



# Bowling For Sanity

**BY KATHLEEN PARKER**  
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COLUMBIA, S.C. — When President Obama said in his State of the Union address that “This time is different,” referring to his push for tighter gun-control laws, he wasn’t just whistling Dixie.

Analysts seeking insight into the gun debate need look no further than the land of cotton, where nothing is ever forgotten. In a matter of days, citizens and lawmakers on both sides of the gun issue have advanced laws to:

- Allow concealed weapons to be carried in bars and restaurants;
- Make it legal to purchase or own any weapon that could have been acquired legally at the end of 2012;
- Strengthen background checks to identify people with mental illness.

The latter is the most serious of the batch and follows a recent near-tragedy at Ashley Hall, a private girls’ school in Charleston where Barbara Bush, among other notables, was once a student. Several days ago, a woman with a long record of mental instability, including a 2005 court plea of not guilty by reason of insanity, brought a loaded semi-automatic pistol to the school and pulled the trigger several times while pointing the gun at a school administrator.

Fortunately, the gun never fired and Alice Boland, 28, was unable to complete her mission. What exactly that was isn’t easily discerned from her bond hearing rant, which covered a diverse collection of complaints:

“I wanted to make a political demonstration about problems in my life relating to the fact that racist feminists, including institutions like that where I was demonstrating ... have been causing me these alleged mental problems ever since I met a lesbian professor,” said Boland.

Check.

This was not Boland’s first visit to Ashley Hall, which is located near her psychologist’s office. Boland prompted a call to police two years ago when she reportedly was seen “harassing children and acting very suspicious,” according to a Charleston police officer. This time, she brought a Taurus PT-22 pistol she had purchased a few days earlier, despite a mental health record that, in a rational world, would have blocked the sale.

The woman herself said she was crazy, yet she’s sane enough to buy a gun?

More than 50 Ashley Hall parents have signed a letter sent to a dozen state and federal officials urging action to prevent people such as Boland from acquiring firearms. Boland managed to answer questions on a federal question-



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naire adequately to purchase the gun. And because she has no criminal record, her name wasn’t flagged during a routine background check.

Laws governing doctor-patient privacy prohibit disclosure of mental health issues — as any who have sought psychological counseling would have it.

But Boland had another record that clearly should have disqualified her from gun ownership. Never mind an earlier diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. She also had faced federal charges for threatening to kill President George W. Bush and “the entire U.S. Congress.” Her plea of not guilty by reason of insanity arguably should have placed her in a database of those ineligible to purchase firearms. But because her charges were dismissed in 2009, she had no criminal record.

Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, speaking in Washington Wednesday, labeled the Ashley Hall case Exhibit A of a “broken system,” and has vowed to introduce legislation that would enhance the background check process to include “prior exposure to court and ... mental status.”

Meanwhile, state officials back home in Columbia were busy figuring out ways to skirt any new laws that might restrict gun ownership.

Citing an 1881 “unorganized militia” state law, state Sen. Tom Corbin, R-Greenville, proposed legislation guaranteeing everyone’s right to own any weapon that could be purchased legally as of Dec. 31, 2012. Corbin’s claim that federal law could not pre-empt South Carolina law, in addition to being incorrect — federal law trumps state law — was rather dramatically disproved during the unpleasantness of 1861-65.

In other action, a state Senate panel approved a bill to allow concealed weapons in restaurants and bars so long as the carriers don’t drink. Noting the volatility of mixing guns and alcohol, some suggested that business owners could post signs banning guns in their establishments. But one speaker called that “un-American.” Another insisted that he should be allowed to have a glass of wine with his lasagna while packing heat.

So it goes in the state that James L. Petigru, anti-secessionist and former South Carolina attorney general, long ago described as “too small to be a republic and too large to be an insane asylum.”

It remains to be seen if this time is different.

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# A Search For The Meaning Of Life

**BY VINCE TWO EAGLES**

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives), John Andreas Widtsoe, author of “Rational Theology,” once wrote, “Man must learn to know the universe precisely as it is, or he cannot successfully find his place in it. A man should therefore use his reasoning faculty in all matters involving truth, and especially as concerning his religion. He cannot learn to distinguish between truth and error.”

In our individual and collective variety of opinions about the meaning of life, I think it can be safely put forth that there is no single, concise meaning everyone can embrace and agree on. For example, if one were to argue that the meaning of life can only be found in the color yellow, there would no doubt be countless arguments countering such a claim with the question, “What about the other colors of the spectrum?” What about red, green, black, white and blue and all the colors in between? Is it not true that one color is every bit as important as any of the others? And the beat goes on.

Does this mean we cannot have collective vision about how we should live and believe? Of course not. Through our Creator-given tools of perception, perspective and communication, we can and do have productive conversations all the time where we arrive at a consensus if not at least a majority rule about, “Where have we been?” “Where are we now?” and “Where are we going?” We are all heir to careful, thoughtful insight as we are to credulity.

It is a lesson in life for us to engage in dialog that aims at the well-being of all living things on this planet, is it not? Exclusivity aimed at ignoring the effect of human existence on the rest of life we share our Mother Earth with is diametrically opposed to many indigenous people’s point of view now being shared by millions of non-indigenous people. From this perspective, the meaning of life clashes with western societal meaning of life doctrine, which puts forth that other life forms are expendable so long as the survival of human beings is top priority.

Human culture and civilization is beginning to shift toward recognizing the relationships between all living things — although because we all have to filter our observations about the real world through our personal, familial and cultural lenses and perception systems, it is remarkable that



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we have made any progress at all. The unity of ideas and vision means a more sustainable future all of us. So, you could probably say that unity is a part of the definition of the meaning of life.

Ideas about wealth and political power are shifting to a more inclusive approach to problem-solving, in my opinion. A daily assessment of emerging events around the globe and the conversations ensuing from or because of these events suggests that at least some people understand the need for the unity of ideas and not necessarily the homogenized version — ideas that can accommodate and incorporate diversity in their application.

Getting to “know the universe as it is” involves giving up superstition, stereotypes and long-held, so-called “traditions,” while at the same time clinging to the tried and true. To John Widtsoe’s point, without knowing the universe “man cannot successfully find his place in it.” Truth, however, has many faces sometimes because so much of what is touted as truth is really subjective in manner: a what-is-one-man’s-trash-is-another-man’s-treasure sort of thing. It is objective truth that will set us free, I think.

The question is: Is there subjective error as opposed to objective error? I think that the biggest challenge facing all of us in order for us to know the meaning of life is to sort truth from fiction, as Mr. Andreas suggests; and in this modern world, we all know what a difficulty that is. Our unending quest for objective truths in the universe is what makes us human. Objective truth can reveal predictability and can lend credibility to our notions about why things occur and how and when they occur. If “A” happens then “B” follows every time, that is objective. If “A” happens and sometimes “B” happens and sometime not, that is subjective.

The meaning of life as an objective definition is elusive and even mysterious at times. Perhaps that is a good thing. Perhaps there are things about the universe we “cannot know,” but we need not equate that with “should not know.” Our individual and collective search for the meaning of life will always be going forward. Let’s be at peace with that, I say.

And now you know the rez of the story.  
Doksha (later) ...

pany.” They already have a working knowledge of our school system, they certainly have great repore with staff and students. We can’t afford to lose good people in this community. We need to let them know we appreciate and value them! Hiring a head hunter without even an attempt at giving your own a chance is a poor business decision.

As the community, we need to keep our school board accountable for the decisions that are made, how our tax dollars are being used. And, as I mentioned, keep good, qualified members of our community here — people that care about our kids and our schools! I would like the Board to look at the prospects they have right in front of them before spending money and hiring an “unknown.”

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

## Are Cosmic Threats Getting New Look?

Perhaps it has taken an extraordinary piece of coincidence to bring a sense of serious attention to a problem that is literally out of this world.

The threat is the danger posed to this planet by asteroids and other objects passing through the earth’s orbit. If that orbit and those objects meet at the same place at the same time, there’s going to be a catastrophic problem the likes of which this world of ours has not seen in a very long time.

While the odds of this occurrence are terribly remote, they are still there — and recent close brushes have put an overdue spotlight on the matter.

The latest occurred last Friday, when an asteroid dubbed 2012 DA14, a near-earth object (NEO) was about half the size of a football field, passed within 30,000 miles of our planet. It was spotted about a year ago, and astronomers had calculated that it would not hit this planet. But it was close enough to threaten some orbiting satellites, which is an uncomfortably close shave in the cosmic scheme of things.

This was not a new situation, as there have been NEOs that have buzzed this planet before, but none ever so close as 2012 DA14.

By sheer coincidence, the flyby of 2012 DA14 last Friday was overshadowed by another, completely unrelated event when a meteor about the size of a bus burned its way across the skies of Russia, cracking the sound barrier with a thunderous bang that injured 1,200 people and shattered thousands of windows. The rock broke up, but not before capturing the attentions of people around the world.

In no time at all after this event, the awareness of the dangers we face from space objects skyrocketed. In the U.S., the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee has called for a hearing on how to “better identify and address asteroids that pose a potential threat to Earth.” This has been a subject that has not been taken seriously for a long time, except by those in the scientific community. The fireball over Russia and the unrelated headlines about 2012 DA14 have inadvertently colluded to add weight to the issue.

Frankly, it’s a welcome development, even though there really was nothing we could have done about the Russian meteor because the object was really just a larger “shooting star” that was nonetheless too small to be detected (or, in all probability, taken seriously) in the vast, cosmic scheme of debris moving around the cosmos.

It must be repeated that the odds of a catastrophe are very small. But a collision could, in a best-case scenario, devastate many square miles of area; in a worst-case scenario, it could be an extinction event.

So, it makes no sense for, say, the United Nations to actively explore the options and defenses. We’re not talking about an “Armageddon”-style mission to explode an asteroid, which would be nearly impossible and almost certainly create broad devastation by unleashing a cloud of falling debris. It’s all a matter of timing, meaning we have to either deflect the object, speed it up or slow it down so that the asteroid and this planet do not cross the same path at the same time. We currently don’t have the technology to do this, but it should be pursued — just in case.

If it takes a coincidence to push this idea forward, so be it.

kmh

### ONLINE OPINION

The results of the most recent Internet poll on the *Press & Dakotan’s* Web site are as follows:

#### LATEST RESULTS:

**Do you support raising the federal minimum wage?**

Yes .....54%

No .....43%

Not sure .....3%

**TOTAL VOTES CAST 560**

The *Press & Dakotan* Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

#### CURRENT QUESTION:

#### Should South Dakota join in the federal Medicaid expansion?

To vote in the *Press & Dakotan’s* Internet poll, log on to our website at [www.yankton.net](http://www.yankton.net).

### TODAY IN HISTORY

#### By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, Feb. 19, the 50th day of 2013. There are 315 days left in the year.

**Today’s Highlight in History:** On Feb. 19, 1963, the book “The Feminine Mystique” by Betty Friedan, credited with reviving American feminism, was first published by W.W. Norton & Co.

**On this date:** In 1473, astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus was born in Torun, Poland.

In 1803, Congress voted to accept Ohio’s borders and constitution.

In 1807, former Vice President Aaron Burr, accused of treason, was arrested in the Mississippi Territory, in present-day Alabama. (Burr was acquitted at trial.)

In 1846, the Texas state government was formally installed in Austin, with J. Pinckney Henderson taking the oath of office as governor.

In 1878, Thomas Edison received a U.S. patent for “an improvement in phonograph or speaking machines.”

In 1881, Kansas prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which cleared the way for the U.S. military to relocate and intern Japanese-Americans. Japanese warplanes raided the Australian city of Darwin; at least 243 people were killed.

In 1945, during World War II, some 30,000 U.S. Marines began landing on Iwo Jima, where they began a successful month-long battle to seize control of the island from Japanese forces.

In 1959, an agreement was signed by Britain, Turkey and Greece granting Cyprus its independence.

In 1976, calling the issuing of Executive Order 9066 “a sad day in American history,” President Gerald R. Ford issued a proclamation confirming that the order had been terminated with the formal cessation of hostilities of World War II.

In 1986, the U.S. Senate approved an international treaty outlawing genocide, 83-11, nearly 37 years after the pact had first been submitted for ratification.

In 1997, Deng Xiaoping, the last of China’s major Communist revolutionaries, died at age 92.

**Ten years ago:** Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-Mo., announced his second candidacy for president with a pledge to repeal most of President George W. Bush’s tax cuts. An

Iranian military plane carrying 275 members of the elite Revolutionary Guards crashed in southeastern Iran, killing all on board.

**Five years ago:** An ailing Fidel Castro resigned the Cuban presidency after nearly a half-century in power; his brother Raul was later named to succeed him. President George W. Bush, visiting Rwanda, pleaded with the global community for decisive action to stop grisly ethnic violence plaguing other African nations like Kenya and Sudan. Barack Obama cruised past Hillary Rodham Clinton in the Wisconsin primary and Hawaii caucuses. Toshiba, creator of the HD DVD, conceded to Sony’s rival Blu-ray format.

**One year ago:** Three skiers were killed when an avalanche swept them about a quarter-mile down an out-of-bounds canyon at Stevens Pass, Wash., but a fourth skier caught up in the slide was saved by a safety device. Forty-four inmates were killed in a prison riot in Apodaca, northern Mexico. The Detroit Red Wings won their 23rd straight home game, breaking the NHL overall record with a 3-2 victory over the San Jose Sharks.

**Today’s Birthdays:** Singer Smokey Robinson is 73. Singer Bobby Rogers (Smokey Robinson & the Miracles) is 73. Actress Carlin Glynn is 73. Sony Chairman Howard Stringer is 71. Singer Lou Christie is 70. Actor Michael Nader is 68. Rock musician Tony Iommi (Black Sabbath, Heaven and Hell) is 65. Actor Stephen Nichols is 62. Author Amy Tan is 61. Actor Jeff Daniels is 58. Rock singer-musician Dave Wakeling is 57. Talk show host Lorianne Crook is 56. Actor Ray Winstone is 56. Actor Leslie David Baker (TV: “The Office”) is 55. NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell is 54. Britain’s Prince Andrew is 53. Tennis Hall-of-Famer Hana Mandlikova is 51. Singer Seal is 50. Actress Jessica Tuck is 50. Country musician Ralph McCauley (Wild Horses) is 49. Rock musician Jon Fishman (Phish) is 48. Actress Justine Bateman is 47. Actor Benicio Del Toro is 46. Actress Bellamy Young is 43. Rock musician Daniel Adair is 38. Pop singer-actress Haylie Duff is 28. Actress Victoria Justice is 20.

**Thought for Today:** “In America everybody is, but some are more than others.” — Gertrude Stein, American author (1874-1946).

### FROM THE BIBLE

It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. *Matthew 12:12.* Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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### YOUR LETTERS

#### Looking Within

**Deidre Hanna, Yankton**

This is an open letter to the Yankton School Board and Yankton community:

First, I want to thank you for your time and effort that you put in to make our school system run efficiently.

On that note, I wish to respectfully ask why a decision was made to pay an outside entity a good amount of money to search for candidates to fill the position that will be open after Mr. Gertsema retires (again). Has there been an attempt to promote from within? I am certain that there are qualified people that would be happy to be given a new opportunity, a step up within the “com-