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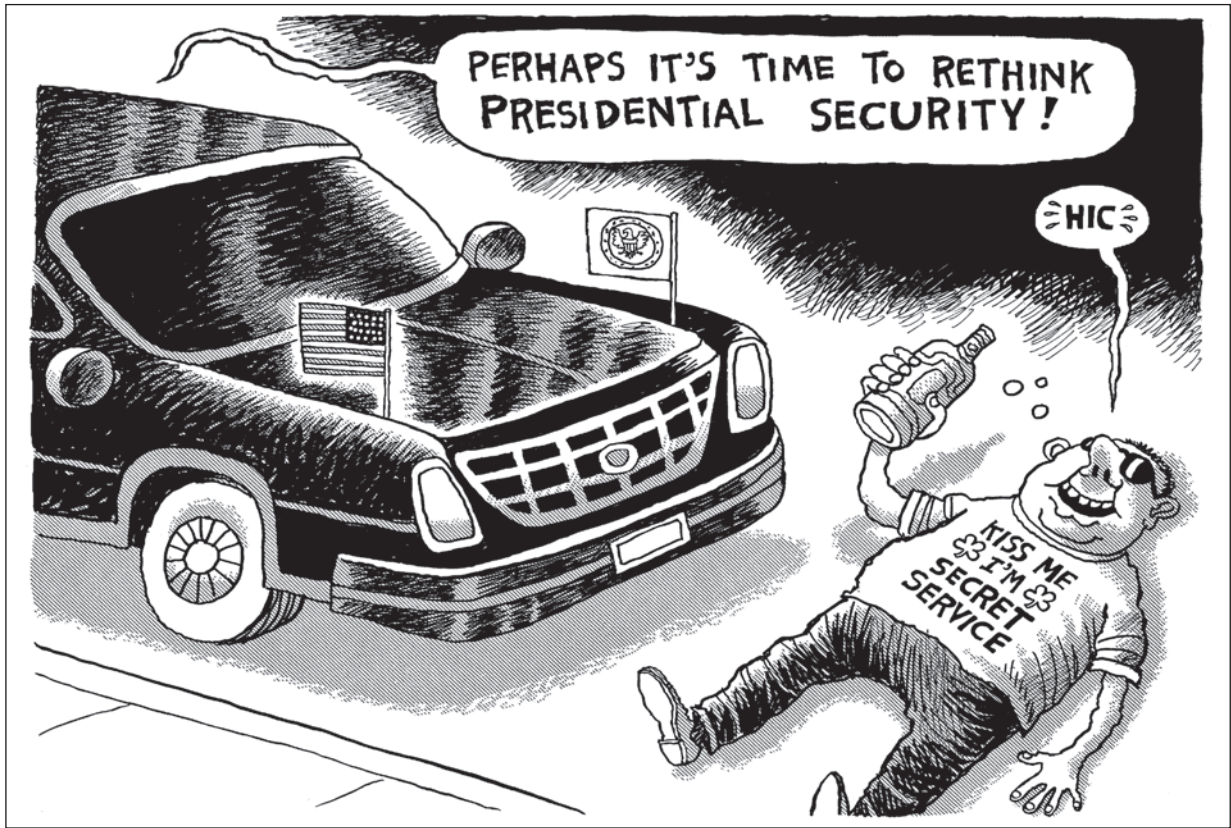
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OPINION

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THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2015 ♦ PAGE A6



Rob Rogers | Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Bab(i)es on campus

Be careful what you say to ‘Swaddled Generation’

TRIGGER WARNING: *This column will include discussion of ideas that may conflict with your own.*

Those accustomed to reading or listening only to liberal commentators may not be aware of “trigger warnings” and “safe zones” on college campuses.



KATHLEEN PARKER

It seems that mostly conservative sites and writers are concerned with the increasingly draconian suppression of free speech on college campuses. But then, it is mostly conservative writers and speakers who are treated as though they’re bringing the Ebola virus rather than contrarian ideas to the sensitive ears of what we may as well name the “Swaddled Generation.”

A trigger warning is usually conveyed on a sign carried or posted near the auditorium where a speech is to be given, alerting students to the possibility that the speaker may express an idea that could trigger an emotional response. A discussion about campus rape statistics, for example, might cause a rape victim to suffer.

This was the case recently at Georgetown University when Christina Hoff Sommers, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and author of “Who Stole Feminism?”, was greeted by sign-carriers warning: “Anti-Feminism,” with the room number of a “safe space.”

Students elsewhere have taken their trigger-phobia a step further, urging professors to add warnings to syllabuses alerting swaddlers to the possibility that a course might prompt uncomfortable thoughts. At Rutgers University, a student proposed flagging F. Scott Fitzgerald’s “The Great Gatsby” as potentially upsetting owing to “a variety of scenes that reference gory, abusive and misogynistic violence.”

Protections against unpleasant

Colleges and universities often boast of their diversity in terms of race, sex, gender or sexual orientation, but too often they fail to encourage diversity of thought.

thoughts can only be arranged by managing unpleasant speech. Thus, anyone who dares question any of the communally collected “understandings” of proper thought, presumably embraced during share-time and group hugs, won’t be celebrated as a curious mind but condemned as a “hater.”

Now there’s a winning debate argument. If you’re 5.

Such playground rhetoric is, nevertheless, effective, first by intimidating and ultimately by silencing. Hence the title of Kirsten Powers’ new book, “The Silencing: How the Left Is Killing Free Speech.” Powers, a columnist, self-proclaimed liberal and Fox News contributor, has opened one extra-large can of whompum with this book, which is filled with examples of free speech suppression, especially on college campuses and by the liberal media.

It is one thing for conservatives to condemn the narrow mindset of some liberals. Less easy to ignore is when a fellow liberal does it. There’s nothing quite like discovering that the affections of one’s “friends” were conditional upon one’s concurrence.

Too often in debates about free speech, we get hung up on exaggerated examples or scenarios, such as the recent Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest, which was provocation for its own sake, or pornography, the purpose of which does not pertain to the loftiest of human realms.

What Powers and others are confronting is far more subtle and sinister — the suppression of ideas. Colleges and universities often boast of their diversity in terms of race, sex, gender or sexual

orientation, but too often they fail to encourage diversity of thought.

This can be correctly seen as cowardice, manifested in the disinclination of that relatively rare species, the conservative commencement speaker, who this year is outnumbered by liberals six to one at the top 100 universities, according to one study. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice last year withdrew as commencement speaker at Rutgers after faculty protested. And Brandeis University canceled its plan to honor Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a fierce critic of Islam and a women’s advocate, at its commencement following protests.

Into this dark, narrow tunnel, a tiny light has begun to seep. Last week, Purdue University followed the University of Chicago’s lead in January by issuing a statement of principles of free expression. Both “guarantee the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn. ... It is not the proper role of the university to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.”

Praising Chicago’s example, Purdue President Mitch Daniels laid out the stakes in a telephone interview: “If universities want to embarrass themselves with their behavior, allowing people to be shouted down or disinvited, that’s their problem. But if they’re spawning a bunch of little authoritarians with an inverted view of our basic freedoms, that’s everybody’s problem.”

Let’s hope other colleges and universities follow suit — and soon. Otherwise, someone will be forced to write the obvious next book, “Dictators in Diapers.” Would that it were instead: “The Unswaddling: How Universities Fought Back to Restore Free Speech.”

Kathleen Parker, winner of the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for commentary, is a syndicated columnist. Send her email at kathleenparker@washpost.com.

GUEST VIEW

Maritime Day honors many in Ocean State

By Terence M. Nicholas

With the 2015 Volvo Ocean Race Newport stopover recently concluded, we once again are reminded of Rhode Island’s celebrated ties to all things sailing and of the state’s rich maritime history. In remembrance of National Maritime Day — which will be celebrated Friday, paying tribute to merchant marines — we wanted to take a moment to recognize Rhode Island’s contributions to our nation’s maritime tradition.

Though Rhode Island is often associated with sailing and the Navy, it has made some significant contributions to our nation’s maritime history and is still a key maritime trade and commerce hub for Southern New England.

The state has two major ports, which play critical roles in not only the regional economies of Southern New England, but also as a major access point for car importing in North America. The Port of Providence is one of only two deep-water ports in New England and is equipped with facilities to handle multiple forms of cargo supplying the region. The Port of Davisville is a key debarkation point for car carriers in the United States, as one of the top 10 auto importers in North America. Both ports have the potential for future development.

In addition to the commerce that flows through the state’s ports, Rhode Island also has a vibrant commercial fishing industry. The Port of Galilee is home to a large portion of Rhode Island’s oceangoing commercial fishing fleet, which represents generations of Rhode Island fishermen who have fished the waters from Block Island Sound to beyond the continental shelf in the Atlantic Ocean. These fishermen are supported by the Point Judith Fishermen’s Cooperative, one of the most successful fishing co-ops in the country and a key

factor in Galilee being a thriving fishing port.

Rhode Island residents also have played a key role in the history of maritime trade for the nation. Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, born in Newport, led the expedition to Japan that resulted in the eventual opening of trade relations between the United States and Japan and a critical part of the development of trade with Asia.

As a result of such historical maritime treaties, more than 90 percent of all world trade moves over the oceans. It is also important to remember that our nation’s maritime heritage would not exist without the skilled mariners who have gone to sea, encountering many dangers and hardships that are unique to their profession.

Our team at the U.S. Maritime Resource Center understands the rigors of life at sea, as we are comprised of mariners who have served at sea in varying capacities at the highest levels of the profession. And we are committed to providing the best research and education capabilities to the maritime industry to ensure that mariners are equipped with the knowledge they need to continue this most critical trade.

So, on this National Maritime Day, we ask that you take a moment to recognize the immense value of maritime trade and commerce, not only to Rhode Island’s economy, but also to the world’s economy and the mariners who make it happen.

Terence M. Nicholas is program manager at the U.S. Maritime Resource Center in Middletown. USMRC is an independent, nonprofit organization with a niche focus specializing in navigation safety, maritime risk mitigation, human capital development and raising awareness of international shipping, maritime trade and transport.

SOMETHING TO SAY?

We welcome our readers’ views. Our letters policy follows:

- ◆ Each letter must bear the writer’s full name, full address and telephone number (for verification purposes only). We will not publish a letter unless a phone number is provided.
- ◆ We correct errors of spelling and punctuation, and edit letters to conform to Daily News style. We may condense letters for brevity.
- ◆ Letters must be no more than 450 words. Proposed guest view columns must be no more than 750 words.
- ◆ We will run no more than two letters per author per month.

America’s police officers don’t need military force

It never made sense for the Pentagon to offer surplus material such as grenade launchers and mine-resistant armored personnel carriers to local law enforcement agencies. The practice helped increase the militarization of the nation’s police, leading to such jarring images as assault-gun-toting officers in full-body armor arriving in armored vehicles to confront demonstrators during the Ferguson, Mo., protests last year. Police officers enforce laws; military units rout enemy combatants and hold territory. Those two missions should not be commingled.

So we were heartened by President Barack Obama’s announcement Monday that the federal government will remove some of the more extreme tools of war from the list of free items, including tracked armored vehicles, weaponized aircraft, .50-caliber or higher guns and ammunition, grenade launchers and bayonets. Police agencies must also make the case that they need some of the items that will still be available, from drones and battering rams to riot helmets and batons. We take heart as well in the president’s reported desire to find a way to retrieve now off-limits items already in the hands of local police.

The 1033 Program, named after a section of the National Defense Authorization Act of 1997, is in itself not problematic. Since it began in 1997, it has distributed more than \$5.4 billion

in excess equipment to 8,000 local law enforcement agencies, most of it office furniture, photocopiers, portable generators, tents and other noncombat items. That’s a smart approach to reduce wasting tax dollars. But giving away grenade launchers and armored personnel carriers for use in American neighborhoods goes too far.

The new limits were announced as the president’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing released its final recommendations, which include a “layered” response to demonstrations to “minimize the appearance of a military operation and avoid using provocative tactics and equipment that undermine civilian trust.” The task force also urged police departments to be more transparent in developing and reviewing policies, and to better track demographic details of encounters with citizens, augmented by post-incident “nonpunitive peer reviews” to determine better procedures.

These are sound ideas. As we’ve said before, there is no legitimate reason for law enforcement agencies not to revisit and revise protocols and training that guide how officers engage with their communities. And they should be open about their methods and results, so the public can measure the actions of its protectors.

◆ Los Angeles Times

AROUND THE U.S.

Tuition problem needs to be solved

Too many American families cannot afford the ever-rising cost of college and the staggering level of debt they’ll face in trying to pay for it.

Over the past three decades, tuition increases not only have eclipsed inflation, but they’ve outpaced price hikes in other sectors of the economy, even health care. From 1978 to 2013, when medical spending rose by 600 percent, tuition jumped nearly twice as much, by 1,120 percent.

The pressure on families is compounded by the fact that states have curtailed their support for public universities. Some federal student aid programs also have been cut. As a result, the average college senior carries \$25,000 in loans and one in five households is paying student debt.

College educations have become so expensive that a diploma, the most important step on the ladder of opportunity, could become out of reach for too many families.

Plenty of reasons are to blame for this crisis, many the result of decisions made on campuses. Colleges and



Jeff Stahler | Universal Uclick

universities are employing more provosts, deans and administrators, according to the Education Policy Program at the New American Foundation. They have built ever-more elaborate dormitories, food courts, libraries and recreation centers in a bidding war for students. Many schools have failed to adjust to enrollment trends — for instance, just 27 percent of the nation’s 18 million undergraduates are fresh out of high school and enrolled full-time in

four-year programs.

No one solution can address this. A broad approach is essential, and the federal government, which already provides significant resources to universities for research, job-training programs and student aid, must lead the effort to rein in costs.

Success stories already dot the landscape and could be replicated. In Tennessee, for instance, rather than using enrollments to determine public funding,

a formula that rewards institutions when students make appropriate progress and complete their degrees is used. Some companies are paying colleges to create the educational programs necessary to fill jobs they require, a tactic that could be expanded.

The government, state and federal, may need to provide incentives for programs that meet the needs of adult learners, increase the number of online courses, expand work-study programs and improve coordination between institutions so students don’t have to repeat costly classes if they transfer. These are just some of the measures that may help.

In a world spinning with new technology and global competition, Americans are seeking political leaders who can find a broad-based solution to make a college education more affordable and post-college debt more bearable. The 2016 presidential campaign is the perfect place for them to step forward. Let the debate begin.

◆ Pittsburgh Post-Gazette