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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Economic Insecurity A Problem For All

"Poverty is no longer an issue of 'them,' it's an issue of 'us.'"

That's the message Mark Rank, a professor at Washington University in St. Louis, shared with *The Associated Press* in a story this week about growing economic insecurity in the United States.

He continued: "Only when poverty is thought of as a mainstream event, rather than a fringe experience that just affects blacks and Hispanics, can we really begin to build broader support for programs that lift people in need."

How is economic insecurity defined? It is experiencing unemployment at some point in your working life, or a year or more of reliance on government aid.

The statistics on economic insecurity reported by *The Associated Press* are staggering and point to the systemic failures of our economic system.

Four out of five U.S. adults struggle with joblessness, near poverty or reliance on welfare for at least parts of their lives.

If current trends continue, close to 85 percent of all working-age adults in the U.S. will experience bouts of economic insecurity by 2030.

What are the causes of this growing insecurity? *The Associated Press* says the evidence indicates an increasingly globalized U.S. economy, the widening gap between rich and poor and loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs are primary reasons.

For those Americans who manage to pursue higher education in the hopes of getting better jobs, they are often rewarded with a "mortgage" but no home. The Project on Student Debt reports that two-thirds of college seniors who graduated in 2011 (the latest year for which statistics are available) had student loan debt, with an average of \$26,600 per borrower. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate for young college graduates in 2011 was 8.8 percent.

It's hard to start saving for retirement with that kind of debt hanging over your head.

So it's no surprise that, as Americans age, the faltering economic system means retirement is increasingly becoming a frightening prospect.

According to the Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, more than half of today's households will not have enough retirement income to maintain their pre-retirement standard of living, even if they work until age 65.

It's no mistake that we keep referring to the failed economic system.

In "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt," Chris Hedges described in excruciating detail America's "sacrifice zones," areas where people and resources have been exploited and then left to decay. The places he and artist Joe Sacco visited included South Dakota's own Pine Ridge; Camden, N.J.; Welch, W. Va.; and Immokalee, Fla.

Hedges wrote: "The belief that human beings and human societies should be ruled by the demands of the marketplace is utopian folly. There is nothing in human history or human nature that supports the idea that sacrificing everything before the free market leads to social good. And yet we have permitted this utopian belief system to determine how we structure our economy, labor, education, culture and our relations with foreign nations, as well as how we treat the ecosystem on which we depend for life."

If Americans truly want to address the poverty that is growing around us, they must sweep aside the myths of individualism so ingrained in the American Dream and look instead at the follies of the free market. By addressing its systemic problems — the concentration of capital into the hands of a few while most workers are underpaid in relation to their productivity, the continued recklessness and lawlessness of the financial sector, and the inability to deal with the hollowing out of so many downtowns as small businesses are forced to succumb to national and international chains, to name a few — we may go a long way toward solving our individual struggles.

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ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Monday, July 29, the 210th day of 2013. There are 155 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 29, 1981, Britain's Prince Charles married Lady Diana Spencer at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. (However, the couple divorced in 1996.)

On this date: In 1030, the patron saint of Norway, King Olaf II, was killed in battle.

In 1588, the English attacked the Spanish Armada in the Battle of Gravelines, resulting in an English victory.

In 1890, artist Vincent van Gogh, 37, died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in Auvers-sur-Oise, France.

In 1900, Italian King Humbert I was assassinated by an anarchist; he was succeeded by his son, Victor Emmanuel III.

In 1921, Adolf Hitler became the leader ("Fuehrer") of the National Socialist German Workers Party.

In 1948, Britain's King George VI opened the Olympic Games in London.

In 1957, the International Atomic Energy Agency was established. Jack Paar made his debut as host of NBC's "Tonight Show."

In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, creating NASA.

In 1967, an accidental rocket launch aboard the supercarrier USS Forrestal in the Gulf of Tonkin resulted in a fire and explosions that killed 134 servicemen.

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford became the first U.S. president to visit the site of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz in Poland.

In 1980, a state funeral was held in Cairo, Egypt, for the deposed Shah of Iran, who had died two days earlier at age 60.

In 1993, the Israeli Supreme Court acquitted retired Ohio autoworker John Demjanjuk of being Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible" and threw out his death sentence; Demjanjuk was set free.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush refused to release a congressional report on possible links between Saudi Arabian officials and the September 11 hijackers, saying disclosure "would help the enemy" by revealing intelligence sources and methods. Boston's Bill Mueller became the first player in major league history to hit grand slams from both sides of the plate in a game and connected for three homers in a 14-7 win at Texas.

Five years ago: Alaska Sen. Ted Stevens was indicted on seven felony counts of concealing more than a quarter of a million dollars in house renovations and gifts from a powerful oil

contractor. (A jury later found the long-time Republican lawmaker guilty of lying on financial disclosure forms, but a judge subsequently dismissed the case, saying prosecutors had withheld evidence.) Disgraced ex-NBA official Tim Donaghy admitted that he'd brought shame on his profession as a federal judge sentenced him to 15 months behind bars for a gambling scandal. Army scientist Bruce E. Ivins, 62, named as a top suspect in anthrax mailing attacks in 2001, died at a hospital in Frederick, Md., after deliberately overdosing on Tylenol.

One year ago: Standing on Israeli soil, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney declared Jerusalem to be the capital of the Jewish state and said the United States had "a solemn duty and a moral imperative" to block Iran from achieving nuclear weapons capability. At the London Olympics, 123-pound North Korean weightlifter Om Yun Chul won a gold medal by lifting an Olympic-record 370 pounds in the clean and jerk. Dana Vollmer of the United States set a world record to win the 100-meter butterfly in 55.98 seconds. Yannick Agnel rallied the French to the gold medal in the 4x100-meter freestyle relay in 3 minutes, 9.93 seconds, pulling ahead of American star Ryan Lochte on the final lap. French film director Chris Marker died on his 91st birthday.

Today's Birthdays: Comedian "Professor" Irwin Corey is 99. Actor Robert Horton is 89. Former Sen. Nancy Kassebaum-Baker is 81. Actor Robert Fuller is 80. Former Sen. Elizabeth H. Dole is 77. Actor David Warner is 72. Rock musician Neal Doughty (REO Speedwagon) is 67. Marilyn Tucker Quayle, wife of former Vice President Dan Quayle, is 64. Actor Mike Starr is 63. Documentary maker Ken Burns is 60. Style guru Tim Gunn (TV: "Project Runway") is 60. Rock singer-musician Geddy Lee (Rush) is 60. Rock singer Patti Scialfa (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 60. Actor Kevin Chapman is 51. Actress Alexandra Paul is 50. Country singer Martina McBride is 47. Rock musician Chris Gorman is 46. Actor Rodney Allen Rippey is 45. Actor Tim Omundson is 44. Actor Wil Wheaton is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer Wanya Morris (Boyz II Men) is 40. Country singer-songwriter James Otto is 40. Actor Stephen Dorff is 40. Actor Josh Radnor is 39. Hip-hop DJ/music producer Danger Mouse is 36. Actress Rachel Miner is 33. Actress Allison Mack is 31. Actor Matt Prokop is 23.

Thought for Today: "An idea is not responsible for the people who believe in it." — Don Marquis, American journalist-author (born this date in 1878, died 1937).

FROM THE BIBLE

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:7. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



The Color of Hope

BY BILL O'REILLY

Creators Syndicate

My friend Charles Krauthammer, a thinking man's pundit, believes some problems cannot be solved. Charles points to the Palestinian-Israeli situation and to the collapse of the traditional black family in America. I disagree. It is possible to change black attitudes, but it will take a dynamic person to lead the way.

The primary reason that Trayvon Martin is not alive today is that George Zimmerman feared him. Making his neighborhood watch rounds, Zimmerman saw a young man wearing clothing that unsettled him. Zimmerman profiled the teenager, and from there, things rapidly got out of control.

There is a perception in America that young black males can be trouble. According to a study out of Northeastern University, black men between the ages of 14 and 24 commit homicides at a rate 10 times that of young white and Hispanic males combined. This disturbing fact drives profiling and fear.

The reason that crime among young black males is so intense is the collapse of the traditional black family. Fifty years ago, the out-of-wedlock birth rate among African-Americans was 25 percent. Today, it is nearly 73 percent and growing, according to the Centers for Disease Control. By contrast, 29 percent of white babies and 53 percent of Hispanic children are born out of wedlock.

Single-parent situations drive poverty and often lead to unsupervised kids. Many boys growing up without fathers often feel angry and abandoned. Thus, they seek comfort in all the wrong places.

President Obama and our leaders in Wash-



Bill
O'REILLY

ington surely understand the root of the black crime problem. So do self-appointed civil rights leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton. But they rarely discuss the matter in public. That might anger their constituency and be bad for business.

When was the last time you saw a demonstration discouraging young black girls from getting pregnant outside of marriage? When was the last time the president held a press conference on the issue? When was the last time we saw the federal government put out a public service announcement encouraging children to reject drugs and violence?

Maybe Jay Z could produce a PSA. How about Lil Wayne? Kanye West? These guys make millions rapping about dubious behavior. Sometimes they glamorize it. So why don't they lead the charge to improve things in Chicago's South Side and other places under siege?

There was plenty of outrage in the black precincts regarding the Zimmerman verdict. Understandable. But there is little national anger about thousands of African-Americans being gunned down in the streets by out-of-control young men, the vast majority of them black.

Until the American leadership begins to encourage the return of the traditional black family, the enormous problems of black poverty and crime will continue. And the fear of young black men will continue. And the death of innocents will continue.

Maybe Jay Z can rap about that.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."

Boss Casts Object Of Desire Into Street

BY GINA BARRECA

The Hartford Courant (MCT)

Last week I saw a girl wearing a yellow dress so tight it should have been made out of "caution" tape. I might well have been one of the few middle-age heterosexual women looking at her and thinking "God bless America." The glazed-eyed lingering glances of admiring men indicated that they were also giving thanks but probably for different reasons.

What made me go all patriotic was that this girl could parade her considerable charms on a summer day without being accused of being licentious, dissolute or impure.

There are no governmental rules telling American women to cover ourselves in order to disguise our bodies and there are no actual laws penalizing us for our looks, whether good or bad.

Women wear what we think is appropriate and flattering. Or clean. And even if we're wrong and our outfits are repulsive enough to get a spot on the program "What Not To Wear," we don't fear the Fashion Police because they aren't, well, real. We're not afraid of being arrested for wearing navy-blue pumps with black trousers.

Yet an ongoing story in Iowa concerning a dental hygienist, Melissa Nelson, fired by her boss for being "too attractive" nudges us toward seeing the Fashion — as well as the Vice and Family Values — Police as an actual threatening force.

As reported by the Des Moines Register, dentist James Knight "once told Nelson that if she saw his pants bulging, she would know her clothing was too revealing."

On another occasion, Knight said it was good that Ms. Nelson had not worn both tight pants and a tight shirt because he'd then "get it coming and going."

So right away you know he's a deeply committed married, church-going man who would never compromise either his integrity or professionalism.

Naturally you can picture what kind of flattering, sexy get-up Nelson was flaunting. Was she also wearing a dress made from caution tape?

Turns out she was wearing scrubs. That's right: scrubs. Apparently her middle-age and married dentist-boss — whose wife was also part of his all-female staff, by the way — just went nuts at the sight of Nelson in those poly-

cotton blends.

Maybe it was when Nelson had flecks of periodontal tissue spewed alluringly near her cleavage or when somebody's drool dripped erotically from her exposed wrist Knight realized he just couldn't take it anymore. Perhaps it was hearing her say "Rinse and spit" 15 times a day that drove him over the edge.

Anyhow, he fired her.

On advice from his wife and his pastor, he fired Nelson because he worried that her irresistible charms might force him to commit adultery — as if Nelson had no say in the matter. It was like he was sexually incontinent. He removed the tempting woman from his sight.

Remember, Nelson's skills were never in question. She'd worked there for 10 years. But as an employer, he could fire a woman for sexual encounters that went on entirely in his own mind.

His fantasy life was more important than her professional life.

(To be fair, the case is complicated by the fact that Knight and Nelson had texted each other outside of office hours; the judicial system deemed this "consensual texting" and I guess decided that it placed Nelson into the "she was just asking for it" category.)

The Iowa Supreme Court recently upheld lower court decisions by ruling that Knight did not discriminate against Nelson. Some have applauded the ruling as a vote for "family values" and decried Nelson (who describes herself as a happily married Iowa mom) as one of those viperish women who, like Eve, are the devil's gateway.

Such folks regard women as terribly powerful but not quite fully human: they don't see women as deserving the same rights as men.

Maintaining the right for women to work at the jobs for which we are trained and at which we excel is like maintaining the right to dress as we choose, marry as we desire and be educated as we decide. It will require vigilance and work. And it will require something else as well: more women on the state court judicial benches. If they wear yellow dresses under their black robes, that's entirely up to them.

Gina Barreca is an English professor at the University of Connecticut, a feminist scholar who has written eight books, and a columnist for the Hartford Courant. She can be reached through her website at www.ginabarreca.com.

YOUR LETTERS

Apology Doesn't Cut It

Cynthia Haeflner, Avon

Voice of the Avon Bards

I'm writing in regard to Jeremy Hoeck's story "SCL: A Look Back At A Season-Long 'Road Trip'" (*Press & Dakotan*, July 24).

As a baseball fan, I found it both informative and amusing.

He states, "Our goal was simple: Drive to

every town in the South Central League ... See every team at least once," and, "With apologies to Avon (we) have met our goal."

Excuse me? Met your goal? Sorry, but the apology doesn't quite cut it with me.

Avon has one of the best fields and grandstands in the area, great fans and concessions, and a very competitive team.

Too bad you missed out on an awesome baseball experience.