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<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/12/17/mourning-fpc-principal-and-former-volusia-superintendent-tom-russell-coronavirus/3924410001/>

December 17, 2020

### HE WANTED THE BEST FOR STUDENTS

Thanks to Gary Marks for his recent letter to the editor concerning Tom Russell, former superintendent of Volusia County Schools. I was not a close friend or associate of Tom Russell, but had a few meetings with him concerning an adult education program I'm involved in at the Ormond Beach Unitarian-Universalist Congregation.

In discussions concerning the current status of K-12 public schools in the U.S., his knowledge and ideas about current problems related to the need for greater local school district autonomy, an apparent privatization movement, and other issues were truly impressive. Also, he clearly wanted to work for the best for students, school personnel, and our nation in general. I certainly agree with Marks. Tom Russell was a good person and an excellent educator.

**Dan Kennedy**, *Ormond Beach*

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**Nov 13 2020** <https://daytonanewsjournal-fl.newsmemory.com/>

### Finalizing the Election

Article II and the 12th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution specify the Electoral College will form every four years to elect the president and vice president. Each state legislature appoints college electors, equal in number to its congressional delegation. Since 1836, statewide winner-take-all popular voting for electors has been the almost universal practice (Maine and Nebraska account for some congressional districts separately).

On November 5, Governor DeSantis on Fox News' "The Ingraham Angle," endorsed President Donald Trump's fight to hold onto his job, and floated the idea that GOP-controlled legislatures in battleground states, won by Democratic nominee Joe Biden, could appoint Trump electors and override the popular vote.

Such a move would be horrifying and dangerous to our democracy. I assume the governor has not thought this through properly and is ignorant of the consequences for the republic.

**Tom Hilburn**, *Ormond Beach*

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<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/09/23/gop-and-volusia-funding-tragic-death-protests-verify-campaign-claims/5867783002/>

**September 23, 2020**

### LOOK FOR BACKUP TO CLAIMS ABOUT BIDEN

A recent letter ("[A clear choice](#)") insists that presidential candidate Joe Biden wants to “marginalize/reject a potential vaccine for COVID-19”— but offers no evidence. She claims that Biden just “sat in his house” while Donald Trump “worked tirelessly to address the pandemic.” This same Trump said of the coronavirus — “It will just disappear.” This same Trump at his Tulsa campaign rally said we should slow down the testing. This same Trump blocked CDC director Dr. Robert Redfield in July from testifying before Congress on safely re-opening schools.

The letter writer denounces then-Sen. Biden for supporting the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (aka the “1994 Crime Bill”) but fails to mention that 95 out of 100 senators of both political parties supported that bill. One component involved more money for community policing. In 2016, noting a 32% decrease in violent crime between 1994 and 2000, the Brennan Center for Justice stated that the bill “likely helped . . . by smarter policing tactics such as putting more cops on the street.” The crime bill provided drug courts grants to states for treatment alternatives to prison. It also established the Violence Against Women Act, the Brady Bill and the 10-year ban on semi-automatic weapons.

The letter writer concludes that in re-electing Trump, voters will gain, among other marvels, “affordable health insurance . . . a champion of the middle class.” But if we do, likely those will emerge in an alternate universe. We surely haven’t seen evidence of them yet in this one.

***Carolyn West, Ormond Beach***

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**September 22, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/09/22/thoughts-battlefield-media-bias-choice-tickets-kaepernick/5854976002/>

**PRESERVING LIBERTY**

As a former history teacher, I think it's still appropriate to ponder Lincoln's words: 'Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.'

Those who served to preserve our liberty were not suckers, nor were they losers. Thank you for your service.

**Tom Zarske, Ormond Beach**

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**August 16, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/08/15/daytonas-main-street-covid-prison-post-office-trump-and-more/5588909002/>

## Set Daytona's Main Street free from rules

"City leaders have tried for decades to reinvent the Main Street corridor that runs between the Halifax River and Atlantic Ocean. They've tried to transform the thoroughfare into a bustling, year-round epicenter of the beachside with a mix of shops, restaurants, professional offices, second-story loft apartments, pocket parks and boutique hotels," said [a recent article about Main Street](#).

**READ MORE::**[COVID-19 leaves Main Street with starker choices | MARK LANE](#)

The problem is that the city feels compelled to insert itself as "command central" of commercial revitalization. The street already has second-story apartments. Already has ideal spaces for that bustling mix of businesses. There's no "reinvention" needed.

We have to look into what's impeding building owners from renting out their upstairs apartments and other spaces year-round. Are codes unnecessarily strict; is compliance unduly expensive?

One impeding factor is parking minimums. Recently I was chatting with a city official. They said, "We'd like to get a riverfront restaurant on Main."

There is a restaurant there! Many different people have tried to run it. Maybe the rent's too high because they're forced to rent the parking lot across the street in addition to the restaurant's own parking lot. We should stop imposing parking minimums; let businesses figure that out on their own.

Small enterprise wants to happen; let it! Allow food trucks, vendor tables (not just during special events but at all times), pushcart vendors. Remove unnecessary barriers. Let everyday people make money serving everyday needs! An economy dependent on tourism and special events is fragile.

**Jenny Nazak, Daytona Beach**

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**August 9, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200808/biketoberfest-cancelled-coastal-cloud-mask-debates-and-more--letters>

## WHO'S PROTECTED

I believe that a very, very large part of the resistance to wearing masks in public places is that many people still mistakenly believe that the purpose of their mask is to protect themselves, and they feel that they have the right to make the choice of whether to do that or not. As an example, one of your reporters in a recent front-page article about Biketoberfest states that “the virus stole the life of...Norma Bland, despite Bland faithfully wearing masks....” Please help educate the public to the fact that “Your Mask Protects Me, My Mast Protects You.” I suggest a banner on the front page every day.

Harriet Anderson, Daytona Beach

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July 12, 2020

<https://daytonanewsjournal-fl.newsmemory.com/> page A14

## COMMUNITY VOICES

### *'YOU ALREADY KNOW' ABOUT AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS*

On June 24, F.A.I.T.H. (Fighting Against Injustice Toward Harmony) organized an Affordable Housing Drive-in Rally, hosted by the Daytona Beach Drive-in Christian Church. I was there and watched while supporters in 70 vehicles honked their amen, enthusiasm, and agreement as they listened on their F.M. radios to a variety of speakers. The Reverend Wendell Webster spoke the prophetic words of Micah 6:8, saying “You already know what is required but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God.” Reverend Webster continued: “You already know statistics show that people who are renting in Volusia County can ill afford \$635 or more for monthly rent.”

“You already know that six out of every 10 renters are paying more than 30% of their income in rent.”

“You already know that 30,000 households pay half of their income in rent.”

Yes, I already know, as the Reverend Nancy Griswold reported, a person must earn at least \$16 per hour to afford the average monthly rent of a one-bedroom apartment in Volusia and that the mean income in our county is \$14 per hour. I already know this creates a particularly unjust cost burden for too many of my neighbors to bear. I already know that with an approximate 16,000 shortfall of affordable housing units, Volusia County desperately needs an Affordable Housing Trust Fund because the shortage will only increase with the effects of Covid-19 on our local economy. I already know that to ignore these facts is unjust, unkind, and unethical. I already know that no person can rightly claim to walk humbly with their God while allowing this situation to continue, especially when they have the power to remedy the situation.

As they attested at the rally, Volusia County Council members, Heather Post, Barbara Girtman, and Billie Wheeler already know the injustice that exists with a lack of affordable housing in their districts. Councilpersons, Post, Girtman, and Wheeler already know what is required of them by confirming their commitment to call for and find funding for a \$7 million per year Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Unfortunately, they do not have the power

to see this through without the support of other Council Members. Thus, I ask: Council member Fred Lowry, you already know what is required of you – what say you to creating a more just community through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

Council member Ben Johnson, you already know what is required of you – what say you to preventing homelessness in Volusia through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

Council Member Deb Denys, you already know what is required of you – what say you to reducing the cost-burden of housing to tens of thousands in Volusia through an Affordable Housing Trust Fund?

As co-chairs of F.A.I.T.H., Pedro Dash and I ask you, Councilpersons Lowry, Johnson, and Denys, to take seriously the urgent need for affordable housing in Volusia County. We ask you to work with F.A.I.T.H. in how to create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund because you already know what is required of you. *The Rev. Kathy Tew Rickey is cochair of FAITH - Fighting Against Injustice Toward Harmony — and serves the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ormond Beach.*

**Rev. Kathy Tew Rickey**

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June 11, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200610/dont-allow-revision-of-plantation-oaks-development--letters>

## **HELP END RACISM**

The George Floyd murder and resulting protests have sparked renewed discussions of racism in the U.S.

Although overt racism has diminished over the last 50 years, we still have systematic racism and too many instances when African Americans are treated unfairly. I do not think there is an easy solution. But there are some things we can do that will help:

- Institute a national program for the selection and training of police officers to help insure they understand and are empathetic to the way African Americans are treated in this country and the importance of treating them fairly and as they would treat white citizens.
- Work toward the goal of improving the economic status of minority members of our society. Black Entertainment Television founder Robert Johnson calls for the United States to compensate African Americans for centuries of systemic racism. He calls for \$14 trillion in reparations (cash payments to black families). I disagree. I suggest we use such money to fund minority owned businesses and improve K-12 education for the disadvantaged. African American often live in poor neighborhoods, where insufficient funds are devoted K-12 education. Investing in the best teachers, after school tutors, and facilities could have tremendous impact on the future of black and other minority communities. It could produce a country better for all.

**Tom Hilburn, Ormond Beach**

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June 9, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200609/solutions-for-avalon-park-letters>

## **SOLUTIONS FOR AVALON PARK?**

There has been a lot of rhetoric concerning the proposed **Avalon Park Daytona** debacle in conjunction with the Hand Avenue extension — the latter a violation of wetlands protection and the sanity of Ormond Beach residents. But there are some missing links. Let's look at the problems and possible solutions to this potential destructive force trying to upend East Central Volusia.

[READ MORE: **[Detail needed about Avalon Park project | OUR VIEW](#)**]

Issues include: Construction of 10,000 homes plus commercial on 2,600 acres; an overload of population and vehicles; homes not of the same quality as neighboring areas; the \$75 million bond to help the developer construct a road from Tymber Creek Road to Hand Avenue at Williamson Boulevard (the developer and some county/city leaders prefer no citizen vote on this matter); the Tomoka River (LPGA) Bridge; the traffic flow on LPGA Boulevard and preservation of the wetlands.

Avalon Park is to be within the city limits of Daytona Beach, whose leaders must envision the impact that this mega-mess will bring to an already burgeoning area. There are other alternatives to resolve the traffic problem and then, perhaps, look at sensible possibilities for that 2,600 acres. Developers should not dictate what should be built where — no matter how many enticing carrots they dangle. And county and city leaders must listen to residents. There is a sense of mistrust already. So, let's examine some possible solutions.

Solutions: Put the development of the 2,600-home Avalon Park project on hold. Void the request for a \$75 million bond; by-products of this are protection of the wetlands and no unnecessary Hand Avenue extension. State, county and city (Daytona Beach) must immediately begin preparation for construction of a 4-lane bridge over the Tomoka River and the widening of LPGA Boulevard from I-95 to International Speedway Boulevard. If funds are needed for the aforementioned projects, hit up on the deadbeats who did not pay their property taxes (see recent issues of the News-Journal).

If this situation persists, it must require a public vote.

**Ed Kolaska, Ormond Beach**

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May 29, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200528/dismiss-incompetence--letters>

**WAIT UNTIL SAFE**

I am a resident of Ormond Beach who is in the high-risk group for having a bad outcome if I would get the Covid-19 virus.

Yes, I am self-isolating and taking precautions when it is necessary to leave home for a quick trip to the grocery or doctor.

Yes, I am looking forward to returning to my former social and exercise routines. I am especially looking forward to going to the pool to swim and work out. I asked my doctor if it would be OK to go swimming in a public pool. His answer was "not just yet. Wait until the local curve of the disease comes down."

Yes, our area has been lucky to have fewer cases than in some areas of Florida but how are we to know if the local curve is coming down and stabilizing if we are not given accurate information?

Thank you News-Journal staff for doing your best to inform us with accurate scientific data.

Hopefully our governor will do the same.

**Joanne Kennedy, Ormond Beach**

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**May 14, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200514/mourning-loss-of-macaw-mural-and-ruminating-in-roses--letters>

## **MOURNING THE LOSS OF MACAW MURAL**

We are happy that the beaches are open in Ormond Beach. We enjoy our bike rides south along the ocean. If we go north we would pass the hotel that once had exhibited Ormond Beach's most beautiful man-made treasures that locals and tourists could see.

Once, long ago, we could walk on the sand. We looked up and were uplifted by Michael Galleon's mural of a macaw. It was in April 2002 that, despite petitions, the wall went from awe to awful! The hotel owner paid the artist perhaps as much as \$18,000 to beautify the hotel; then there was the cost of the paint to cover it over to make it look like a prison wall.

However, it is not the cost that saddens and sickens me.

It is that the artist's labor-intensive and very risky undertaking is gone forever. When I was young, my parents took our family to visit capitals in the western parts of the United States to marvel at the marble floors in the Capital Buildings that my ancestor, a mason, created. The children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Michael Galleon cannot see his mural in Ormond Beach. There are cities that do treasure art. Austin, Texas is one example. Seeing the artwork on their buildings and around the city, makes Austin one of our favorite travel destinations. In my mind, none of Austin's murals can compare to The Macaw Mural that once inspired us in Ormond Beach.

**Barbara Sandberg, Ormond Beach**

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May 8, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200507/why-do-they-call-it-lsquo-progressrsquo-plus-more-coronavirus-views--letters>

## **BIPARTISAN INVESTIGATION**

Most of the recent press reports about Tara Reade's accusation of sexual misconduct against Joe Biden compare the situation to Dr. Blasey Ford's accusations against Brett Kavanaugh. One item typically missing is that Ford told her story while being questioned under oath before a Senate committee. Ford also took a lie-detector test and there were four sworn affidavits from people whom she'd talked with about Kavanaugh's attack. Reade's story has only come from private interviews and non-public testimony.

Here is what I suggest. Form a bi-partisan Senate committee to investigate. Call both Biden and Reade to testify and be questioned under oath. Also, ask both to take lie-detector tests. Hopefully this would help decide the truth of the matter.

**Tom Hilburn, Ormond Beach**

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April 20, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200419/coronavirus-views-sen-rick-scott-on-covid-19-and-storm-season--letters>

## **TACTICS WORK**

In a Saturday **letter to the editor**, a correspondent complained about coronavirus restrictions, such as "stay at home." He argued that deaths from automobile crashes can be as dangerous as the virus and asked "will we suggest that all drivers be banned from the roads so as to save lives?" Such arguments are being used in protests around the country.

But, we do place restrictions on automobile drivers: speed limits, stop signs, driver licenses required, no drinking and driving, etc. These automobile restrictions reduce deaths and so do social distancing and stay at home constraints.

**Tom Hilburn, Ormond Beach**

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March 21, 2020

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200321/coronavirus-should-volusia-county-close-its-beaches--letters>

## **A SHOW OF STRENGTH**

Everyone was inspired by Boston Strong, the pulling together of folks there after the horrific marathon bombing in 2013.

Now our country needs to be America Strong in fighting the growing coronavirus pandemic. Divert ICE funds to building more hospitals rather than looking for undocumented immigrants. Crowded beaches in Florida need to be closed.

The many Good Samaritan acts of people and businesses alike are inspiring. For example locals are taking food and prescriptions to vulnerable seniors, and cruise ships are becoming floating hospitals.

We're all in this and we'll get through it, together.

**Marilyn Sapsford, Ormond Beach**

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**February 2, 2020**

**Rev. Kathy Tew Rickey writes of Homeless Shelter"s Barriers to Redemption in [Community Voices](#)**

COMMUNITY VOICES DB News-Journal, Sunday February 2, 2020 Barriers to redemption hold homeless people back Rev. Kathy Tew Rickey – pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ormond Beach A few Sundays ago, a homeless man attended the worship service at my congregation. I'll call him Joey. Joey, in his late 40's, a veteran living on a meager disability income, had been living in a local residential motel which he quickly found to be beyond his means. He had been homeless in Ormond Beach a few days and was earnestly seeking shelter. He had been told by local law enforcement that he would not be able to get into First Step Shelter without a sponsor. Would I help him, he asked?

Absolutely! I called the First Step shelter and spoke with a most pleasant and helpful case manager. Yes, Pastor, you can refer Joey to the shelter. Please go to our website and click the "Becoming a Resident" tab. There you will find a list of requirements for applying for the First Step program. If Joey meets the criteria, take a picture of him and submit it along with the completed admission request form and email it to us. We will get back to you within 48 hours.

I went to the First Step Shelter website and found ten criteria for admission, including "Resident of Volusia County." Resident? I ask Joey: "I know this sounds ironic but are you a resident of Volusia County?" He said, "No, Pastor, the last time I had a roof over my head was in Vermont." "Alas, Joey," I said, "you do not qualify for First Step Shelter for the homeless." What actually makes someone a "resident" of Volusia County?

What an utter shame. Joey who was sober as a judge but suffering from debilitating depression since his spouse was murdered in Crystal River, Florida, several years ago. He would have been a perfect candidate for the First Step program. There would have been solid potential for him to be stabilized medically, get connected with the social services he deserved, learn life skills and coping skills, all which would have given him a chance for success as a functioning adult in a world that is challenging for any one of us to navigate. Instead, I bought Joey a bus ticket to Jacksonville where he thought he would have a chance at being admitted to a Gospel mission downtown. Only God can redeem souls but we can be redeemers to our brothers and sisters in this life by extending our hands and our hearts to the downtrodden. Indeed we are called by God to do so if we can.

The First Step Shelter, as it was conceived, proposed, and built, was supposed to be a low barrier, come-as-you are homeless shelter. As it is now, there are only some 40 residents while many others have been turned away. Albeit, there have been successes – The Daytona Beach Housing Authority has placed four residents from First Step into permanent housing and this is to be praised. Many are off the streets and in a safe place getting help. But, First Step Shelter can do better. First Step has the capacity to be a safe zone if it staffs enough beds and takes away the strict barriers to entry.

The best time to help a person get off the streets is when they are asking for help! First Step Shelter has much more potential to offer redemption of the social kind to the most needful and vulnerable among us. I urge Catholic Charities Services, current operator of the shelter, the City of Daytona Beach, and the First Step Shelter Board of Directors to re-capture the original vision for the shelter. I am a current Co-Chair of FAITH (Fighting Against Injustice

Towards Harmony) and my congregation has been a member for 20 years. This strict criteria was not at all what FAITH envisioned when we advocated for the shelter.

We turned out thousands of people, every year for seven year in order to get the county and city governments to fund \$8 million for a come-asyou- are, 24/7, emergency shelter with enough services to get people into housing. The proposal we worked on with Catholic Charities and other community partners allowed for a \$1.2 million budget for 80-100 residents. With enough beds and low barriers to entry, there would be no need for a safe zone. FAITH will continue to fight for our homeless brothers and sisters because it is what God requires.

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**JANUARY 15, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200115/volusias-sales-tax-question-isnt-ready-for-round-two--letters>

### **Worth a visit**

The Ormond Art Museum is small jewel in Volusia County. Currently it has two exhibitions. One is a set of wonderful nature pieces by Caroline and Paul Rowntree.

The other exhibition is "Indigo: The Color of Ormond". Artist Catherine Cross and Osceola Elementary art teacher Kelsi Quicksall have organized an art project for Osceola students. Over a hundred works of art by students (K-5th grade) are displayed. All involve the indigo color (a deep and bright shade of blue). It is good to see our schools are educating our students in the arts.

I encourage all to visit the Ormond Art Museum and experience art that is interesting and refreshing.

**Tom Hilburn, Ormond Beach**

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**JANUARY 14, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200113/comparing-volusia-students-across-ethnic-lines-letters>

### **COMPARING GROUPS IN VOLUSIA SCHOOLS**

The December 8, 2019 issue of the News-Journal presented **an extensive special report comparing ethnic group students** as to educational attainments on a variety of important measures. The comparison measures included standardized test scoring, graduation rates, and school suspensions. Ethnic groups included White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Mixed.

[READ MORE: [Black students face achievement gap in Volusia County](#)]

The article also compared the ethnicity of student populations with instructional staff, especially noting the relatively low percentage of Black staff with the higher percentage of the Black student population. Also presented were data showing that the Asian student population is just over twice as high as the Asian instructional staff. This is a very pertinent finding (not commented on) inasmuch as the Asian student group was the most successful on almost all student educational comparisons. The implication appeared to be that Black students are at a disadvantage due to having fewer Black instructors. Why is that not the case for Asian students? Could it be that there is a paucity of certified Black teachers? Or could it be that the more experienced teachers are not placed in the predominantly Black schools? These would seem to be issues that should be addressed.

As noted, the Asian student group came out ahead on almost all of the ethnic group comparisons. Is there something to be learned from the Asians here? My guess would be that this would relate to values, attitudes, and behavior. Asians are known for highly valuing education.

It is certainly clear that educational attainment is extremely important concerning economic advancement, general feelings of satisfaction with life, and for maintaining a democratic form of government. The implications of the important News-journal report should be carefully examined.

**Dan Kennedy, Ormond Beach**

Kennedy retired from a career combining psychology and education.

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**JANUARY 5, 2020**

<https://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/20200105/dont-nip-daytonas-beach-street-in-bud--letters>

**WAR PROFITEERS**

During the Civil War many were profiting off the booming economy. Harper's Monthly, in 1864, writes of the insensitivity to the carnage of war: "...fortunes are being made with such marvelous rapidity, and in the haunts of pleasure, where they are being spent with such wanton extravagance that they don't feel this war." Those profiting from the war "...are at a banquet of abundance and delight, from which they are not to be unseated, though the ghosts of the hundreds of thousands of their slaughtered countrymen shake their gory locks them."

Is it any different today? Our economy is booming. While President Trump works to bring our troops home, we watch the impeachment trials and witness no concern for ending the death and maiming of our young men and women. Their names are buried in the back pages of our newspapers, if at all. Ten years ago, the name of Staff Sgt. Anthony Davis did make the front page of our local paper. In big capital letters it said, "HE WON'T BECOME A FORGOTTEN HERO." As we enjoy our freedom, may this be true.

**Barbara Waite Sandberg, Ormond Beach**