



What do I really want to do on my birthday? First, get out of Dodge. Second, ride elephants."

GLORIA STEINEM, who turns 80 today in Botswana

TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT OPINION

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2014

Zing!

READERS' OPINIONS
STATED SUCCINCTLY

- » Mr. Mayor: Tear down that kill switch!
- » A trap door behind the speaker's rostrum would be a lot more exciting than merely turning off the microphone.
- » This time of year you can get a free preview of how your car would look if painted yellow.
- » Oh, I forgot that Harris Corp.'s non-disclosure agreement trumps Florida state law.
- » The only thing worse than a cop with a chip on his shoulder is a cop with a quota.
- » Are we still allowed Zing!s about the City Commission?

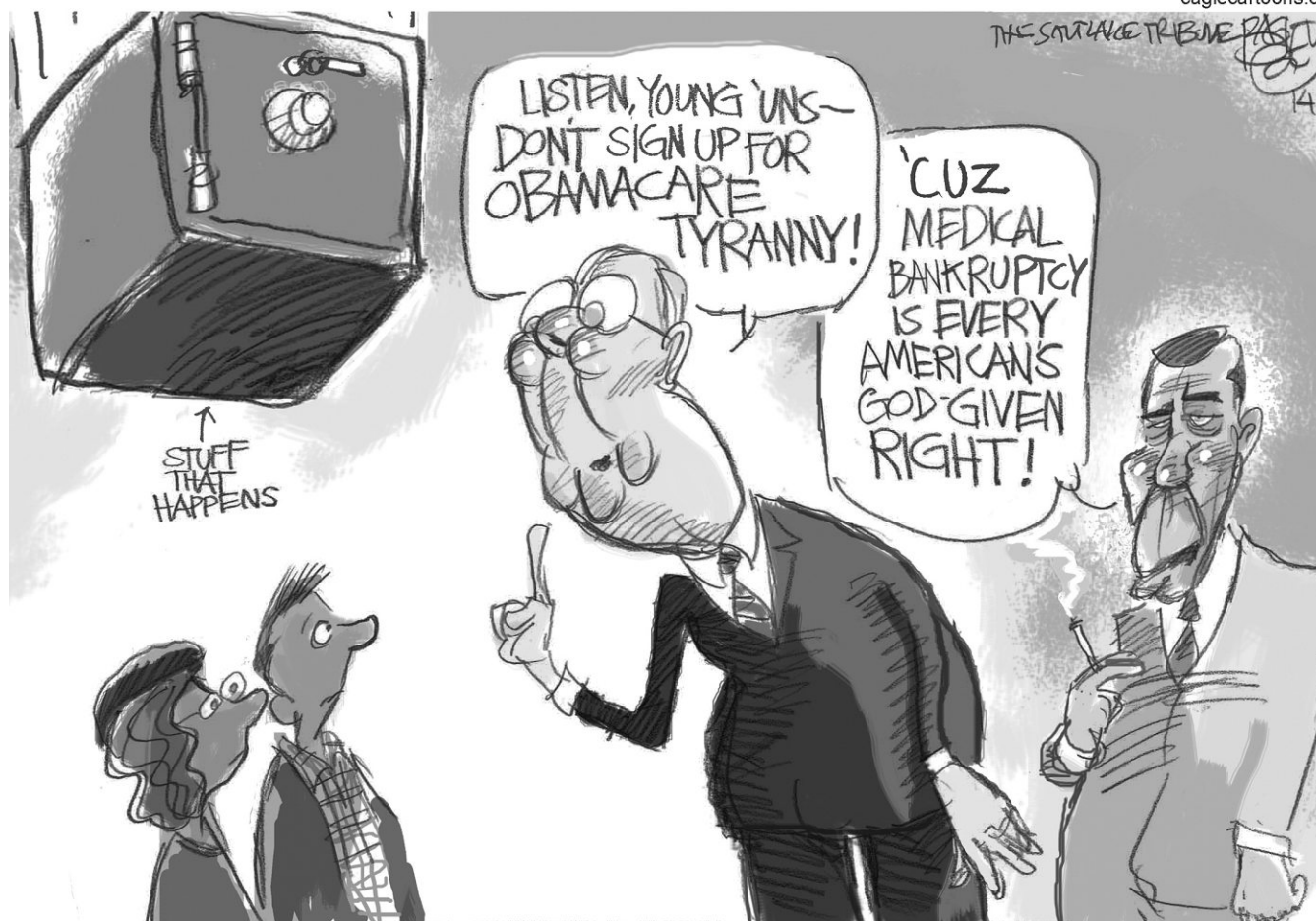
Allowed? Heck, now they're encouraged. Email zing@tallahassee.com or write P.O. Box 990, Tallahassee, FL 32302. And be sure to check out the Zing! blog at Tallahassee.com or on Twitter at [@zinginbox](https://twitter.com/zinginbox).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Letters should be 150 to 200 words, and include your full name, address and telephone number for verification purposes; only names will be published, and e-mail addresses, unless requested otherwise. We may condense letters and edit for grammar and clarity.

| LETTERS TO THE EDITOR |



PAT BAGLEY/SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Commission is wrong to cut off speakers

As a citizen and attorney in Tallahassee, I am offended by the action the City Commission has taken to silence what it considers to be uncivilized speech at its public meetings.

The events of the last half-century have taught us that unbridled free speech is essential to our democracy. The protests of Martin Luther King Jr. were considered by many to be "uncivilized." So, too, were the flag burnings by opponents of the Vietnam War. Bringing about change often necessitates confronting the opponents of that change with what they don't want to hear or see.

In today's world, there is much that goes on in high places — and in the way government conducts its affairs (look at our Congress!) — that causes great frustration in the public. That frustration manifests itself in the way many citizens express themselves at public meetings. It is more important to focus, continually, on the way in which we conduct our government, rather than be preoccupied with the way frustrated citizens express themselves.

The way to handle "unruly" and "uncivilized" critics is to limit the amount of time they have to speak — no more nor less than we limit the time everyone has to speak at a public meeting. We — and particularly

our public officials — do not have a right, constitutional or otherwise, not to be offended.

ARTHUR L. STERN III
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Off-button for citizens makes you think of Putin

Freedom of speech. First, the Tallahassee City Commission has to be forced to allow citizens a chance to speak at public meetings. Now, it actually installs an off button on the citizens' microphone?

Freedom of speech, look it up, it's an American citizen's basic right. You can't limit it because you don't like what they say. You can't disallow it because what is said isn't on the agenda. You can't disallow it period.

When I saw "thug in a suit," I thought of Vladimir Putin. When I read about the off button, I thought of Putin again.

Our city commissioners are public servants, public employees. Mayor John Marks is quoted as saying, "If they believe it infringes upon their right to free speech, they should go and take the appropriate action against us." I assume he means: "Sue us?" I'm sure that is coming and that it will cost taxpayers a lot of money to defend a really bad idea. And what a waste of time and money, because each of the com-

missioners knows that, while the method is effective, it is wrong.

GREY CARTER
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We're playing the wrong game in Ukraine

World politics is a vast chess game with many players. Right now, I fear our president is playing the wrong game in Ukraine.

Looking at the big chessboard, the critical battlegrounds are Iran and Syria, which are linked with the Israel/Palestine conflict and the dangerous rise of Islamist extremism. But greater stability in these areas can only be achieved with the cooperation, trust and good will of Russia. Ukraine is only a pawn. Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Ukraine has been squarely in the Russian sphere of influence. Pawns are typically defensive pieces, and the Russians look at Ukraine as the *sine qua non* of their national defense strategy. By attacking the pawn, we lose strategic ground in areas that are far more critical to world peace. It is time to play this chess game with a little less Jimmy Carter, God bless him, and a little more Henry Kissinger — for the good of the whole world.

CRAIG REEDER

It's a memorial, not a playground

Can you imagine what would happen in Washington, D.C., if someone tried to scale the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall?

I don't know for certain, but I imagine that a National Park Service ranger — or several — would quickly "remind" the offender that solemn, respectful behavior is expected at a war memorial.

No different is a local war memorial, the purpose of which needs to be made clear. Specifically, I am talking about the Florida Korean War Memorial in Cascades Park and making the point to some parents that it's not a child's jungle gym.



Rebecca Lutz
Multimedia
News Editor

I enjoyed the recent opening of Cascades Park. It is a place to play, a place to exercise, a place to be entertained and a place to celebrate our shared culture and heritage. I appreciated seeing a diverse crowd of Tallahasseeans enjoying a park of which we can all be proud, but one thing has continued to bother me, and that is park-goers' desecration of the Korean War Memorial.

"Desecration" is a strong word, but it fits, and the designer of the memorial agrees.

On the night of the park's opening, I watched as several parents allowed their children to climb all over the memorial. What really got to me was watching a boy who appeared to be about 10 or so sliding his posterior down the portion of the memorial that lists the names of Florida's Korean War fallen.

Since then, I've seen social media chatter from others who witnessed the same behavior and found it disturbing.



The Korean War Memorial in Cascades Park was designed by Shawn Bliss and dedicated in 1999. SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT

It's puzzling, especially when you consider that just a few yards away sits Discovery at Cascades, a playscape for children that includes the Cypress Climb, Steephead Slide, Log Jump, Butterfly Garden, Beach Sand Area and an old-fashioned water pump.

Now that Cascades Park has become a major destination, the Korean War Memorial is more visible, which in theory is good, but only if we give it and the lives it represents the respect they deserve.

When I first started talking about this issue, I considered it a no-brainer. Of course, rational people would agree that we should not allow war memorials to be turned into playgrounds, but rather, should use them as an opportunity to teach children about freedom and respect. So I thought.

A few people suggested that children climbing the war memorial was a good thing because it is a work of art,

something they can embrace and wrap their arms around. A few even suggested that it looks as if the memorial was designed for that type of "interaction."

That sounded like bunk — the children I saw were not "embracing" the memorial but, rather, missing its point entirely. So I called the designer, Shawn Bliss, thinking that he certainly could speak to the intent of the memorial.

Bliss, who owns the firm Prosser Inc. in Jacksonville, wanted to create a quiet, contemplative space, not a playground.

"I had spoken with veterans and their families, and there was this constant discussion that (the Korean War) was the forgotten war, and that bothered me," he said. "I wanted to create a sense of deep importance about fighting for freedom, that freedom isn't free and that when you enter that space, you understand that

during war life is turned upside down. That goes for the soldiers and for those who are at home.

"The meaning is that we lost 550 or so Floridians, that the circle of life was interrupted, and we'll never get those folks back."

The Korean War Memorial was dedicated in 1999. Its centerpiece is a large, broken circle that symbolizes the "Circle of Life." The portion of the circle broken from the top sits to the side and is inscribed with the names of Floridians who died in the Korean War. This piece of the monument is the one I witnessed a child using as a slide. It has been an attractive target to skateboarders, as well, and the faded names show the wear.

Shortly after the park's opening, I called Blueprint 2000, the agency that oversaw the building of Cascades Park, and requested that a sign be placed near the memorial re-

questing that visitors not climb on it.

Susan Emmanuel, public information officer for Blueprint, said Monday that she had contacted the state Department of Management Services, which maintains the memorial, and that the two agencies were working on signage to educate visitors about the memorial and the Korean War and to remind visitors it is a memorial to the fallen that should be treated with respect.

I am under no naive impression that a sign will resolve this issue — some people will still climb on the memorial — but it might give contemplative pause to parents and children who simply aren't thinking. The best solution is to raise awareness that sparks parents to talk to their children.

"I'd ask the public to please tell your children that this is a very sincere item, that it represents a very trying time in the lives of a lot of veterans and our country," said Bob Hebner, president of the executive board of the Korean War and Korean Service Veterans Association Inc., Department of Florida.

There is a time to let children be children, to let them explore, to let them "interact," but not at a war memorial. Parents should be doing some serious talking about what a war memorial is and what it means.

I am more than a little concerned about our community and our country if we can't agree on this basic philosophy — that those who gave their lives in sacrifice to our country deserve our respect, and that we must teach our children to value their sacrifice, as well.

Rebecca Lutz is the multimedia news editor for Tallahassee Democrat/Tallahassee.com. Contact her at rlutz@tallahassee.com, [@RebeccaLutz](https://twitter.com/RebeccaLutz) on Twitter.

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