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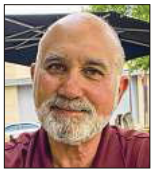
TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

It is time for Ohio to repeal the death penalty

By David Sablosky

“The criminal justice system does not always get it right. I think that’s the starting point here.”

This quote was from Ohio Supreme Court Justice Maureen O’Connor, a former county prosecutor, in an April article by Laura A. Bischoff. While the article addressed the need for a greater post-conviction review, there can be no stronger statement supporting the



Sablosky

death penalty repeal. If the state cannot always get it right, then the death penalty must be repealed.

There is a growing movement for death penalty repeal in Ohio. Bob Taft, Lee Fisher, and Jim Petro, a former Ohio governor, and two former Ohio district attorneys, have joined together to support repeal, stating in an editorial dated March 9, 2021, that when they re-introduced the death penalty in 1981 after it was declared unconstitutional, “We had the best of intentions, but in this case, we built it, and the expected benefits did not come. Instead, we have a broken and incred-

ibly costly system that fails to protect or aid us in any way. It is time to retire Ohio’s death penalty.”

A poll conducted last fall by the Tarrance Group found that 59% of Ohio voters support replacing the death penalty with life in prison without the possibility of parole.

In both acknowledgments of the will of Ohio’s voters and a broken death penalty system, Ohio’s legislature is addressing repeal. Senate Bill 103 has primary co-sponsors Nickie J. Antonio (D-District 23) and Stephen A. Huffman (R-District 5); House Bill 183 has primary co-sponsors Jean Schmidt (R-District 65)

and Adam C. Miller (D-District 17). Both bills have received sponsorship testimony and would replace the death penalty with life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Speakers at the May 26 virtual event “Innocence and the Push for Abolishing Ohio’s Death Penalty” included Ohio death row exoneree Derrick Jamison, Senator Cecil Thomas (D-District 9 and an SB 103 co-sponsor), and Schmidt. This event was sponsored by the Ohioans to Stop Executions (OTSE), ACLU, and the Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center (IJPC).

Jamison is a Cincinnati native who spent 20 years

on Ohio’s death row for a crime he did not commit. He is the national exonerated death row survivor No. 119. “No one should have the right to say who shall live and who shall die in America,” Jamison said.

To those who profess to be pro-life, how can we justify ending a life no matter the reason? Keeping the death penalty can lead to false confessions, as in the case of the West Memphis Three.

The death penalty is expensive, costing \$16 million dollars per prosecution. The death penalty harms the economically disadvantaged disproportionately. Public defenders

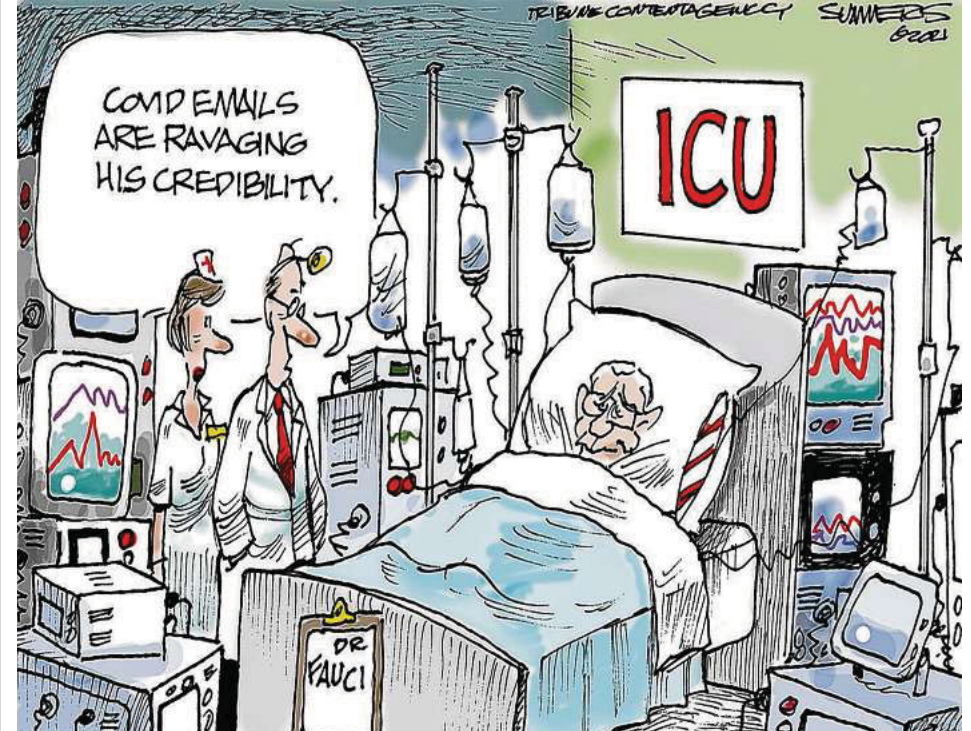
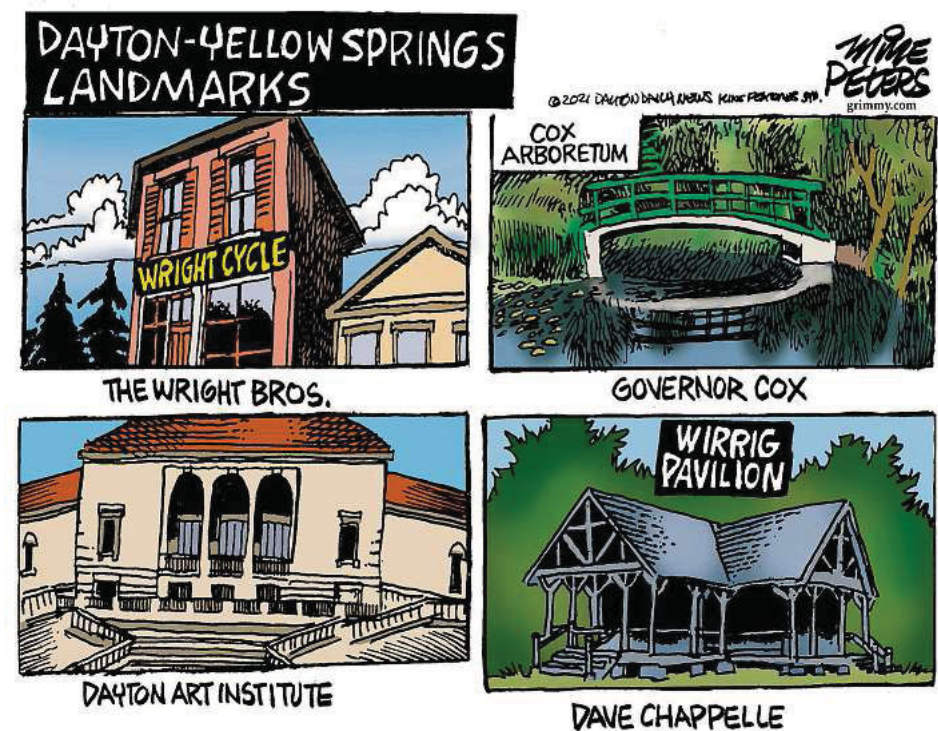
do not have the same financial resources as prosecutors have. Indigent defendants are more likely to end up on death row than people with money. And if we can’t always get it right, then we should never execute. Institutional confinement for the rest of life is a just punishment.

Death penalty repeal is non-partisan because it is beyond a partisan issue. It is a moral issue and supported throughout Ohio. It is time for the death penalty to end in Ohio.

David Sablosky, a Fairfield Twp. resident, works at the grassroots level to end Ohio’s death penalty.

FROM THE LEFT MIKE PETERS

FROM THE RIGHT DANA SUMMERS



BALANCED VIEWS

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FROM THE LEFT

Osaka raises issues with athletes and mental health



Mary Sanchez

On the court, Naomi Osaka can still physically pound her opponents to a pulp. She’s the same incredible athlete. Nothing has changed – except for a very public admittance of details about her mental health after she chose to withdraw from the French Open last week.

Yet in the span of mere days, the highest-paid female athlete and the No. 2 ranked women’s tennis player in the world went from being widely portrayed as a powerful businesswoman and a savvy steward of social justice worthy of magazine covers to someone who needs to be handled with kid gloves.

This response is telling. How this plays out in the tennis community and the wider world of sports in the coming months will tell volumes about society’s, let alone the world of competitive sports’, understanding of mental health.

Even though they might say the right things in a situation like this, many in the sports world – writers, fans and tournament directors alike – don’t fully accept that mental health is intertwined with physical health.

In Osaka’s case, the change in discourse about her was traceable in real-time. Commentators who initially heaped on criticism changed their tune as

they determined what was the most socially acceptable reply. That process wouldn’t be necessary if people were grounded in science and removed from the antiquated inclination that issues like anxiety and depression are just mental weakness.

After Osaka, 23, announced that she would be declining requests to appear before the press after matches, a contractual obligation, tennis legend Martina Navratilova commented on TV that Osaka needed to just “man up” and “deal with it.”

But by the next day, Navratilova was on board with a more conciliatory statement, tweeting, “I am so sad about Naomi Osaka. I truly hope that she will be OK. As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental & emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a press conference. Good luck Naomi—we are pulling for you!”

Their intentions were likely genuine. Yet missed is the crucial detail that the four-time Grand Slam winner would likely still be in the tournament if the governing powers had allowed her to do what she said was best for her mental health and sidestep the post-match press conferences.

Though she was fined \$15,000 and threatened with suspension from future games, Osaka ultimately withdrew when her request became its own sideshow. She had wanted the fines that she knew would come to be sent to a

mental health charity. Before Paris, Osaka had been the “it” girl of her sport for both her on-court achievements as well as her philanthropy and activism.

She aligned her brand with the Black Lives Matter mantra to “say their names” by putting George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and Tamir Rice on the masks she wore at the U.S. Open. Last summer, she joined other pro sports boycotts over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, skipping her semifinal match at the Western & Southern Open in Mason.

She has acknowledged her own mistakes in how the situation at the French Open was handled. In doing so, she has kept to her brand: respectful, humble but steadfast in taking a stand.

Though Osaka announced she is taking some time away from the court, her involvement in conversations about sports and mental health is likely only beginning. But these conversations will take place if and only if the world of tennis, of sports reporting, of women’s sports and its fans are willing to listen to and believe athletes.

Mary Sanchez writes for The Kansas City Star.

FROM THE RIGHT

Destroying Black babies and families with federal dollars



Star Parker

If there is one reason why problems associated with race in America persist, it is because we pretend to address problems caused by one sin by exchanging them with other sins.

President Joe Biden has issued a proclamation recognizing 100 years since the race massacre that occurred in the Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921.

Greenwood was a wealthy Black neighborhood, a center of Black business, known as Black Wall Street, that was ravaged in two days of rioting by white racists. It resulted in the death of hundreds and the loss of property of thousands.

It is indeed another tragic and painful memory of race relations in our nation’s history. The proclamation issued by President Biden states, “The Federal Government must reckon with and acknowledge the role that it has played in stripping wealth and opportunity from black communities.”

I totally agree. What offends me is that Biden’s

administration enthusiastically continues federal policies that damage Black communities, while it pretends it is addressing the problems.

As a starter, let us consider that at the same time the president issued this proclamation, he sent an unprecedented \$6 trillion budget to Congress that, for the first time ever, omits the long-standing Hyde Amendment.

The Hyde Amendment, passed in 1976, prohibits use of federal funds to pay for abortion, except in cases of rape or incest or when the mother’s life is in danger.

Every budget since the Hyde Amendment was passed has included a rider with this provision – except this year’s, thanks to President Biden and his party. So, while Biden issued one proclamation recalling the tragedy of a massacre of Black Americans, he now wants new policy that would use federal funds to subsidize another massacre. Abortion policy in our nation amounts to nothing short of a massacre and tragedy for Black Americans, born and unborn.

According to National Right to Life, 62.5 million unborn children have been destroyed in the womb since Roe v. Wade legalized abortion on demand in 1973. Per the most recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about one-third of all abortions are done on Black babies. Given this, we can estimate that since 1973, some 21 million Black babies have been destroyed in the womb.

Despite the words in the president’s new proclamation indicting the government in causing damage in

Black communities, this is exactly what he wants now: to bring the government in to fund the abortion massacre. But the damage done by abortion to Black Americans goes beyond this massacre of unborn Black children. It has tangible, damaging effects on the well-being of the Black family.

Why do poverty rates persist so much higher, on average, in Black communities compared with national averages? Data shows a compelling correlation between family structure and incidence of poverty.

In the Census Bureau’s “Income and Poverty in the United States: 2019” report and per Statista, the incidence of living under poverty is more than four times higher for Black families headed by a single woman than for Black families headed by a married couple. And 41% of Black families are headed by a single woman.

Per data from Pew Research Center, in 1970, three years before the Roe v. Wade decision, around 10% of Black adults over 25 had never been married. By 2012, this had more than tripled, to 36%. Abortion undermines the values of the traditional family.

The persistence of problems in Black communities stems from policies that pretend to fight the sin of racism with the sins of the destruction of life and family.

Now President Biden not only wants to continue this destruction; he wants to use our tax dollars to subsidize it.

Star Parker is president of the Center for Urban Renewal and Education.

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