn't love, rage doesn't build, rage doesn't care. Rage only rends and destroys.

We have to be better than that. We have no choice but to be better than that. We owe it to Mason to be better than that. He deserves a country better than this mad one in which his father died and life is poured out like water.

Jocelyn Jackson, the sister of the murdered officer Montrell Jackson, put it best in an interview with The Washington Post.

"It's getting to the point where no lives matter," she said.

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