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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Perhaps U.S. Should Get Angry, Too

As the anti-American protests continue to flare up across the Middle East over a film that insults Islam, perhaps it's time for Americans to get angry, too.

We mean REALLY angry.

In no particular order, here are some reasons why:

- Americans (along with the rest of the planet) must once again witness crowds of angry Muslims — to be sure, we are told by several sources that this is actually a small, agitated minority involved in these actions — take to the streets because their religion was offended.
- To which we can only say, welcome to the real world. Religions get insulted all the time in this day and age. Christianity, for instance, is often mocked and ridiculed, sometimes by Christians themselves. It is a fact of life, unfortunately.
- In fact, America is often berated by some as a supreme evil in the world, which is quite insulting in any terms whatsoever. There are always legitimate differences on policy — there always will be. Nevertheless, we cope with such extreme interpretations and learn to deal with them, mostly by dismissing them for what they are. We don't riot in the streets over it.
- We must also bear witness to the ironic spectacle of apparently religious people spewing out deadly violence and harm in the name of religion. That makes no sense, for it betrays any concept of faith that any religion might possess. Like many other faiths, Islam cherishes peace. These protesters may have missed that part of the sermon.
- As stated above, we are told that it is only a small, militant minority carrying out these protests. So, where is the silent majority in the Mideast who, presumably, understand what's happening and realize what light is being cast on their faith? Such dissension is a constructive and vital part of our democracy, by the way.
- However, we should also be angry with the makers of the film in question. If you've seen the trailer on YouTube, you might have been shocked at just how amateurish this thing is. It's embarrassingly bad, and the notion that anyone could view this piece of garbage as serious cinema is absurd. But the makers of the film probably weren't out to make a cinematic work of art. They were aiming to ignite precisely this kind of response. They knew what they were doing and the chaos it would unleash.
- Protesters and some militant spokesmen claim that America should be held responsible for the making of this movie. In other words, they believe THIS is the kind of cinematic quality we are putting out. That alone is an insult beyond measure.
- Lastly, and by far and away most importantly, we should be enraged that this bizarre outburst of violence was used as a cover to attack a U.S. embassy and kill four members of our diplomatic corps. It is a painful development and a harrowing reminder of just how dangerous the world is, has always been and will probably always remain. And in light of that, the consequences tied to a stupid film that no one should take seriously are appalling. They magnify a madness that betrays faith and betrays human dignity. And that should make all people angry.

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The Price Of Freedom

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Media Services

They are, perhaps, the most dangerous words ever written:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

That, for those who don't know, is the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States.

What makes those words dangerous is that they guarantee a freedom that, in the wrong hands (or even the right hands) can cause upset and outrage, even topple regimes. America confers that kind of power — freedom of expression, unfettered by government — equally to the conscientious and the flighty, the modest and the mighty, the noble and the most vile.

We've been arguing about it ever since, from the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which restricted criticism of the government, to Snyder v. Phelps in 2011, a Supreme Court ruling upholding the right of a hateful Kansas cult to picket military funerals. We are not ourselves at peace with those words. So it is no surprise foreigners have difficulty with them.

As Islamic extremists continue a campaign of anti-American violence over "Innocence of Muslims," a risibly wretched piece of Islamophobic propaganda, it is apparently an article of faith for many in that world that the film represents a U.S. government attack upon Islam. CNN's Fareed Zakaria says they have "a lack of ... understanding of freedom of speech and opinion."

That's putting it mildly. And that ignorance has become a potentially deadly flashpoint in recent years. It used to be that only a few high-profile, theoretically responsible, individuals had access to the world stage and the ability to affect world events. But with the advent of YouTube, Google, Facebook and Twitter, it is now conceivable some shlub in Fort Lauderdale could start a riot in Mogadishu. So the most dangerous words ever written have become more dangerous still.

Small wonder, then, that radio host Tom Joyner re-

cently called on Google to block the offending video from its search engine, which Google has refused to do, though it has blocked the video in Egypt, Libya, India and Indonesia. At the other end of the spectrum, Newt Gingrich told CNN last week that the U.S. should use this episode to "teach the Muslim world about freedom" — free speech in particular.



Leonard PITTS

He's right. Even if it were possible to put the toothpaste back in the tube as Joyner demands, one has to ask: what next? If extremists on the far side of the world learn the lesson that we will abandon a core principle because they throw tantrums or even commit murder, what does that tell them about us? What might we next be bullied into doing?

There is nothing congenitally "Muslim" about the way some in the Middle East and Africa are responding to this film's insult of their religion. If there were, Muslims would be rioting in Cleveland and Detroit as well.

They are not, because Muslim-Americans, like other Americans, know there is a reason you embrace those dangerous

words. Namely, that though they give license to outrage, offense and obscenity, they also give license to that which enlightens, ennobles and uplifts. They liberate the worst in us, but also the best, a tradeoff Americans have always found worthwhile. We are now tasked with explaining that to parts of the world where the outrageous can't be said aloud and conformity is required by law.

That will not be easy, especially when Americans have been killed, and standing up for this principle requires you to stand behind a greasy little morsel like "Innocence of Muslims." Worse, we must make that case to those who have no framework to even understand what free expression is. But we have no choice. That is what this moment demands.

It is the price we pay for believing in dangerous words.

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Demographic Doom For The GOP?

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

Unemployment is still above 8 percent, job gains aren't even keeping up with population growth, the economy is barely moving forward. And yet, according to most polls, the Romney-Ryan ticket is falling further and further behind. How can this be?

Because Republicans are failing the central test of electability. Instead of putting together the largest possible coalition of voters, they're relying largely on one slice of America — middle-aged white men — and alienating just about everyone else.

Start with Hispanics, whose electoral heft keeps growing as they become an ever-larger portion of the electorate. Hispanics now favor President Obama over Romney by a larger margin than they did six months ago.

Why? In February's Republican primary debate, Romney dubbed Arizona's controversial immigration policy, which authorized police to demand proof of citizenship from anyone who looks Hispanic, a "model law" for the rest of the nation.

Romney then attacked GOP rival Rick Perry, the governor of Texas, for supporting in-state tuition at the University of Texas for children of undocumented immigrants. And Romney advocates what he calls "self-deportation" — making life so difficult for undocumented immigrants and their families that they choose to leave.

As if all this weren't enough, the GOP has been pushing voter ID laws all over America, whose obvious aim is to intimidate Hispanic voters so they won't come to the polls. But they may be having the opposite effect — emboldening the vast majority of ethnic Hispanics, who are American citizens, to vote in even greater numbers and lend even more support to Obama and other Democrats.

Or consider women, whose political and economic impact in America continues to grow. (Women are fast becoming better educated than men and the major breadwinners in American homes.) According to polls, the political gender gap is widening.

Why? It's not just GOP senatorial candidate Todd Akin's call to ban all abortions even in the case of "legitimate rape" (because he believes women's bodies somehow reject violent sperm). The GOP platform itself seeks to bar all abortions, with no exception for rape or incest. And on several occasions Paul Ryan has voted in favor

of exactly such legislation.

Meanwhile, Republican legislators in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Idaho and Alabama have pushed bills requiring women seeking abortions to undergo invasive vaginal ultrasound tests. All told, more than 400 Republican bills that attack women's reproductive rights are pending in state legislatures.

Republicans have repeatedly voted against legislation giving women equal pay for the same work as men. Republicans in Wisconsin have even repealed a law designed to prevent employers from discriminating against women.

Or consider students, a significant and growing electoral force, who voted overwhelmingly for Obama in 2008. What are Republicans doing to woo them back?

Paul Ryan's budget plan — approved by almost every House Republican and enthusiastically endorsed by Mitt Romney — would have allowed rates on student loans to double, adding an average of \$1,000 a year to student debt loads. (Under mounting political pressure, House Republicans came up with just enough money to keep the loan program going safely past Election Day by raiding a fund established for preventive care in the new health-care act.)

Now Romney wants to hand the federal student loan program over to the banks, which will charge even more. Earlier this year he argued that subsidized student loans were bad because they encouraged colleges to raise tuition, and suggested students ask their family for money.

Republicans have even managed to antagonize seniors by seeking to turn Medicare into vouchers whose value won't keep up with rising health-care costs, and seeking to cut \$800 billion out of Medicaid (which many seniors rely on for nursing home care).

And, of course, they've come out against equal marriage rights for gay couples.

Romney, Ryan and the GOP don't seem to know how to satisfy their middle-aged white male base without at the same time turning off everyone who's not white, male, straight or middle-aged. Unfortunately for Romney and Ryan, the people they're turning off are the majority.

Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is the author of "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf release now out in paperback.

America, we need to educate ourselves. Note, the total debt under President Bush in 8 years, was about \$4.8 trillion, a very large sum. The total debt under President Obama in 3 years and 7 months is about \$5.4 trillion and still counting (\$16 trillion plus). These are U.S. government figures.

OUR LETTER POLICY

The PRESS & DAKOTAN encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

- Please limit letters to 300 words or less. (During political campaigns, letters related to the campaign may be limited to 150 words.) Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.
- In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the PRESS & DAKOTAN will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.
- Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.
- Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters, 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD 57078, drop off at 319 Walnut in Yankton, fax to 665-1721 or email to views@yankton.net.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Wednesday, Sept. 19, the 263rd day of 2012. There are 103 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Sept. 19, 1982, the smiley emoticon was invented as Carnegie Mellon University professor Scott E. Fahlman proposed punctuating humorously intended computer messages by employing a colon followed by a hyphen and a parenthesis as a horizontal "smiley face." :-)

On this date: In 1777, the first Battle of Saratoga was fought during the Revolutionary War; although the British forces succeeded in driving out the American troops, the Americans prevailed in a second battle the following month.

In 1976, President George Washington's farewell address was published.

In 1881, the 20th president of the United States, James A. Garfield, died 2 1/2 months after being shot by Charles Guiteau; Chester Alan Arthur became president.

In 1934, Bruno Hauptmann was arrested in New York and charged with the kidnap-murder of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr. In 1945, Nazi radio propagandist William Joyce, known as "Lord Haw-Haw," was convicted of treason and sentenced to death by a British court.

In 1957, the United States conducted its first contained underground nuclear test, code-named "Rainier," in the Nevada desert.

In 1959, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, visiting Los Angeles, reacted angrily upon being told that, for security reasons, he wouldn't get to visit Disneyland.

In 1960, Cuban leader Fidel Castro, in New York to visit the United Nations, angrily checked out of the Shelburne Hotel in a dispute with the management; Castro ended up staying at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem.

In 1961, Barney and Betty Hill, a New Hampshire couple driving home from vacation, experienced what they later claimed under hypnosis was a short-term abduction by extraterrestrials.

In 1962, the Western TV series "The Virginian" debuted on NBC.

In 1970, the situation comedy "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" debuted on CBS-TV.

In 1985, the Mexico City area was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed at least 9,500 people.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush asked Congress for authority to "use all means," including military force if necessary, to disarm and overthrow Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein if he did not quickly meet United Nations demands to abandon all weapons of mass destruction.

A Palestinian suicide bomber blew himself up on a Tel Aviv bus, killing five victims.

Five years ago: The Senate blocked legislation that would have regulated the amount of time troops spent in combat, a blow for Democrats struggling to challenge President George W. Bush's Iraq policies. A powerful bomb killed anti-Syria lawmaker Antoine Ghanem and six others in Beirut, Lebanon.

One year ago: In a White House address, a combative President Barack Obama demanded that the richest Americans pay higher taxes to help cut soaring U.S. deficits by more than \$3 trillion. Mariano Rivera set a major league record with his 602nd save, closing out the New York Yankees' 6-4 win over the Minnesota Twins. Dolores Hope, the sultry-voiced songstress who was married to Bob Hope for 69 years and sometimes sang on his shows for U.S. troops and on his television specials, died in Los Angeles at age 102.

Today's Birthdays: Author Roger Angell is 92. TV host James Lipton ("Inside the Actors Studio") is 86. Actress Rosemary Harris is 85. Former Defense Secretary Harold Brown is 85. Actor Adam West is 82. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Bob Turley is 82. Actor David McCallum (TV: "NCIS") is 79. Singer-songwriter Paul Williams is 72. Singer Bill Medley is 72. Singer Sylvia Tyson (Ilan and Sylvia) is 72. Singer Freda Payne is 70. Golfer Jane Blalock is 67. Singer David Bromberg is 67. Actor Randolph Mantooth is 67. Rock singer-musician Lol Creme (10cc) is 65. Former NFL running back Larry Brown is 65. Actor Jeremy Irons is 64. Actress Twiggy Lawson is 63. TV personality Joan Lunden is 62. Singer-producer Daniel Lanois is 61. Actor Scott Colomby is 60. Musician-producer Nile Rodgers is 60. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL player Reggie Williams is 58. Singer-actor Rex Smith is 57. Actor Kevin Hooks is 54. Actress Carolyn McCormick is 53. Country singer Jeff Bates is 49. Country singer Trisha Yearwood is 48. Actress-comedian Cheri Oteri is 47. News anchor Soledad O'Brien is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Espranza Griffin is 43. Actress Sanaa Lathan is 41. Actress Stephanie J. Block is 40. Rock singer A. Jay Popoff (Lit) is 39. Comedian and TV talk show host Jimmy Fallon is 38. TV personality Carter Oosterhouse is 36. Actress-TV host Alison Sweeney is 36. Rock musician Ryan Dusick is 35. Folk-rock singers-musicians Sara and Tegan Quin are 32. Actor Columbus Short is 30. Rapper Eamon is 29. Christian rock musician JD Frazier is 29. Actor Kevin Zegers is 28. Actress Danielle Panabaker is 25.

Thought for Today: "Start every day off with a smile and get it over with." — W.C. Fields, American comedian (1880-1946).

FROM THE BIBLE

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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YOUR LETTERS

Educate Yourselves

Brad Butzlaff, Yankton

This is an open letter to all voters, Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, Independent, etc.: To get the actual facts, regarding this election, I suggest all voters watch the movie "2016: Obama's America," currently playing at the Yankton movie theater and read the following books written by President Obama: "The Au-