

# THE PRESS & DAKOTAN

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**OPINION | OUR VIEW**

## Our Freedom Isn't Easy, Either

It's a pity that Americans take their freedom for granted. Sure, we think about it reflexively when we believe it's being compromised by some government action we disagree with or by some similar intrusion that makes us feel threatened.

We give it patriotic lip service when we honor our veterans on Memorial Day or Veterans Day. We mouth the thank-yous and pray the prayers, mostly because we know we're supposed to do those things.

And to be sure, we'll be celebrating our freedom on Thursday, the Fourth of July. It's a magnificent holiday that glows with excitement and explodes across the purple heavens in a fiery celebration of liberty. The Fourth is an in-your-face, star-spangled reminder of who we are, and we seize upon the opportunity to celebrate eagerly. But do we really appreciate the freedom we have?

Recent events put our thoughts about freedom in the spotlight, and they also compel us to confront some difficult questions.

The revelation of the extent of the internal surveillance done by the National Security Agency (NSA) has many people up in arms, as well it should. It turns out that our free way of life is being scrutinized, through phone records and Internet monitoring, among other things. We may feel compromised by these facts, and we may feel as if government is intruding with a prying eye into our lives.

But one of the motivations for such surveillance is to protect this country from threats — in other words, to protect our freedom.

Is the tradeoff worth it? Are you comfortable with sacrificing a certain measure of personal freedom in order to protect the greater good?

In this space on Tuesday, we discussed the Voting Rights Act and what it has meant to cultivating the freedom to vote. In some views (including our own), the Supreme Court's decision last week to effectively scuttle a portion of the act may undercut this freedom for some voters. Others, however, say the decision may free the states to act as they see fit. So, which freedom is more important? And what should or shouldn't the government do to protect our freedoms?

The Supreme Court last week also shot down the so-called Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a federal edict that defined marriage as a bond between a man and a woman. With the court's decision, same-sex couples in some states are now free to enter into marriage, but couples in other states still are not, as those states have exercised their freedoms to define the institution of marriage as exclusively heterosexual. Again, which freedom garners precedence?

It turns out that freedom is not only NOT free, it also isn't easy. It can be complicated with nuances, and it can even be contradictory at times. It can produce headaches undreamed until the boundaries in inevitably tested.

A great thing about America is that we have the freedom to debate all these things. And (for the most part) we also have the freedom to vote for candidates who can carry our views on such matters forward, either to Pierre or Lincoln, or to Washington.

Imagine what life would be like if we couldn't do those things. In fact, there are millions of people around the world who don't have to imagine it: They live with it, and they suffer under it. And some of them would give anything to taste the freedom that we here take for granted most every day.

Perhaps that's a good thought to carry with you during the Independence Day holiday. The day is about more than noise and spectacle. It's about some serious business, and we must never lose sight of how vital freedom really is to all of us.

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**SPEAK UP!**

Share your thoughts with us. Write to the PRESS & DAKOTAN on a topic of the day or in response to an editorial or story. Write us at: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

**ON THIS DATE**

**By The Associated Press**

Today is Wednesday, July 3, the 184th day of 2013. There are 181 days left in the year.

**Today's Highlight in History:** On July 3, 1863, the three-day Civil War Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania ended in a major victory for the North as Confederate troops failed to breach Union positions during an assault known as Pickett's Charge.

**On this date:** In 1608, the city of Quebec was founded by Samuel de Champlain.

In 1775, Gen. George Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Mass.

In 1890, Idaho became the 43rd state of the Union.

In 1898, the U.S. Navy defeated a Spanish fleet outside Santiago Bay in Cuba during the Spanish-American War.

In 1913, during a 50th anniversary reunion at Gettysburg, Pa., Civil War veterans re-enacted Pickett's Charge, which ended with embraces and handshakes between the former enemies.

In 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt marked the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg by dedicating the Eternal Light Peace Memorial.

In 1944, during World War II, Soviet forces recaptured Minsk.

In 1950, the first carrier strikes of the Korean War took place as the USS Valley Forge and the HMS Triumph sent fighter planes against North Korean targets.

In 1962, French President Charles de Gaulle signed an agreement recognizing Algeria as an independent state after 132 years of French rule.

In 1971, singer Jim Morrison of The Doors died in Paris at age 27.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air jetliner over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 people aboard.

In 1993, Hall of Fame pitcher Don Drysdale died in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, at age 56. Comedian "Curly Joe" DeRita, the sixth member of the Three Stooges, died in Woodland Hills, Calif., at age 83.

**Ten years ago:** The U.S. put a \$25 million bounty on Saddam Hussein, and \$15 million apiece for his two sons. (The \$30 million reward for Odaï and Qusai Hussein went to a tipster whose information led U.S. troops to their hideout, where the brothers were killed in a gunbattle.)

Five years ago: The Pentagon announced it had extended the tour of

2,200 Marines in Afghanistan, after insisting for months the unit would come home on time. Venus and Serena Williams won in straight sets to set up their third all-sister Wimbledon final and seventh Grand Slam championship matchup. Larry Harmon, who turned Bozo the Clown into a show business staple, died in Los Angeles at age 83.

**One year ago:** A federal judge in Amarillo, Texas, found Clayton F. Osborn, a jetBlue Airways pilot who'd left the cockpit during a flight and screamed about religion and terrorists, not guilty by reason of insanity of interfering with a flight crew. Andy Griffith, 86, who made homespun American Southern wisdom his trademark as the wise sheriff in "The Andy Griffith Show," died at his North Carolina home.

**Today's Birthdays:** Actor Tim O'Connor is 86. Jazz musician Pete Fountain is 83. Playwright Tom Stoppard is 76. Writer-producer Jay Tarses is 74. Attorney Gloria Allred is 72. Folk singer Judith Durham (The Seekers) is 70. Actor Kurtwood Smith is 70. Actor Michael Cole ("The Mod Squad") is 68. Country singer Johnny Lee is 67. Humorist Dave Barry is 66. Actress Betty Buckley is 66. Rock singer-musician Paul Barrere (Little Feat) is 65. Actress Jan Smithers is 64. Actor Bruce Altman is 58. Former Haitian President Jean-Claude Duvalier is 62. Talk show host Montel Williams is 57. Country singer Aaron Tippin is 55. Rock musician Vince Clarke (Erasure) is 53. Actor Tom Cruise is 51. Actor Thomas Gibson is 51. Actress Hunter Tylo is 51. Actress Connie Nielsen is 49. Actress Yearley Smith is 49. Singer Ishmael Butler is 44. Rock musician Kevin Hearn (Bare-naked Ladies) is 44. Actress-singer Shannee Smith is 44. Actress-singer Audra McDonald is 43. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is 42. Actor Patrick Wilson is 40. Country singer Trent Tomlinson is 38. Actress Andrea Barber is 37. Singer Shane Lynch (Boyzone) is 37. Actor Ian Anthony Dale is 35. Actress Elizabeth Hendrickson is 34. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tonia Tash (Divine) is 34. Country singer-songwriter Sarah Buxton is 33. Actress Shoshannah Stern is 33. Actor Grant Rosenmeyer is 22. Actress Kelsey Batelaan is 18.

**Thought for Today:** "A timid person is frightened before a danger; a coward during the time; and a courageous person afterward." — Jean Paul Richter, German author (1763-1825).

**FROM THE BIBLE**

Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD. Psalm 33:12. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



## Assaulting Civil Rights

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.  
Tribune Media Services

Last week was bittersweet for the cause of human dignity.

On one hand, the Supreme Court gave us reason for applause, striking down barriers against the full citizenship of gay men and lesbians. On the other, it gave us reason for dread, gutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The 5-4 decision was stunning and despicable, but not unexpected. The country has been moving in this direction for years.

The act is sometimes called the crown jewel of the Civil Rights Movement, but it was even more than that, the most important piece of legislation in the cause of African-American freedom since Reconstruction. And in shredding it, the court commits its gravest crime against that freedom since Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896.

That decision ratified segregation, capping a 30-year campaign by conservative Southern Democrats to overturn the results of the Civil War. Given that the Voting Rights Act now lies in tatters even as Republicans embrace Voter ID schemes to suppress the black vote, given that GOP star Rand Paul has questioned the constitutionality of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, one has to wonder if the results of the Civil Rights Movement do not face a similar fate.

Or, as Georgia Rep. John Lewis put it when I spoke with him Monday, "Can history repeat itself?"

Lewis was the great hero of the battle for voting rights, a then-25-year-old activist who had his skull broken by Alabama state troopers on Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., while leading a march against the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, morals tests, economic intimidation, clubs, guns and bombs to deny black people the ballot. The law he helped enact required states and counties with histories of voting discrimination to seek federal approval before changing their voting procedures. (Those that behaved themselves for a decade could be released from that requirement.)

The court struck down the formula the law uses to determine where discrimination lives (and

therefore, which jurisdictions should be covered), saying the dates are too old to be reliable. As Chief Justice John Roberts noted in writing for the majority, the country has changed dramatically since that era. African-American electoral participation is at levels undreamt of in 1965.

And so it is. Because. The Act. Worked.

Using that success as an excuse to cripple it, noted Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg in her dissent, is like "throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet." Indeed, had the nation not changed dramatically since 1965, would that not have been cited as evidence of the act's failure? Damned if you do, damned if you don't, then: the Voting Rights Act never had a chance.

This court, said Lewis, "plunged a dagger in the heart" of the freedom movement. Nor is it lost on him that the majority which struck down this bedrock of black freedom included a black jurist: Clarence Thomas. "The brother on the court," said Lewis, "I think he's lost his way."

So what now? Lewis says we must push Congress for legislation to "put teeth back in the Voting Rights Act." Given that this Congress is notorious for its adamant uselessness, that seems far-fetched, but Lewis insists bipartisan discussion is already under way.

Fine. Let us demand that bickering, dysfunctional body do what is needed. But let us — African-Americans and all believers in freedom — also serve notice that, whatever lawmakers do, we will not stand placidly by as history repeats and citizenship is repealed, but that we will energetically resist by every moral means.

Saying that, I hear the ghostly echo of those who, once upon a generation, marched into southern jails, singing "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me around." It is an ancient song of defiance that feels freshly — sadly — relevant to our times.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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**Kathleen Parker**

## Wendy Davis' Sudden Sainthood

BY KATHLEEN PARKER  
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WASHINGTON — I like Texas state Sen. Wendy Davis. I admire her intelligence, chutzpah, tenacity and, to be perfectly honest, her enviable contenance.

But her elevation to national heroine, essentially owing to her ability to speak for 11 hours straight without a break while wearing (how many times did we hear or read it?) "rouge-red sneakers," is absurd.

No matter what one's politics, one can't help noticing the strangeness of this latest phenomenon — fame by filibuster — or the remarkable acclamation bestowed on Davis for her passionate defense of a woman's right to destroy an unborn child (or fetus, if you prefer) up to the 24th week of pregnancy.

One may wish to leave unfettered a woman's right to do anything to herself, even if it means destroying her own offspring, but shouldn't one be at least somewhat discomfited?

Instead, we celebrate.

In the days after Davis' now-famous filibuster to block a Texas bill that would have banned abortions after 20 weeks, as well as imposed stricter safety standards and doctor qualifications, the flaxen-haired damsel (if only to be consistent with media coverage thus far) has been on a magic carpet ride through the green rooms of America's television talk shows.

Almost without exception, Davis has been regaled as a heroine of the war on women, a new gladiator in the pantheon of feminist warriors. As such, she faced such probing questions as "How are you even awake today?" and "What was it like standing for that long?" Like wowsers-zowser, Wonder Woman, "Will you filibuster again?"

When MSNBC's Joe Scarborough asked a substantive question — whether Davis thinks 20 weeks is an unreasonable limit on abortion — she replied in part that some women don't even know they're pregnant at 20 weeks. Really? Even if true, though surely rare, this observation is utterly irrelevant.

We have indeed come a long way from Roe v. Wade. In the early days of legal abortion, nearly everyone insisted that the procedure wasn't intended as birth control. Millions of abortions later, original intent is laughable.

Even Bill Clinton's call for abortion to be safe, legal and rare has a fairy tale quality by today's

standards. Such that when legislators seek to place limits on abortion, based at least in part on technology that now allows us to see fetuses as more than a clump of cells, we are appalled.

No adult needs a primer on the politics of abortion. Part of what makes this issue so difficult is that both sides are, in principle, correct. Anti-abortion folks see it as a human rights issue. Given that human life is a continuum that begins at conception, there can be no compromise.

Pro-abortion rights folks see any limitation on abortion as an infringement on a woman's right to control her own body. In their view, the baby isn't a baby with human rights until it leaves the mother's body, thereby becoming autonomous if lacking in self-sufficiency.

No wonder we can't untwist this pretzel. Ultimately, the question comes down to which awful option we can live with. Although a majority of Americans (61 percent) generally favor legal abortion in the first trimester, they become much more squeamish in the second (27 percent) and third (14 percent).

In other words, we seem to be relatively comfortable terminating a pregnancy before the fetus looks much like a baby. At 20 weeks, the halfway point, the fetus looks very much like a baby.

The abortion conundrum is further complicated by the dishonesty of our terminology. Simplistic phrases such as "pro-life" and "pro-choice" distort the complexity of how most people feel. It is also deceptive to refer to abortion as only a "women's health issue" or to people who push for abortion limits as waging a "war on women."

Perhaps the silliness and vagueness of our language have led to silliness and vagueness in our understanding and behavior. Who wants to talk about the meaning and purpose of life when you can talk about rouge-red shoes?!

But when the question of whether we should destroy human life at any stage is reduced to theater, leaving many journalists gushing like breathless red-carpet commentators, we have lost more than a sense of decorum.

One may agree with Davis' principled stand on the Texas bill, which, she argued, tried to do too much. Even so, a little less glee from the bleachers would seem more appropriate to the moment.

Kathleen Parker's email address is kathleen-parker@washpost.com.

**YOUR LETTERS**

**Online Issues**

**Tom Roper, Fridley, Minn.**

Over the years I have kept up with the events in Yankton by reading the Press and Dakotan online. It downloaded quickly and provided the information I was looking for quickly and efficiently. When the format changed, I figured I would get used to the new look and quirks that came along with it.

Unfortunately, this is not the case. I find the profusion of ads on the front page, and the time it takes for them to download, distracting to say the least. Combine that with the highly irritating and generally purposeless "survey questions" blocking my path to reading a complete story

and my dissatisfaction knows no bounds. Congratulations, you've taken a perfectly good service and downgraded it tremendously.

EDITOR'S NOTE: As was noted in a May 13 online article to explain our use of Google Surveys: "Many newspaper websites are moving from free pages to partial and/or full paywalls to help offset a portion of the business costs associated with producing their news and advertising content in print and online. At this time, Yankton Media is partnering with Google to test our ability to generate some new online revenue as we continue to look at the possibility of implementing a paywall."