

EDITORIALS

Not-so-proud boys

What they say at sentencing

ANOTHER DAY, another penitent rioter makes the papers at his sentencing. Rarely have we seen a defendant in a Jan. 6, 2021, case hold his head up in court and shout *Power to the people!* “Meek” is the rule instead. It’s almost as if they’ve seen themselves on TV, and understand now. These stories will become more and more frequent as the cases worm through the system. This weekend the paper said the disc jockey who filmed himself (!) smoking weed (!) inside the U.S. Capitol during the amateurish insurrection/riot/hissy fit was sentenced to nearly 3 ½ years in prison.

“This is history!” Greg Rubenacker said on cell-phone footage played at his sentencing. “We took the Capitol! Smoke out the Capitol baby!”

Well, yes, it was history. But not the kind that will be treated kindly in the textbooks. This wasn’t the Boston Tea Party, but more like Charlottesville circa 2017.

As far as what Mr. Rubenacker thinks now, baby, we give you his statement from late last week: “I just want to say sorry to you guys for having to go through all the cases,” he told the court. “I want to say sorry to the United States of America . . . I wish I hadn’t believed the lies.”

Remember the guy who was pictured smiling as he walked around inside the Capitol with Nancy Pelosi’s lectern? His name is Adam Johnson, and he was sentenced to 75 days in prison back in February.

Authorities say Mr. Johnson was nothing but cooperative, and at his sentencing he said he was “ashamed” and, as far as his thoughts on Speaker Pelosi: “If I did find her, I would ask for a selfie with her, if anything.”

Mariposa Castro of California, at her sentencing: “I don’t glorify my actions. I got caught up in the energy, and if I could go back and change things over, I definitely would have brought more peace.”

Duke E. Wilson, 68, from Idaho, who struck at Capitol officers with a pipe: “It was stupid for me to do something like that. I made a very bad decision by going in that place that day.”

Aaron Mostofsky, from New York, who dressed like a caveman the day of the riot: “I am ashamed of my contribution to the chaos of that day, and I apologize to members of Congress, all of their employees, and to the Capitol police officers that were in attendance.”

Robert Palmer, the Florida business owner who, while in mob form, threw a fire extinguisher at police: “I’m just so ashamed that I was a part of that.”

Scott Fairlamb, a 44-year-old New Jersey man who punched an officer: “I take full responsibility for what I did that day. That’s not who I am. That’s not who I was raised to be.”

And we all remember the QAnon Shaman, aka Jacob Chansley—the guy with the Viking horns—who was sentenced to 41 months in prison. But not before he told his courtroom judge: “The hardest part about this is to know that I’m to blame. To have to look in the mirror and know, you really messed up. Royally.”

This list goes on and on. And often, dispatches say the defendants fight back tears when they don’t weep openly.

None of this is meant to delight in some kind of schadenfreude at the misery of these rioters. It certainly isn’t meant to mitigate what they did on Jan. 6. They are lucky they haven’t been charged with sedition or treason. In another country, they might be lined up against a wall.

But when these Americans have time to look back at themselves, in sober thought, while facing the consequences of their decisions, they have a much different idea about their actions than they did that day 18 months ago.

This is what mobs do: They help disguise individual responsibility (for a while) and make it easier to do stupid things in the comfort of the madding crowd. Sometimes these mobs lead to violence. Sometimes death. As this mob did on Jan. 6, 2021, in Washington, D.C.

There are as many lessons here as people at that riot. Today’s might be this: Riled-up crowds, plus a misunderstanding of constitutional mechanisms, multiplied by delusions of grandeur equals . . .

Regret.

body is maybe going to lose his job. The United States Supreme Court doesn’t have a sense of humor about its secrecy.

Actions often have consequences. (See editorial above.) But if a honest person thinks the consequences are worth the trouble, he takes ‘em as he gets ‘em.

OTHERS SAY

Who’s watching the kids?

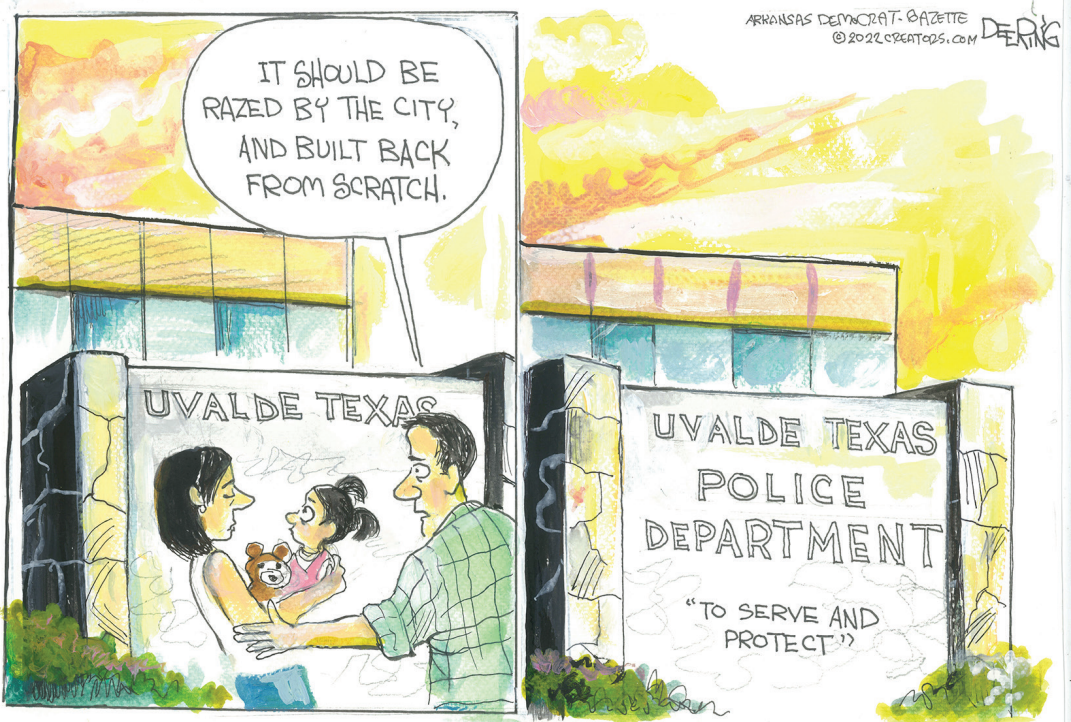
THE WASHINGTON POST
The coronavirus flung 1.6 billion children and young adults around the world out of the classroom and into the realm of digital learning—which, for the advertising industry, meant 1.6 billion new sources of sensitive data.

A new report from Human Rights Watch reveals the startling extent to which the educational tools students used during the pandemic collected and shared their information. The analysis of 164 apps and websites recommended by school districts here and governments elsewhere discovered that almost 90 percent of the products vacuumed up students’ activities, locations and even sometimes their keystrokes, passing this trove of knowledge on to firms that exploit them for profit.

These findings show how the globe has settled on a default position of constant surveillance. The harm this status quo causes varies: Most grievously, the detailed picture that this data allows brokers to develop could, for example, aid an abuser or trafficker in tracking down a victim; more mundane is the annoyance of being followed by the image of a pair of shoes an advertising

algorithm has decided you can be enticed into buying. The lack of restrictions in the United States and many other places on the gathering, processing and selling of personal information means that companies rarely have to distinguish between these uses, or protect customers against the worst of them. And even when it comes to the mildest of outcomes, it’s worth asking the question: Is it necessary, and is it right, to amass this data on children when they and their parents do not expect it and have no ability to prevent it?

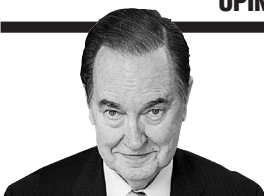
The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act already has special restrictions on data collected from young children, which the companies implicated in last week’s report say they haven’t violated. The Federal Trade Commission voted this month on a policy statement to enforce the law more vigorously, and there’s movement on Capitol Hill to strengthen it. These efforts are obviously in order, but the fact that even kids trying to learn amid a pandemic are monitored so that someone, somewhere can make some money points to a societal problem. The solution is a comprehensive federal privacy law that applies to everyone.



COLUMNISTS

Multitude of failures

OPINION



Cal Thomas

Clearly that failed. At a news conference held last Thursday, it was reported that Ramos was allowed to enter Robb Elementary without opposition, contradicting earlier reports that Uvalde police officers “engaged” the killer.

The website says “proponents” consist of four officers, including two within the school district, security staff that patrols door entrances and parking lots at secondary campuses, canine detection services, modern detectors and alarm systems, perimeter fencing at Robb and other schools and outside buzz-in systems; security cameras, a locked classroom door policy, and a threat reporting system.

That sounds good, but investigators, parents and relatives will want to know which, if any of these, were not operative or malfunctioned?

It wasn’t that long ago when parents could send their children off to school, expecting them to return safely. Schools, then, were considered as safe as one’s home. Faculty and staff saw it as their duty to protect students from injury. Even running in the hallway could require a child to stay after school as punishment, or meet with the principal.

Today, it appears only homeschooling can guarantee a safe environment for kids. While some people in Uvalde and elsewhere may select that option, most won’t, or are unable to for various reasons.

Each time one of these evil acts occurs, we hear from politicians that we can’t go on like this. OK, then tell us how to stop it. Laws alone have not succeeded. Again, examining prospective purchasers more closely might help, along with waiting periods and more rigorous background checks.

There is also a moral element to this and other school shootings which should not be overlooked. Preachers, please, take note.

Cal Thomas is a columnist for the Tribune Content Agency.

Count out Trump? Oh, please

OPINION

MAX BOOT

THE WASHINGTON POST

For approximately the millionth time since 2016, we are once again reading that former president Donald Trump is losing his chokehold on the Republican Party. As a Never Trump ex-Republican, I would love to believe that’s true, but find the evidence unconvincing.

Commentators’ newfound optimism centers on Georgia, where last week two of Trump’s primary targets—Gov. Brian Kemp and Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger—handily defeated Trump-backed challengers.

Both men had dared to certify the 2020 election results showing that Joe Biden had won their state. Trump’s ire did not turn out to be a strong enough reason for GOP voters to turn against these popular incumbents, and their survival might reduce the pressure on Republicans to steal the 2024 election for Trump.

But it would be quite a stretch to read into the results any indication that the GOP is becoming more sane or centrist.

Raffensperger, who has been deluged with death threats from Trump supporters, has said he wouldn’t rule out voting for his tormentor in 2024. Kemp, for his part, carefully refrained from criticizing Trump. “I’ve never said a bad word” about the Trump administration, he told reporters, “and I don’t plan on doing that.”

This should serve as a reminder that Kemp is no moderate. He bragged about ending covid-19 lockdowns in Georgia, resisting mask and vaccine mandates, loosening restrictions on concealed firearms, passing an anti-abortion bill, standing up to “woke” corporations and prohibiting the teaching of “divisive concepts” regarding race.

This isn’t a post-Trump agenda. It’s Trumpism—and it’s become the formula employed by nearly every successful politician in the Republican Party outside a few blue enclaves.

GOP candidates differ in the fervor with which they embrace Trump. But almost no Re-

publicans are running on an anti-Trump platform. Rep. Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) is the rare exception. She shows with her courage how cowardly and submissive the rest of the party has become.

But she is paying a stiff price: A recent poll shows her running far behind a Trump-backed primary challenger.

In 2016, conventional wisdom had it that there was an anti-Trump “lane” within the party. That wasn’t accurate then and is less true today. There isn’t even an anti-Trump bike path.

Recent polls indicate that Trump is the front-runner for the 2024 Republican nomination. His nearest challenger, Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, is at least 20 points back. I doubt that DeSantis or any other major figure will challenge Trump if he runs. To do so would be to invite a level of abuse that, as Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) has discovered, could do long-term damage to their standing with the MAGA base.

Trump has remade the GOP in his own orange image. It is simply inconceivable any more to hear an ambitious Republican politician espouse pro-immigration, pro-free-trade or pro-gun-control views that would have been considered unremarkable a generation ago. More and more Republicans are emulating Trump’s devotion to waging a nonstop culture war. “Owning the libs” has become more important than getting anything done.

To the slight extent that the Republican Party has separated itself from Trump recently, it’s hardly a comforting development: A lot of the GOP base, it turns out, is more rabid than he is.

The only scenario in which Trump is unlikely to win the 2024 Republican presidential nomination is if he doesn’t run. But it’s not as if moderate Gov. Larry Hogan of Maryland is going to be the nominee. A Trump mini-me, most likely DeSantis, will almost certainly get the nod.

Whatever Trump’s personal fate, Trumpism has become the new Republican orthodoxy. Two primary election results in Georgia and a lot of wishful thinking will not change that dismal reality.

Arkansas Democrat
Established 1878



Arkansas Democrat  Gazette
Arkansas' Newspaper

Walter E. Hussman, Jr., Publisher

Eliza Hussman Gaines
Executive Editor

Alyson Hoge
Managing Editor

Arkansas  Gazette
Established 1819

Lynn Hamilton
President

Larry Graham
V.P. Circulation

Nick Elliott
V.P. Operations

David Barham
Editorial Page Editor