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Crestview News Bulletin

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OPINION

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January 14-16, 2015



BRIAN HUGHES | News Bulletin

Marianne, the allegorical representation of French liberty and reason, stands watch over the Place de la République in Paris, site of mass demonstrations supporting freedom of expression in the wake of shootings at nearby Charlie Hebdo.



RYAN MASSENGILL | Special to the News Bulletin

Je suis also, Charlie

Am I Charlie? I could be. I love a good laugh and love to see sacred cows get a gentle skewering. And I love living in a country where that skewering is protected speech.



BRIAN HUGHES
Reporter

travels in Europe, I actually went out of my way to avoid France. That was silly — and sadly ignorant. When at last I put goofy prejudices behind and visited Paris for the most

memorable wedding I ever attended, I kicked myself for having passed up so much beauty, culture and wit.

Yes, wit.

See HUGHES A5

BEAUTY, CULTURE AND WIT

I've also acquired a fondness for our French friends. Shamefully, I once fell for that "France hates us/The French are rude" malarkey. On my first

HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK With gay marriage, live and let live

A Milligan church displayed an anti-gay marriage sign last week, and we posted a photo of it on our Facebook page.

Then battle lines were drawn. When Milligan Assembly of God displayed a sign that stated "This church does not marry homosexuals," our Facebook fans — and a ton of their friends — turned out in droves.

"That's discrimination, any way you look at it," one woman said.

"The general statement is they will not perform the ceremony," another woman said. "That's not hate, just a truthful statement."

The discussion touched on familiar topics — the church should love the sinner, hate the sin, some said; sexual orientation is innate, so legalizing same-sex marriage in Florida was long overdue, others said — but many of the comments devolved into attacks on Christianity, the Bible and even on other Facebook users.

religion that is out of touch with reality," one woman said.

This is a fairly expected go-to argument when issues challenging traditional values crop up. However, what isn't so familiar are some of the subversive images users posted in the seemingly endless message threads. Particular among them was Baphomet, a goat-headed symbol of the occult that celebrates humans' sinful and spiritual nature.

So on one end of the spectrum were comments glorifying God and encouraging the church to take a more loving approach in expressing its views, and on the other end were Satanic symbols and messages.

And somewhere in the middle laid a voice of reason. "Seems like a lot of the people on these comments just like to go around and argue with people," one man said.

Indeed — especially for an issue that people may never see eye to eye about.



THOMAS BONI
Editor-in-Chief

in the second group of folks, you may feel, as one man told reporter Brian Hughes, like "a second-class citizen."

Then there's the political comparison of same-sex marriage to the legalization of interracial marriage. No one wants to be racist, so similarly, no one should want to deny gay couples their rights — right?

And if you do, you must be a bigot. If you don't, you must be a sinner, right?

Not exactly. Sometimes, I believe, it just is what it is. (An expression that makes no sense, but what better expression for issues of divinity and equality that are far beyond any mere mortal's grasp?)

LIVING IN COMMUNITY

We are called to live in community with each other; this is a Christian principle.

So it was refreshing to see so many Christians stand up for gay people, speak out against persecuting them and preach Christ's message of love.

Still, there's a long way to go. Too many people in the message threads instead fanned the flames. They called each other names and made snap judgments.

And it all seemed so pointless. If you're a staunch Christian who believes engaging in homosexual acts is a sin, someone calling you a bigot won't make you rethink your position; and if you're a gay Christian, or a gay non-Christian, someone thumping a Bible won't convince you to change what you feel in your heart.

So if you're not going to change someone's mind, why not call it a draw and just get along with each other?

See EDITOR A5

TWO ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM

Social media attracts diverse perspectives that I'd bet many of our readers don't hear every day.

For instance, if you're a Christian living in Baker — Florida's most conservative community, according to the website Business Insider — you may not encounter too many people who outright deny God's existence or blame organized religion for much of the world's problems.

But that sentiment was typical among 400 comments made about the viral photo.

"More and more young people are not choosing to live a life ruled by an ancient, and I mean ancient,

IT IS WHAT IT IS

Same-sex marriage is a complicated issue. Many Christians follow the Bible word for word and believe marriage is between one man and one woman. Heterosexual union opens the relationship to fertility, which is God's plan, the faithful say.

Then there are people who fall in love with someone of the same sex, that's the only reality they've known, and they feel that is a heaven-sent relationship. For them, same-sex marriage's legalization means securing long-sought equal rights, not redefining ancient tradition.

If you're in the first group of folks, you may firmly believe you're saving souls, but if you're



HUBBUB

Featured comments from our discussion at facebook.com/crestview.bulletin.

PJ ADAMS ISSUE NOT GOING AWAY

Future headline, circa 2035: "County Commissioners pondering options for improving the PJ Adams Corridor." Our grandchildren will

be driving down this same broken down, overused road while the CC is still trying to "figure something out." Come on!!

Kurt Burgess

IDEA: LIMIT GOVERNMENT

Here is a novel idea: cut all government that is not required by the

Constitution.

You know, that governing legal document that is there to limit government. The one that only gives government certain powers while the rest are for We the People.

Then our elected employees will be acting legally and correctly and actually serving We the

People in their legally limited role.

Then they can concentrate their efforts on doing only those limited things and do them well, while at the same time giving We the People back the stolen money and power we rightly and legally own.

Rob English

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WHAT JUDGES SAID:

"These are truly excellent pages. Not only are they entirely local, but they leverage the paper's social media presence to more deeply engage the community in discussing the issues that matter to readers. Much larger papers could learn a thing or two from this approach."

GUEST COLUMN

Crestview's goodness starts with you



MAE R. COLEMAN
Crestview

Looking back on 2014, God has brought me through a trying time. However, I've been blessed because He never brings you to anything that He will not carry you through.

There is turmoil and chaos all over the world, and our leaders in Washington do not agree on anything.

Americans are fighting and killing each other daily, and this must stop.

I am praying to God that each city in the United States can come together and figure out a way to have better relations between the races.

That can start with each one of us: the citizens of Crestview.

Town hall meetings can be a start, but the discussion and working together must go beyond meeting walls.

Cities run well when the mayor, council people and the chief of police work hand in hand with the citizens, religious leaders and business leaders. Everyone

— regardless of status, title, age and race — has an impact and valuable insight into making this city great. We are all God's children.

We may not agree about everything, but we can still have open dialogue with love.

We have good leaders in Crestview, with open doors to the public, but we all have to be willing to walk through

them with love; to not just talk, but also have our actions back it up.

I think often of my little town of Crestview. It sits upon a hill and can be a beacon of hope, love and right relationship between all races to the rest of the world.

It starts with me showing love. It starts with all of us receiving love and looking at others who are different from us not with disdain, but with willingness to learn about them. It starts with all of us being one family and not divided by "us versus them."

Crestview's becoming a true beacon of all things good starts with you.

Will you join me? Wishing you all the best in the New Year, and continued blessings from our Heavenly Father.

Mae Renatha Coleman is the recipient and namesake of the Mae R. Coleman Citizen's Award.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

No easy answer in Exodos debate

For several months, one issue has driven a wedge between residents of the closely knit Baker community.

Exodos Ministries, a six-year-old Christian substance abuse rehabilitation ministry, wants to house men with drug, alcohol and sex addictions on the agricultural zoned Buck Ward Road.

The goal is to build a house that initially serves eight men and eventually can minister to 16 men, according to Kyra Crowson, Exodos' admissions director and secretary of its board of directors.

But that's too many men with serious problems, and it's too close for comfort, according to nearby residents.

Okaloosa County Commissioner Nathan Boyles will facilitate a 6 p.m. public meeting Thursday at the Baker Recreation Center so residents can finally hear more about Exodos' proposal, and both sides can have their say.

At least, they can offer feedback directly to Exodos Ministries board members and Buck Ward Road residents, as our readers have certainly made their views known on crestviewbulletin.com and on Facebook.

That was in addition to protest signs lining residents' properties and at least one assembly beckoning the two groups to find peaceful resolution.

I've covered this issue, as a reporter, from day one and won't

take a side in the debate, but I will offer some analysis.

Several Buck Ward Road residents have expressed concerns about having an alcohol or sex addict receiving Exodos' services on their street. But Exodos supporters say even if the ministry moves somewhere else, that doesn't ban addicts from residential areas.



THOMAS BONI
Editorial

Indeed, there's no scarlet letter or bad seed icon branded on people who've lost their way.

In many cases, you may be unable to tell who's battling the bottle or abusing prescription drugs. They go to work, go to church, and you see them cheerful and friendly around town, but behind closed doors it could be a different story.

That's why they call them high functioning alcoholics.

In addition, "sex addict" is not synonymous with "sex offender." Rather, the term — whose legitimacy, granted, some psychologists question — refers to someone who battles anxiety, depression or other problems with high-risk sexual activity, according to WebMD.

These typically are people who seek release to cover sorrow, not people who seek to prey on others.

So, knowing that Exodos doesn't minister to sex offenders or men who have committed any violent act, and knowing that their clients are HIV-negative, readers' remarks about fearing sex addicts are puzzling.

These aren't pedophiles; they're sad people finding other sad people for consensual sex. They're not predators; they're human beings with weaknesses.

That said, I also understand those who oppose the ministry's proposed location.

People often fear the unknown. If you don't know someone who has suffered from any kind of addiction, or if your only frame of reference for these behaviors is connected with criminal activity, it should raise concern.

And those fears can snowball and create, in the mind, a bogeyman that doesn't fairly reflect Exodos' good aim of helping lost sheep.

Or those fears could be legitimate.

What if someone who isn't just a high-functioning alcoholic or run-of-the-mill Craigslist sex addict entered Exodos' doors?

What if a pedophile sought spiritual guidance months or years before a law enforcement official learned about his behavior, before he could be locked up, and thus denied admission to Exodos?

If you were raising a family on Buck Ward Road, would you really want to take that gamble?

There will be no easy answer here.

But there will be an opportunity for your voice to be heard, this Thursday.

What's your view? Email boni@crestviewbulletin.com or tweet @cnbeditor.

GUEST COLUMN

Making New Year's resolutions — despite my best intentions

I tell myself I'm not going to make any New Year's resolutions.

I feel like I never accomplish the things I put on there, so why bother?

I told myself two weeks ago, very firmly, that I was no longer doing that.

I was wrong.

Last week, while going through my day, things would crop up and I would tell myself, "That is definitely going on the list." So, I give up. Despite my best intentions, I'm making New Year's resolutions.

Here's my list:

• Eat breakfast more often. As much as I love Doritos and vanilla Coca-Cola, they are not breakfast.

Doughnuts, pound cake and iced tea are not (really) breakfast.

When I eat more oatmeal, eggs, yogurt and fruit for breakfast, I eat fewer snack foods. Even leftover dinner is better than nothing, because when I eat breakfast, I eat less cookies, cake and Doritos.

• Bring lunch at least twice a week. As much as I love McDonald's and Burger King — my life's "easy



RENEE BELL
Editorial

buttons" — I have "fast food fatigue."

I love cheeseburgers, but come on now. Five days a week is a little too much!

Also, lowering fast food consumption helps lower what I pay for lunch, and lowers my gas consumption!

• Always keep a book or two in the car. I had to get my car repaired last month, and I had a huge book on Java programming in the car. (No, I'm not a big nerd, Dad. I'm a weightlifter.)

That's a good thing, because I was there at least three hours longer than I'd expected. If I'm in a waiting room more than 20 minutes, I'd rather have something to do that I find interesting.

It also keeps me from staring at people and making them uncomfortable.

• Acknowledge personal limits and keep manageable commitments. I've become more careful about how I spend weekends. I now make a point of recharging my batteries and working toward personal goals.

After all, a stressed out, miserable Renee is no good to anyone.

• Start keeping a journal. It doesn't have to be pretty, perfect; Associated Press style, which we use for work; or "I may be famous someday" worthy.

It just has to be a record of what happened to me, around me, in my family or in the world; how I spent a day, or how something affected me.

I have a couple of papers and letters from when I was growing up. Things are written in there that I forgot even happened, and things mentioned that barely exist today.

Cassette tapes, for instance. I get a kick out of reading those, and seeing where I was then.

These are a few of my intentions this year. I have a little more work to do to get that breakfast one accomplished, but I feel like they're easier to manage and achieve than previous, lofty New Year's goals.

Email Renee Bell, renee@crestviewbulletin.com, follow her on Twitter @cnbRenee or call 682-6524.

HUBBUB

Featured comments from our discussion at facebook.com/crestviewbulletin.

Editor's Note: Same-sex couples now can marry in Okaloosa County. Here's what our Facebook fans are saying about the issue.

'SUDDENLY RELIGIOUS' WHEN ISSUE ARISES

I wonder what the country would look like if as many heterosexual couples exerted the effort to preserve a happy, healthy marriage in their own home, rather than exerting all of their effort to prevent others from marrying.

Also, I think it's so interesting how many of those who oppose same-sex marriage are suddenly religious when this particular topic is at

hand, however, the last time they probably uttered a prayer was when they were clutching a Florida lotto ticket and finding out the current numbers.

Heather Lamada

'TILL DEATH DO US PART'

We are all humans. Regardless of who we love, we all deserve to marry the people we love!

That's what marriage is about: making a commitment to the person you love that you will be with them for eternity.

"Till death do us part" — not till death do us part if we're straight!
Brittany Cross

PROUD OF CLERK'S DECISION

I'm proud of you, Okaloosa County. Yes, (the county clerk) will still have to issue the marriage licenses, but this way they are not forcing clerks to perform same-sex marriages which are against their religious beliefs.

Erica Mason

DOES SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE APPLY?

How is the clerk of court's religious beliefs interfering with their legal responsibility? Isn't that listed somewhere under separation of church and state?

Allana Kortlever

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HUBBUB

Featured comments from our discussion at facebook.com/crestviewbulletin

The Crestview Police Department has 26 patrol cars breaking down at the same time, but no money to replace them. Readers shared these thoughts about the issue.

START PLANNING FOR IT

This is a prime example of the city not planning for capital expenditures. If you know a car needs replacing in eight years, you start planning for it. All servers need replacing every four years. This isn't rocket science, folks.

Silvia Clem Womack

WHAT ABOUT NEXT TIME?

So why wasn't there a phased replacement program and maintenance program to prevent the need to replace that many (cars) at once? If all 26 are replaced now, won't the same thing happen years later as well?

Mark Hilton

TAX INCREASE OK

I'm okay with paying my fair share of a tax increase to support the (police and fire departments). I'm not okay with the tax breaks that keep being given to new businesses and developments who use the same infrastructure I do.

Kurt Burgess

TRY USED CARS

Buy used cars and keep them maintained. Put some (officers) on motorcycles. Put some on bicycles. Have running limits during the months of March through May and September through November.

Sheena Faircloth

RIDE BICYCLES

Switch (cars) out for bicycles in the suburban areas! Cops can really have a chance to interact with the community and stay in shape and save the city money! It's a win-win.

Julio Escobar

POLICE SHOULD HOOF IT

With the amount of traffic in the poorly planned and managed city, a patrol car is not needed. Responding on foot is way more efficient.

Dennis Luczak

Learning that at least six Crestview High School football players transferred to Baker School raised readers' concerns. Here are some of their thoughts on the issue.

EVERYONE WANTS THE WINNING TEAM

It's funny to me how the tables have turned. When my child played football at Baker, we had a mediocre team due to our most athletic players playing at Crestview High School under Matt Brunson as coach, who had just had a team go to state playoffs. We could have had a great team if our Baker athletes had stayed at Baker.

When you take three to five good players from a small school, you hurt their program greatly. They have to play younger, smaller athletes on varsity because of the small amount of kids left.

Now, the situation is reversed! Coach Brunson is at Baker and has just had an outstanding season there and went to the state playoffs. Players from Crestview are transferring to Baker. After Niceville had a great season and went to the state playoffs, some of Crestview's players transferred to Niceville!

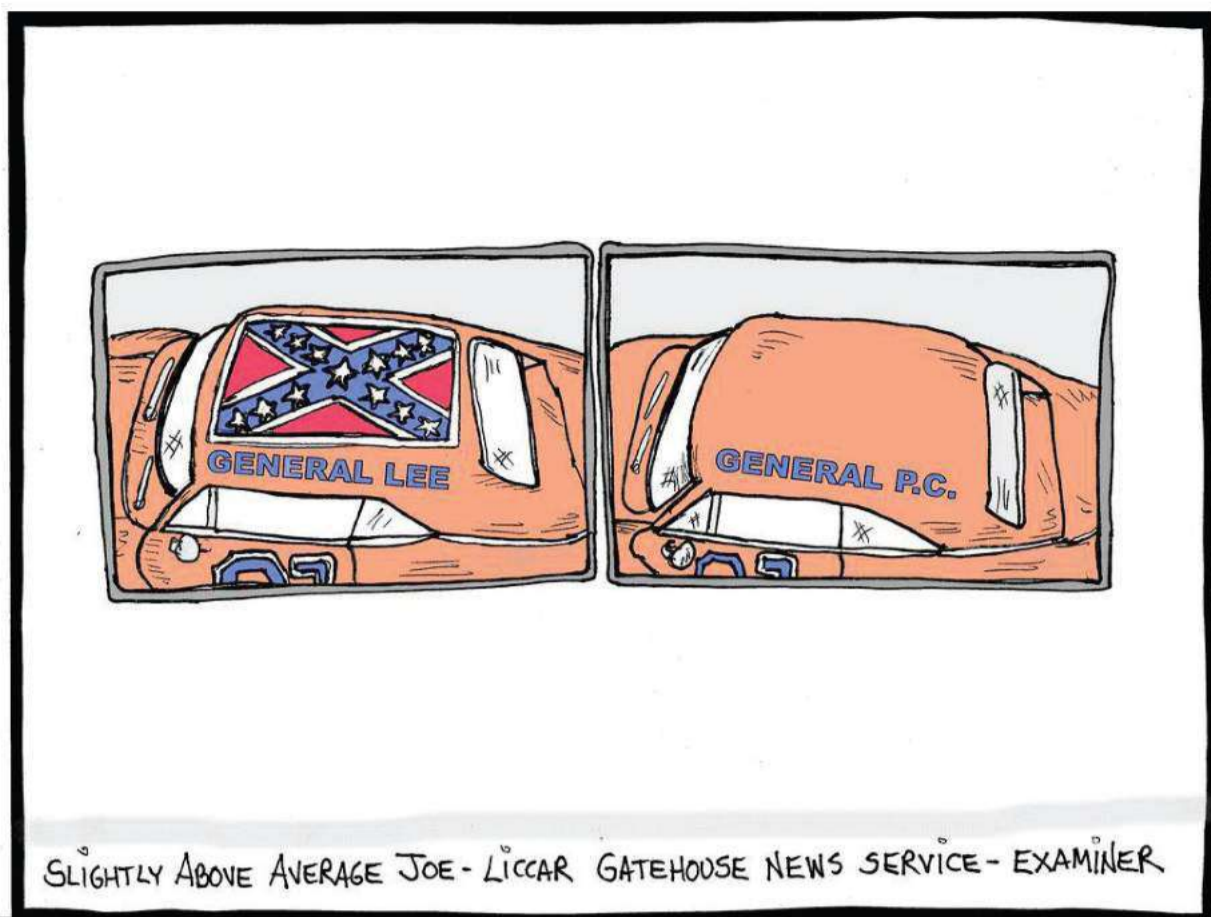
Point is: Everyone wants to play on the winning team! It's not right but that is what is happening.

Steffanie E. Cook

THAT'S WHAT PARENTS WANT

I think it's the parents, ultimately. They want their kid to be on the "winning" team. Today's society is breeding a bunch of kids who never learned what it was like to lose!

Jackie Pritchett Flavors



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Confederate flag deserved a proper farewell

Crestview's almost two-decade Confederate battle flag saga has culminated.

City workers on Thursday unceremoniously removed the rebel flag from the William "Bill" Lundy Memorial at East First Avenue and North Ferdon Boulevard. Such a flag had fluttered in the city since 1958, when the Crestview Lions Club dedicated a memorial to Lundy, purportedly Florida's last surviving Confederate veteran.

But this symbol of Southern heritage — for many residents, anyway — seemed more like a celebration of the oppressive South's slavery to others.

Okaloosa County's NAACP branch and community activists had publicly objected to the flag since 1996, but efforts to have it removed, up until 2013, failed.

Then Dylan Roof, a white man, killed nine black people mid-June at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, S.C., and a photo of him with the Confederate flag spread on the internet. Outrage fueled a nationwide effort to move all rebel flags from the public square to museums, where critics said they belong.

TV Land pulled "The Dukes of Hazzard" from its schedule, apparently because the 1980s series' iconic General Lee featured the rebel flag.

And professional golfer and Great Floridian Bubba Watson, who owns the actual General Lee, vowed to take the Confederate flag off

the top of the 1969 Dodge Charger, according to CBS Sports.

2015 has not been the Confederate flag's year; various states have sent a clear message by removing it from the public square.

A crowd of hundreds cheered Friday in Charleston as the rebel flag came down at the South Carolina Capitol grounds. Uniformed highway patrol officers lowered the flag, folded it and retired it during the ceremony, during which some sang, "Hey, hey, hey, goodbye," according to CNN.

A much different response followed the Crestview flag's unceremonious removal.

"Don't you just love it when politicians cave to the pressure of political correctness?" one woman said on the News Bulletin's Facebook page.

"Whether you agree or not, it should alarm and concern every voter that they were given no say in the matter," another said.

"What gives them the right to just do this?" one man said. "The people have no voice anymore!"

That's not so surprising when you consider public opinion: 57 percent of Americans view the flag as a symbol of Southern pride, not racism, according to a CNN-ORC poll.

Of course, some, like Sabu Williams, of the local NAACP, and community activist Mae Reatha Coleman spent years petitioning for the flag's removal — with Coleman, whom I know personally, telling anyone who would listen why it's

so painful for her to see the city endorse this otherwise harmless piece of fabric. They're among those who have seen victory after fighting so long for what they believed in.

Then there's the Lundy family, whose members intimately feel the sting from Thursday's action. For them, this isn't just about preserving history but also protecting Bill Lundy's honor, particularly as a number of residents question his military record's accuracy.

So many aspects to this story have made it one of the most difficult ones to cover. Crestview's flag isn't just about Southern heritage or racism, depending on your view; it's also about family honor and now, as former Crestview City Councilwoman Robyn Helt pointed out Monday, protocol. She criticized the city for removing the flag outside of Florida's Sunshine law.

She has a fair point, for more reasons than one.

With all the passion, pride, pain and scrutiny surrounding this flag, residents needed a public meeting about its fate.

And if the flag had to come down, then, like in Charleston, the city's residents needed a proper ceremony to cheer or mourn its departure.

It's unfortunate that, after more than 50 years fluttering, Crestview residents didn't have that chance to say goodbye.

What's your view? Email tboni@crestviewbulletin.com or tweet @cnbeditor.



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GUEST COLUMN

Stop the P.C. madness before it's too late

I grew up in the North — yes, I am a Yankee, born and bred. I have no "dog in the fight" when it comes to some cultural or historical connection to the South, its heritage and the Confederate flag.

Yet, this whole recent uproar over that flag has, for the first time, made me passionate about that flag.

Not because I choose to fly it at my home, or display it prominently. I don't and likely will not. But this is yet another example of the insanity of our time, how the tragic incident in South Carolina has created such a backlash against — what else — this flag.

As if this flag had anything to do with that event.



MARY ANN LEPPER

What about the moral breakdown of the society, and the fact that the sick young man who murdered nine people came from a terribly dysfunctional background brought on by a broken family life?

Instead, the left and media go off on a symbol of Southern heritage, claiming somehow that it contributed to this man's hate. True, that flag has been used in the past as a racist symbol by some, but today it's largely representative of Southern heritage.

This whole episode is really about the left jumping on every opportunity, or forcing opportunities, to change society into their leftist image — one

without values, except, of course, theirs; one deplete of our historical American way of life; and one in which we can boldly move forward into the "brave new world order" of tomorrow.

A world in which the elite among us — specifically, leftists, who are, of course, smarter, wiser and simply better than the rest of us minions — can dictate their worldview to everyone else. After all, they, of course, have all of our best interests in mind. And we can trust them.

Really? In truth, this is political correctness simply out of control. We need to stop the madness before it's too late!

Mary Ann Lepper lives in Crestview.