

Opinion

Quote of the Day

"Because America's First Amendment is the gold standard of press freedom guarantees, even limited efforts by the U.S. government to influence the work of the press have an enormous ripple effect around the globe."

— Joel Simon,
Executive director, Committee to
Protect Journalists, 2002

Guest editorial

The 'R' word

Racism charge is a weapon no one can defend against

We don't like conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, but not because of his politics. In fact, we agree with some of what he has to say. But we don't like the way he makes money by capitalizing on anger, fear, misinformation and dismissing anyone who disagrees with him as a "liberal."

Those tables were turned on Limbaugh when he was dropped from an investment group seeking a piece of a St. Louis Rams football franchise because he was dubbed a racist.

Limbaugh might be a racist. He might not. He's obviously guilty of using poor judgment in how he says things, but that goes for virtually every show he broadcasts.

The problem here is how the "R" word is thrown about like a weapon no one can defend against. How do people prove they are not something? It's impossible.

Critics of President Obama are too often accused of being racists, a handy term that quiets the opposition because no one wants to be seen as one.

The same goes for those who speak out against the Rev. Al Sharpton or the Rev. Jesse Jackson. Legitimate criticisms are dismissed once they are labeled as racism. It's an accusation Sharpton is quick to make despite his own verbal foibles.

He once referred to Jews as "diamond merchants," told a college audience that "White folks was in caves while we was building empires" and "We taught philosophy and mathematics before Socrates and them Greek homos ever got around to it."

To his credit, he later apologized for the remarks. Limbaugh has not apologized for his. In fact, he has accused "the media" of making up quotes. That is true in a couple of instances. But transcripts of his shows contain plenty of examples that are as inflammatory as Sharpton's words.

Are they both racists, or are they shameless self-promoters who start their mouths before putting their brains in gear?

We choose the latter, because calling someone the "R" word is too easy and too common. No matter what their heritage, let's hope Americans can move beyond this knee-jerk accusation. It serves no useful purpose.

— The Salina Journal

Guest editorials are published to offer readers a variety of opinion. Views expressed are not necessarily those of The Herald or its editor.



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Reader Forum

Payday loans, planners

This is in response to Joe Blake's Oct. 31 Reader Forum comments about payday loans.

I would like to thank Mr. Blake, a resident of Garnett, for showing an interest in Ottawa. His interest, however, is not supported with information that would be obtained by attending our Ottawa Planning Commission meetings, knowing how the planning office functions and becoming educated about our zoning. Some of the assertions in his Reader Forum letter almost certainly would have been different were that the case.

Also, Blake would have been better served had he read The Herald more carefully. He would have realized Ed York, current chairman of the planning commission, was not present for the discussion about payday loans during the study session. I chaired the meeting in his absence. Therefore, it was impossible for York to exert any conflict of interest. Furthermore, if and when any conflict arises, potential or actual, we are given the opportunity to recuse ourselves, something York has done on other occasions. Lastly, a majority vote of the seven members of the planning commission is required, minimizing, if not eliminating, any action the result of conflict of interest.

By attending our meetings one also learns that an opportunity is provided for public comment. These comments are taken very seriously, for, after all, we commissioners are charged with serving and protecting the community to the best of our ability. I do not remember, however, anyone from a neighboring city who has the temerity to offer suggestions about what should happen in Ottawa.

Yes, Ottawa has ordinances just as Blake's city, Garnett, has ordinances, and those ordinances are enforced. A city is a dynamic entity, however, so ordinances have to be visited, altered or written anew. The planning commission is one of the entities for bringing this about by being in touch with the public. It has no governing power. It listens, formulates and recommends.

Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor express the opinions and research of the writers, who are identified at the end of each letter. To allow a full and robust public debate of significant issues, The Ottawa Herald publishes letters in its "Readers' Forum" with the understanding that writers accept responsibility for their opinions and statements of fact. The Herald encourages those who disagree with the opinions or dispute the facts as stated in a letter to respond in the "Readers' Forum."

A careful look at Blake's letter possibly reveals his intent when he writes about how banks take advantage of the overdraft privileges attached to checking accounts. I strongly agree this is a questionable practice and urge banking customers to beware. However, to link this with payday loans is a stretch. Banking practices are highly regulated. Banking has an aura of respectability earned over the years. I frankly cannot say that about payday loans.

Payday loans may have their place. There is a segment of the population that does not have a banking relationship and has no place to turn if they run out of cash a few days short of pay day. Some place to get a few dollars for a few days can be a good thing. Pawn shops have provided such a service for years. Pawn shops are regulated too. The goal, as far as I am concerned, is not to put payday loan enterprises out of business nor outlaw them, but to assure, to the best of our ability, that they are honorable with a presence appropriate for our city.

So, this is not a discussion based on "good" versus "bad." Nor has the city of Ottawa decided anything as Blake would have us believe. This is a discussion concerning our citizens and how this city is presented. This is a discussion to protect property owners. This is a discussion to encourage new business to locate in our city. This is a discussion about

our future. This is no different from any of the other discussions at the meetings of the planning commission.

— Richard Warren,
Ottawa planning commissioner

More ruffled feathers

Richard Warren, Ottawa planning commissioner, doesn't know anything about chickens.

First of all, Warren calls them males and females. I never heard them called that before. They are roosters and hens.

You don't have to have roosters for hens to lay eggs. When chicks come out of incubators, they are sexed and separated. The pullet chicks are raised to maturity, then they are put in cage houses. The rooster chicks are raised for fryers and find their way into your supermarkets.

The way Warren raised chickens, I can understand why city zoning officers made him get rid of them. Hens don't make loud enough noise for anyone to hear.

Which came first? The chicken or the egg?

— Bob Brenner,
Ottawa

Not country music

I read in Wednesday's Herald what George Jones said about country music. He is right.

The trash they play today is not, even in their wildest dreams, country music. I don't know what it is, but it is not worth the electric the radio takes to listen to it.

Our local radio station plays it all the time, so I don't listen to it anymore. They only have one person at the station that knows what country music is. His name is Bob Reusch. He is on Saturday mornings every other week. That is the only time I tune into local radio.

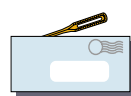
I love good country music, but the junk they play today is not it.

— Jesse Chick,
Princeton

Share your views with The Ottawa Herald

READERS' FORUM: HOW TO REACH US.

LETTERS: Send letters of 250 words or less to the Readers' Forum. Please include name, address and daytime phone number. The letters may be edited for length and clarity. Readers will be limited to one letter per month. Form letters, poems, consumer complaints or business testimonials will not be printed.



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