

opinion

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A VERSE FOR TODAY
He who digs a pit will fall into it ...
Ecclesiastes 10:8

Cheers

Young lawyer serves public

Congratulations are in order to Jacksonville lawyer Allison M. Stocker for winning a major legal award.

Stocker will receive The Florida Bar's 2018 "Young Lawyers Division Pro Bono Service Award" during a ceremony later this month in the Supreme Court of Florida.

The award is given each year to a lawyer who is younger than 36 and has been in practice for no more than five years — yet has performed outstanding public service or legal aid that deserves recognition.

Stocker has certainly met that standard. And more.

A lawyer in the Jacksonville office of Akerman LLP, Stocker did more than 500 hours of pro bono work helping legal efforts by the nonprofit Ability Housing to purchase and renovate an area apartment building to create permanent housing for disabled homeless veterans.

After the city blocked Ability Housing's attempt to renovate the site — citing a zoning rule — the nonprofit filed a federal lawsuit that eventually ended with the city agreeing to a settlement that included paying \$2 million in penalties, legal fees and a grant to support housing for area residents with disabilities.

A graduate of the University of Florida's Levin College of Law, Stocker has previously won recognition from various organizations for her work in both business and commercial litigation.

Bravo!

UNF HELPS STUDENTS DURING FINALS WEEK

Let's applaud the University of North Florida for once again using a fun event to help reduce stress for students during Finals Week.

Recently, the university held its biannual "PAWS Your Stress" event, in which several dogs were brought to the campus' Thomas G. Carpenter Library for studying students to hug and pet.

UNF began the cool event some four years ago to give students a nice way to decompress from their intense end of semester studying.

And let's have some "Cheers" for the Jacksonville chapter of Canine Companions for Independence, which brought the dogs and their volunteer trainers to UNF for the event.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

American Dream speech still challenges us today



mike clark
editorial page editor

When Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington in 1968, it wasn't the first time he has used the dream theme.

In fact, one of King's best speeches was titled "The American Dream."

It was delivered on Feb. 5, 1964 at Drew University in Madison, N.J.

Here are a few of the best quotes along with my commentary.

• **King:** "America is essentially a dream, a dream unfulfilled. ... Slavery and racial segregation are strange paradoxes in the nation founded on the principle that all men are created equal."

My comments: King was referring to the Declaration of Independence as Abraham Lincoln did.

"All men are created equal," the Declaration stated.

Yet for African-Americans it meant slavery followed by the second-class citizenship of Jim Crow.

• **King:** "In the final analysis we must get rid of segregation because it is sinful. In a real sense it is a new form of slavery covered up with certain niceties of complexity."

My comments: King, a Baptist minister, saw racial injustice as immoral and appealed to Americans' sense of right and wrong. He used that sense to oppose certain human laws as immoral. Basic rights are gifts of God, King said, quoting the Founders.

• **King:** "For the shape of the world today does not afford us the luxury of an anemic democracy, the price that America must pay for the continued oppression of the Negro and other minority groups is the price of its own destruction."

My comments: King recognized America is built on the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence. Slavery and inequality undercut those ideals. Yet America has moved forward in so many respects. Look at the vote. At its founding, most voters were limited to white men of property. African-Americans received the vote, which had to be won again in the Voting Rights Act of the 1960s. Then women received the right. And 18-year-olds received it during the Vietnam War.

• **King:** "Through our scientific genius we have made this world a neighborhood, and now through our moral and ethical commitment we must make of it a brotherhood. We must all learn to live together as brothers or we will all perish together as fools."

My comments: This is one of King's best-known quotes.

African-Americans have been present throughout American history, at times as unpaid laborers, at other times as willing soldiers in war.

The story of America cannot be segregated any more than our music can be.

• **King:** "I'm sure that everybody assembled here has heard this idea that only time can solve the problem of racial injustice. ... the people of ill will in our country have used time much more effectively than the people of good will. And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation, not merely for the bitter words and violent actions of the bad people who will bomb a church in Birmingham, Ala., but for the appalling silence of the good people who sit around and say, 'Wait on time.' ... the time is always right to do right."

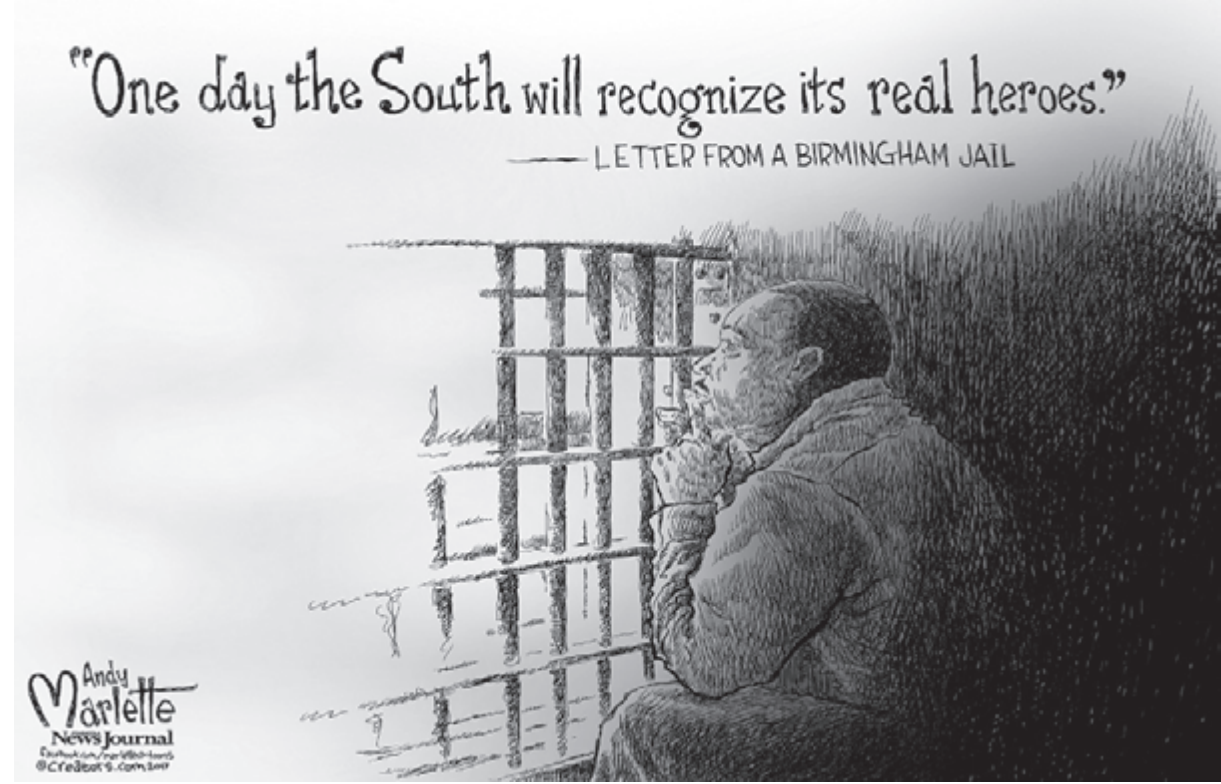
"But it is also necessary for a white person of good will to rise up with as much righteous indignation when a Negro cannot live in his neighborhood, or when a Negro cannot get a job in his particular firm or when a Negro cannot join his professional society ... there must be something of a divine discontent."

My comments: With the genius of 20/20 hindsight we can see how right King was.

It can be extremely difficult to change a bad precedent even if it is immoral.

But good people must speak out and act.

Another view: Andy Marlette Creators Syndicate



Mental illness

Help, support available for families

If you have a family member or friend in the mental health system, accessing that system can be daunting.

There is no simple road map to where you should go, who you should see, how it gets paid for, what insurance does or does not cover.

And it can become incredibly frustrating for the patient and the patient's family.

Mental illness and addiction issues often occur together. And it doesn't matter which one caused what symptom or behavior.

What does matter is that recovery is dependent in so many ways on a person's support system, which means having family invested in positive outcomes.

The Jacksonville affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness offers Family to Family classes several times a year.

This class not only educates on general mental health issues, but

provides networking and support through interaction with others living through similar circumstances.

A family member of a person living with mental illness recently stated this about the Family to Family class:

"We strongly believe (it) was worth the time to drive to attend the class. Our instructors followed a National Alliance on Mental Illness-provided manual that is the same nationwide and updated every year. The instructors are volunteers.

"You will move through the material at an appropriate pace leaving time to share personal stories (if you want to). We found out how other families dealt with issues that were similar to ones we faced and found out how others were more or less successful than we were. And as you might expect, we found out everyone's family had unique challenges

If you've been, tell a friend. If you haven't, don't wait. Go!"

One in four of us will have a diagnosable mental health disorder at some point in our life. And if it is not treated, it will lead to self-medication and potential addiction to legal and/or illicit substances.

We also know the earlier you seek treatment, the better the result.

While one class won't solve our society's lack of attention to these serious and sometimes deadly issues, it will certainly help to improve the flow of information and lessen the stigma.

It's OK to ask for help when you need it, whether through the National Alliance on Mental Illness or other organizations focused on mental health.

Tara Wildes, president, National Alliance on Mental Illness Jacksonville, Jacksonville

Letters from Readers

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

A BETTER WORLD FOR IT

A recent column offered some views on what would the world look like had Jesus not been born.

Scott Powell presented facts to show how the world has been positively shaped by the birth of Jesus.

He noted that Methodist suffragette Frances Willard inspired millions of Americans to support voting rights for women.

And Powell noted how America's civil rights movement was inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., a Baptist minister.

I would like to point out some additional facts.

Without Jesus, our world would not have had Mother Teresa, whose good works in India are well known all over the world.

Nor would we have had Christian politician William Wilberforce, who worked hard to stop the slave trade in England.

We would be without beautiful songs like "Amazing Grace," "Silent Night" and the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah.

We wouldn't have great works of art like Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel" and Caravaggio's "The Entombment of Christ."

And we would only have half of the Bible: The Old Testament foretold of Jesus' coming hundreds of years before his birth. The New Testament told of the fulfillment of these prophecies through Jesus Christ.

Sonja Harpe, St. Augustine

RACE AND CHILDREN

THE ARTS CAN HELP

No one is born a racist. But it does not take long to develop racial and ethnic biases.

By the age of 3, children can recognize differences in skin color and other physical traits.

And American children of color are experiencing harassment and anxiety.

One factor contributing to this animosity is the increasing racial

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segregation of K-12 schools.

But the good news is that even though children develop negative biases quickly, once they are exposed to diversity those prejudices can be unlearned.

Arts education is an incredibly viable way to combat prejudice, especially when works of artists from diverse backgrounds are given equal billing in the curriculum on an ongoing basis throughout the school year.

In the visual arts, students learn to look beyond surface impressions and examine elements and technique.

They focus on character. Similarly, individuals trained as musicians hear more during a symphony performance than those who hear only the top-line melody.

They also hear the character of the composition.

It stands to follow that studying the work of diverse artists is a start toward developing a deeper understanding of other individuals.

Through works of art that reflect the creative thinking of diverse peoples, children come to see their story from different perspectives.

They also learn the stories of others from diverse backgrounds.

The arts help children look more closely at both the ways we differ and the ways we are alike.

Kimberly Hyatt, CEO, The Cathedral Arts Project, Jacksonville

DEPORTING SALVADORANS

A JUSTIFIABLE ACT

A recent Times-Union article tried to generate sympathy for a Salvadoran who has been in the United States for 17 years.

The man has an American spouse and two children who are American citizens, but he will be deported to his native El Salvador because the conditions in that country that led him to being granted temporary residency in America no longer exist.

Being married to an American citizen almost guarantees you citizenship if you fill out the form — and you're not a war criminal or fleeing felon. So why didn't this man apply for citizenship during the past 17 years?

Probably because as a "refugee," he was getting benefits from some support group — or food stamps, rent assistance, energy assistance, free or subsidized housing and other entitlements.

Meanwhile, a Salvadoran sought to draw sympathy by complaining about losing the money that was being sent home to El Salvador by "refugees" in the U.S.

We Americans decided to provide temporary assistance to people who were coming from countries experiencing a natural disaster or man-made upheavals from revolutions, civil wars, etc. But the operative word here is "temporary."

We Americans did not agree to provide these people with eternal entitlements.

Yes, I agree that it will be a hardship to uproot these people after years of public assistance. But they should have been sent home years ago.

Robert Pasciuto, Jacksonville

QUOTES FROM A PROFESSOR ON A CONTROVERSIAL CAMPUS VISITOR — AND FROM OPRAH

• "A new day is on the horizon. And when the new day finally dawns, it will be because a lot of magnificent women and some pretty phenomenal men, are fighting hard to make sure they become the leaders who take us to the time when nobody ever has to hear 'me too' again."
— **Oprah Winfrey**, speaking during the recent Golden Globes awards telecast.

• "If you can't speak your mind and make mistakes and learn from them, it's the end of liberal education."
— Middlebury College (Vt.) professor **Allison Stanger** regarding the campus reaction to controversial conservative author Charles Murray's March 2017 appearance. Some students physically confronted Stanger and Murray during the event.