

VOICES



Oran Smith
Guest columnist

Starting a dialogue: What could SC do?

We have a long way to go in the living out of our “all men are created equal” national creed. So to make real progress as a nation and as a state, all Americans and all South Carolinians – conservative, moderate and liberal -- must take stock.

But where will we find common ground in the political world that is 2020?

“If I could be you, if you could be me for just one hour. If we could find a way to get inside each other’s minds. If you could see through my eyes instead of your ego, I believe you’d be surprised to see that you’ve been blind.”

I know I have looked into my own heart in recent weeks and gotten very uncomfortable. I have asked myself as both a believer and as a person who works in public policy: How have I been blind? What can I do?

“Do we simply turn our heads and look the other way?”

Perhaps for a person of faith and a policy researcher like myself, it starts with refusing to look away, to understand that there are statutes and statutes that are hurting many of my fellow South Carolinians in soul and in sustenance.

Purely political common ground is hard, so perhaps we should start with opportunities for agreement around policy. To start, I would offer seven areas that need reform:

1. Civil asset forfeiture. Police can take property without the owner being convicted of any crime.

2. Court fees. According to an Institute for Justice survey of state laws, South Carolina is fourth-worst in the nation for “taxation by citation,” regressive court fees that trap people financially for minor offenses.

3. Payday lending. The endless cycle of debt lives also in the predatory practices of some in the payday loan industry.

4. Education segregation. A student’s destiny shouldn’t be determined by district lines. Parents should be able to choose any public school that has a seat for their child.

5. Energy inequality. South Carolinians pay the highest power bills in the nation. We know who that hurts most.

6. Reverse Robin Hood. Perhaps without intention, the South Carolina Education Lottery is a wealth transfer from poor to middle-class South Carolinians. More need-based aid is needed.

7. Barriers to work. Small businesses often can’t hire willing workers for simple tasks because of overly burdensome licensure requirements from state government.

“If I can dream of a better land where all my brothers walk hand in hand, tell me why, can’t my dream come true?”

My list is a only a small part of the answer. But perhaps it could jump start a conversation about specific ways to expand opportunity and grow equality not for the few, but for the many, in the state we love.

Oran Smith is a Greer native and resident who serves as Senior Fellow at Palmetto Promise Institute. Lyrics are from songs performed by Elvis Presley, who passed away 43 years ago this month in Memphis, eight miles from The Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. King was killed in the year that until 2020 was America’s worst: 1968.

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LETTERS

How politics is ‘killing America’

How did we go from being the United States of America, to becoming the Divided Red and Blue States of America? I’m reminded of George Washington’s warning about political parties, in his Farewell Address to the Nation: “...They are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people, and to usurp for themselves the reins of government; destroying afterwards the very engines, which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”

It is troubling to me that the representatives I have voted for are so indebted to donors and party, they are unwilling to speak out and address offenses that damage our democracy; choosing to remain silent when it comes from within their own party.

Representatives are toeing the party line, no matter how far off-track it goes, harming the very checks and balances put into place to ensure that our democracy does not fail. George Washington’s warning 224 years ago should be a resounding alarm to us all.

We are in a very sad state of affairs in our country today, because politics is guiding a health pandemic. Politics plays a role in conspiracy theories that cause people to ignore, and even threaten, the health experts who are advising us. Politics plays a role in how governors choose to heed the experts’ advice when it comes to shutting down and re-opening their states.

Politics plays a role with states overriding local governments’ attempts to stop the spread, when local officials belong to the “other” party. Politics is throwing money at a problem, but not getting it into the hands of those needing it most. Politics has killed more than

150,000 Americans and counting, with no remorse for the lives that continue to be lost.

Politics has divided family and friends. Politics is not solving the day-to-day needs of American citizens. Politics is conspiracy theories. Politics is trying to subvert the power of the people.

I’m sick of politics. Politics is killing America.

Stephanie Ball
Greer

We want to hear from you

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John Lewis funeral a political event



Cal Thomas
Columnist

Traditionally, funerals are supposed to serve at least three purposes: honor the life of the deceased, comfort those who mourn his passing and preach a message about eternity and the brevity of life.

Tradition was discarded during John Lewis’ funeral last week in Atlanta. Like the memorial service of the late Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) in 2008, the Lewis service was a political event that included veiled denunciations of President Donald Trump. There were allegations of voter suppression by Republicans and a comparison of Trump by former President Barack Obama to George Wallace, the late Alabama governor and segregationist.

On that last point, it was Wallace who stood in a schoolhouse door 1963 in an effort to stop African Americans from entering the University of Alabama. Today’s Democrats have it reversed. They are blocking poor kids from escaping failed public schools, bowing to the desires of teachers’ unions that support and contribute campaign money to Democratic politicians.

Obama also criticized President Trump for sending federal agents to Portland, Oregon, to help quell violence that had gone on for more than 60 days.

Presumably, President Obama would not have been opposed to President Eisenhower’s decision in 1957 to send the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock, Arkansas, to protect nine black students entering Central High School.

Someone should ask Obama if he approved of President John F. Kennedy’s decision on May 21, 1961, to send 300 federal marshals to Montgomery, Alabama, to keep order after race riots broke out when then-governor John Patterson said he could not guarantee the peace.

President Obama apparently ignored another historical event in which federal forces were used to achieve a civil rights goal. On Sept. 20, 1962, James Meredith attempted to register as a student at the University of Mississippi. The entrance was blocked and rioting erupted. Attorney General Robert Kennedy sent 500 U.S. Marshals to the school. President Kennedy sent military police, troops from the Mississippi National Guard and even U.S. Border Patrol officials.

Is President Obama OK with President Kennedy’s decision on June 11, 1963, to federalize Alabama National Guard troops to end then-governor George Wallace’s blockade of African Americans attempting to enter the University of Alabama?

On March 20, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson federalized the Alabama National Guard to protect the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery of which John Lewis was a notable part. President Obama probably favors that decision. A reporter should ask him.

Alabama, Mississippi and Arkansas all had governors at the time who were Democrats and segregationists and yet today’s Democrats claim Trump is a racist.

In his “eulogy,” Barack Obama also mentioned mail-in ballots, the latest effort by Democrats (early voting and no required identification are other efforts) that many believe could open the door to voter fraud.

One pastor at the Lewis funeral even



Former President Barack Obama speaks at the funeral for the late Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga. AP

reached back to the Reagan administration and erroneously blamed the 40th president for the poor housing conditions endured by some African Americans.

Democrats and their media allies consistently ignore the fact that Jim Crow laws, the Ku Klux Klan and other immoralities were all led by Southern Democrats.

John Lewis’ legacy and his brave fight for civil rights will always remain untarnished. But Lewis was also a partisan Democrat, who refused to attend President Trump’s inauguration in 2017 and believed to the end that the Russians helped Trump beat Hillary Clinton, though that would likely have required the infiltration of every precinct and voting machine in America, something not even Lewis claimed was possible.

What was even sadder than the politicized funeral service was the applause from attendees, who apparently believe every word that comes from President Obama’s mouth, though none of this kind of talk improves a single life. It makes one wonder why so many African Americans continue to be loyal to the Democratic Party.

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