

Letters

Trump's word for African countries is misapplied

To the editor:

While serving as a Peace Corps volunteer to West Africa, I landed one night in early September and the first thing that hit me was the smell, little helped by the heat and humidity. In lugging my gear from the terminal, it occurred to me that I had brought way too much stuff. All in all, my first impression was not alluring and, if I had resigned then and there, I might well have agreed with Trump's indelicate word to describe African countries during a Jan. 11 White House meeting. But I had signed up for it. And when it came time to leave, my time in Africa had changed me in a dozen different ways. Like so many Americans, I harbored an unconscious well of racism that was one of the main things I had to overcome.

At home, we were embroiled in racial violence, but in Africa racial prejudice was rare. In fact, I was treated with affection and esteem, notwithstanding the news. People had kerosene lamps, privies in the yard, spotless dirt floors, grass for a roof, bicycles for transport and elephant grass 10 feet high. But they also had a grace and cheerfulness that defied their "poverty."

I learned that ease and a wealth of things do not give happiness. I was picky about my food and different meant "gross." So, with dreams of pizza and cheeseburgers, I was a shadow of myself after just a couple of months. Driven by necessity, I learned to eat African food and swallow "last mimbo" with gusto, accepting the honor while ignoring the bugs. The drink is the fermented sap of a palm tree. Bugs collected in the sap sink to the bottom of the calabash, and it is an honor usually reserved for chiefs to be offered the dregs of the mimbo.

Two years came quickly to an end, and if there had been a permanent job available, I may well have stayed. But, as it is for many Africans, the lack of prospects sent me away.

While the place didn't seem attractive to me that first day on the tarmac, perhaps President Trump's label is misapplied.

Robert Wanager
Hillsboro

Bess: Free press vital to the country

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smash it down.

A free press is vital to our continued existence as a free country. Numerous countries throughout history have allowed their press to fall and then paid horrendous consequences. Right now, reporters in places like Turkey, Russia and Mexico take their lives in their

Trump has Lincoln doing flip-flops; wake up, GOP

To the editor:

Polls during Donald Trump's presidential campaign showed a large percentage of Americans had concerns about his temperament. Those concerns have been validated.

Trump's approval rating has remained around a historically low 35 percent, despite a strong economy. This speaks volumes about his dreadful performance in other aspects of the presidency.

Whether Trump deserves all the credit for the economy is debatable, since our economy had good momentum when he took office.

Although I disagree with many of his policies, I mainly object to Trump's conduct and temperament. I suspect that is true for most of those who don't support him.

He is a deeply flawed president – undisciplined, inconsistent, unable to control his impulses or his anger. He is dangerous, not only as commander in chief of the military, but also because of his incessant and insidious attacks on American institutions. By eroding public trust in the press, the courts, the FBI and the CIA, Trump is inexorably eating away at the fabric of our democracy. This damage is deep and incalculable, and cannot be overstated.

Trump is a fragile, thin-skinned, narcissistic man-child with a *National Enquirer* mentality. He is a hateful and divisive bully who goes around with a chip on his shoulder, attacking those who dare oppose him with juvenile name-calling tweets. He is racist, xenophobic, petty, vindictive, vulgar and corrupt – a pathological liar and godfather of fake news.

Trump demands loyalty and craves respect but gives neither. He has no respect for our Constitution or separation of powers and arrogantly believes he is above the law. He lacks dignity or decency.

Trump has diminished and disgraced the presidency and our country and is temperamentally unfit to hold the office.

Trump is single-handedly destroying the Republican Party and its brand. Abraham Lincoln must be doing flip-flops in his grave. It is disturbing and

hands every time they report the facts.

The press is charged with searching for and reporting the truth. At all levels, I believe that is what journalists are trying to do.

It would be easier to accomplish if our leaders could recognize what the truth is.

Here's some guidance: Truth is the thing that is not a lie.

distressing that a third of our country sees nothing wrong with this.

I am fed up with the daily drama and controversy. It's only been a year but it seems like 10.

It's time for reasonable Republicans to show some spine and stop putting party ahead of country. It's time to censure this president. If not, we will likely see a dramatic change in the political landscape.

Jim Behr
De Soto

The 'underbelly' speaks up for children's insurance

To the editor:

At the height of the tea party uprising against everything President Obama in 2010, I attended a public forum where a tea party supporter who thought I was a sympathizer leaned over to me and said, "Democrats are really just the underbelly of society, aren't they?"

"What do you mean by 'underbelly'?" I asked.

"Oh, you know, all the welfare bums and blacks and illegals," he replied.

I moved to another seat.

Ever since then, I've known this belief about the Democratic Party exists, and the election of our 45th President put the cherry on that cake.

Now comes Edward Graham on the Jan. 18 opinion page, shamelessly saying the Democratic Party consists of "hundreds of irate minorities." That's a pretty big old dog whistle. I'm certain Graham also believes Democrats are the "underbelly."

His tirade was against funding for the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Way back on Sept. 9 of last year, Congress let the program, which covers 9 million children nationwide, lapse.

They could have reauthorized it then, but instead they put a poison pill in their bill to cut millions from Medicare so Democrats would not vote for it. The new poison pill is the stupid border wall, which most Americans don't want to fund.

The poor children covered by CHIP are the children of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents in red and blue states. A huge majority of Americans want them covered.

Democrats have been begging the majority leadership, Republicans, to take care of this, but the GOP is playing games again with CHIP kids. If Democrats don't vote for billions for a wall in the budget, the Republicans will shame them for voting against CHIP kids.

Republicans hold the House, the Senate and the Golfer-in-Chief is in the White House. It is always up to the majority party to compromise for minority party votes. Instead, Republicans prefer to hold 9 million kids hostage. This is a failure and complete absence

of leadership.

Sign me part of the "underbelly."

Bunnie Gronborg
Festus

Rein in Big Pharma to control costs, improve health care

To the editor:

The U.S. life expectancy rate fell for two years in a row (2015 and 2016) and is expected to fall again in 2017.

The last time the country saw a three-year drop was during the flu epidemic of 100 years ago. The good news is, if you make it to age 65 (when the best health care in the world kicks in) you are expected to live another 21 years for women and 18 years for men.

The decline in life expectancy is attributed to unintentional drug overdoses. While other countries in the world are experiencing increases in life spans, the U.S. is the only nation with declining numbers.

"The rest of the world is improving. The rest of the world is seeing large declines in mortality and large improvements in life expectancy," said Peter Muennig, a professor of health policy and management at Columbia University. "That's true in rich countries and middle-income countries and generally true even in lower-income countries." In the U.S., the death rate from overdoses tripled from 1999 to 2016. And it spiked 21 percent from 2015 to 2016, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Medicare could be expanded to include everyone and still reduce what the government currently spends, if Big Pharma was reined in.

When will Americans say "ENOUGH" to prescription and insurance lobbyists who buy our legislators with their obscene profits? These two industries have a stranglehold on the American economy, and tax cuts for these villains will only strengthen their death grip.

Barbara Marco
De Soto

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