

INSIGHT



EDITORIAL FELLOW | DAVID CHUNG

Supreme Court bans racial bias in college admissions

I am a minority and I have waited 45 years for this decision.

I am an Iowan and, in the summer of 1978, I was doing what thousands of other high school students were doing — I was working on a farm detasseling or walking beans. This was before cellphones or iPods or even the Sony Walkman. No one had Beats headphones or earbuds. I had a transistor radio on a rope slung over my shoulder. Of course, I was listening to music. It was after all the best era for popular music, but the real reason I carried that radio was to listen to the news. I was waiting for the Supreme Court to rule in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*.

Bakke was the case that introduced the phrase “reverse discrimination” to the American lexicon. Of course, what we called reverse discrimination today is called “affirmative action.”

At issue in *Bakke* was whether the admissions policies of the University of California Davis School of Medicine discriminated against white applicants in violation of the U.S. Constitution. At the time, the medical school admitted 100 new students each year. Of those, 16 seats were reserved for minority applicants. Of course, minority applicants could fill any of the 100 seats and were not limited to the 16 minority seats.

Allan Bakke was a white engineer and former Marine officer. He had applied to the school twice and been denied admission twice. While Bakke was not one of the top applicants, he argued that based on the school’s criteria, including GPA and test scores, were it not for the 16-seat minority “set aside” he would have been admitted.

The court ruled 5-4 in Bakke’s favor, and he was admitted. The court did not reject race outright as a factor in admissions but ruled that the strict quota used by the school was unconstitutional.

Though it sounds strange, this brown high school student, preparing for college admission himself, celebrated that decision in the middle of an Iowa farm field.

In my opinion, Bakke was a victory, but only a partial victory. The court still allowed race to be considered in admissions, but not in the form of strict quotas.

In 2003 the court affirmed *Bakke*, ruling in *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* that race could still be a factor in college

admissions.

Two weeks ago, the U.S. Supreme Court finally completed the work begun in *Bakke* and banned racial discrimination in college admissions. In a momentous session, the Supreme Court found in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina* that using race as a factor in college admissions violates the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and more importantly the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

In an intriguing role reversal, *Students for Fair Admissions* argued that minority students (particularly Asian Americans) were victims of discrimination in the race-based admissions policies of these elite schools. The plaintiffs pointed out that while the number of Asian American applicants to Harvard had been increasing, the percentage of Asian American students admitted had not.

Harvard has a complex admissions process that weighs both objective criteria such as grades and test scores, as well as subjective aspects related to personality. The plaintiffs contended that Asian American applicants as a group outscored all others in objective criteria but were rated consistently lower in subjective traits. At the same time, African American applicants scored the lowest in objective criteria but highest in subjective traits.

Applicants tend to highlight their most favorable qualities. However, the admission policies at Harvard led to Asian American students minimizing their Asian identity, such as opting to accentuate athletic accomplishments rather than showcasing musical talents like violin proficiency.

The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 for the plaintiffs in North Carolina and 6-2 in Harvard (with Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson recusing herself from Harvard). In writing for the majority, Chief Justice John Roberts invoked Justice Lewis Powell’s majority opinion in *Bakke*, writing:

“... the guarantee of equal protection cannot mean one thing when applied to one individual and something else when applied to a person of another color. If both are not accorded the same protection, then it is not equal.”

I was a minority student getting ready to apply for college myself in 1978, and in that Iowa farm field I cheered when the *Bakke* decision

was announced. Forty-five years later, as a minority college graduate, I cheered again when the Supreme Court ruled in Harvard.

You may ask how I as a minority could support these court decisions. I understand that systemic or institutional racism remains a critical issue in our country. It is also racist to stereotype every person of color as disadvantaged. I am a multiracial brown man. My father was an African, Jamaican, Chinese immigrant with a green card. My mother was from Guam. But every person’s story is unique. My father was from a poor family, but he came to the U.S. on an academic scholarship after winning an islandwide competition. My mother also came to the states to study. My father became a professor at UNI and my mother was a teacher. Both had advanced degrees, and I grew up in a home full of books. My parents were not wealthy, but I grew up in a middle-class neighborhood, and many of my classmates came from similar backgrounds.

Critics might say that I can oppose race-based affirmative action because of “my privilege.” That is precisely the point! I did not need or deserve preference in admission based on my race.

To make race itself a deciding factor in college admissions only makes things worse. In *Bakke*, the admissions policies of the UC Davis Medical school discriminated against white students. In Harvard, the university’s admission policies discriminated against Asian American students.

Significantly, the court permitted institutions to consider the impact of race on the life experiences of applicants. This moves away from the assumption that every minority applicant should be given automatic preference, enabling schools to take into account actual hardships faced because of race.

I like the words of Justice Clarence Thomas in his concurrence:

“While I am painfully aware of the social and economic ravages which have befallen my race and all who suffer discrimination, I hold out enduring hope that this country will live up to its principles so clearly enunciated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States: that all men are created equal, are equal citizens, and must be treated equally before the law.”

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EDITORIAL FELLOW
SOFIA DEMARTINO

Aging while LGBTQ

Few Iowa programs address the needs of older LGBTQ adults

In the wake of a nightmarish legislative session for LGBTQ Iowans, a defiant Pride month has come and gone. Throngs of people gathered to celebrate in communities across the state from early morning until the sun faded into darkness, and buildings awash in rainbow hues stretched themselves into the night sky. Perhaps the best description of Pride month I have heard came from Jasper Bowles, director of the Mayor’s Office of LGBTQ Affairs in Washington, D.C.: “I mean, Pride started as a protest. Now it’s a party — and a party that serves as a placeholder in case it ever needs to be a protest again.”

Much of the focus of late has been on youth: where they go to the bathroom at school, whether they should be extended the common decency of gender-affirming chosen names and pronouns, whether they should be allowed to choose the time, place and manner they come out to their parents, whether they should hear the word “gay.” In fact, so much of the anti-LGBTQ legislative hysteria has been related to children (who may or may not be LGBTQ themselves) that it almost seems other demographics have been forgotten.

For many LGBTQ older adults, being open about topics like gender identity or sexual orientation was a dangerous endeavor for much of their lives. According to the American Psychological Association, they often “experience unique economic and health disparities. LGBTQ older adults may disproportionately be affected by poverty and physical and mental health conditions due to a lifetime of unique stressors associated with being a minority, and may be more vulnerable to neglect and mistreatment in aging care facilities. They may face dual discrimination due to their age and their sexual orientation or gender identity. Generational differences and lack of legal protection may cause older LGBTQ adults to be less open about their sexuality. Social isolation is also a concern because LGBTQ older adults are more likely to live alone, more likely to be single and less likely to have children than their heterosexual counterparts. All of these considerations can be compounded by intersections of sex, race, ethnicity and disability.”

A few programs in Iowa work to address the specific needs of LGBTQ older adults. In Iowa City, the Senior Center hosts a Queer Elders group that meets twice each month to come together, share stories and find community. One Iowa, a nonprofit based in Des Moines, hosts an annual LGBTQ Older Adults Conference where leaders in social services, medicine and advocacy assemble to conceive solutions to the unique challenges of aging while queer. A shortlist of additional local resources for health care and socialization can be found on One Iowa’s website, followed by a longer and more targeted list of national service providers.

A search of the Iowa Department on Aging website turned up only two results for LGBTQ; both of the links led only to the same external national resource SAGE. There are no references to LGBTQ resources, initiatives, projects or legislation within the state of Iowa evident on the Iowa Department of Aging page.

We may take some inspiration for additional measures from other communities. In 2022, Washington, D.C., instituted the HOPE (Housing Older People Efficiently) LGBTQ housing voucher. New York’s governor signed a bill into law in October that offers expanded access to social services by clarifying the state’s interpretation of the Older Americans Act — essentially adding LGBTQ status as a priority consideration for identifying those “most in need” for services like Meals on Wheels or in-home caregiver support. Illinois passed legislation in 2018 requiring service providers to receive training in issues specific to LGBTQ older adults and requiring that consideration of their needs and experiences be incorporated throughout Department on Aging programming and policymaking.

We have the capacity to uphold the civil rights of LGBTQ Iowans, and we have done so as a state before. In 2009, Iowa shocked the nation by becoming the third state to legalize same-sex marriage. The backlash that followed saw three Iowa justices who decided the case in favor of legalization ousted. There have been legal victories for LGBTQ Iowans over gender-affirming medical care, over including the name of a same-sex parent on a child’s birth certificate, over employment discrimination and more. After several years of oppressive policy stripping civil rights and dignity from LGBTQ Iowans, it might just be time to turn this party back into a protest.

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GUEST COLUMN | IOWANS FOR HEALTH LIBERTY

Abortion restrictions jeopardize the health of women in Iowa

‘Advocating for women before, during and after pregnancy by promoting their reproductive choices.’ This is the answer many OB-GYN physicians give when asked why they chose OB-GYN as their medical specialty. Unfortunately, the priorities of the governor and Republicans in the Iowa Legislature are at odds with the values that physicians practice every day. We strive to care for and advocate for the women of Iowa to maintain autonomy over decisions about their health.

In residency training we learned that most pregnant women have healthy pregnancies with a good outcome. We also learned that not every pregnancy is planned, normal or turns out well. We were taught to recognize maternal warning signs and intervene early to prioritize the mother’s health. Women may have complex heart, lung or kidney disease that makes a pregnancy more complicated or, in severe situations, not recommended at all. Complications can arise in pregnancy, even in the healthiest women, which

can threaten their life and health. Examples include “breaking their water” or premature rupture of membranes before viability and developing an infection in the uterus or hemorrhage from placenta complications. Abortion is recommended in these scenarios and others to prevent the women from developing complications that could result in organ failure and death if not treated early. Any of the medical or pregnancy scenarios where abortion is recommended are rare, but they happen to women in Iowa every day.

These discussions are difficult for the patient, her support people and the medical team caring for her. Each scenario is unique and nuanced, requiring skill, empathy and advocacy. Some women will choose to continue complicated pregnancies even though it may threaten their health and life. Other women will choose abortion based on their personal values about their life and health. There is no room for politicians or the government in any of these discussions.

Republicans in Iowa are striving to deny women

the right to bodily autonomy in health care decisions, under the guise of compromise and exceptions. Abortion restrictions jeopardize the health of women. After extreme abortion laws were passed in Texas, women at two Texas hospitals who were less than 22 weeks gestation with a medically complicated pregnancy had worse outcomes. Delay of definitive care was associated with a higher risk of developing intrauterine infection, hemorrhage, intensive care unit admission, and dilation and curettage procedures.

In Ireland in 2012, a 31-year-old dentist, Dr. Savita Halappanavar, pregnant at 17 weeks, came to the hospital because she was miscarrying with her bag of water coming through her dilated cervix. Since the fetus had cardiac activity, she was told an abortion could not be performed because it was illegal in Ireland. Over the next three days, she developed sepsis and labor, delivering the fetus who had died. She died after delivering her fetus due to multiple organ failure from sepsis because of intrauterine infection. Dr. Halappanavar’s death resulted in the abolishment of restrictive abortion laws in Ireland.

It is not hyperbole to say these terrible outcomes could happen in Iowa if more restrictive abortion legislation becomes law.

We should not have to wait until a woman dies to reverse the course in Iowa. Yes, the Republicans will say that legislation will have some exceptions, but those will not account for all the scenarios we see beyond six weeks of gestation and will have language meant to intimidate patients and health care providers. We ask the citizens of Iowa to make their opinions known about abortion availability for the women in our state by contacting their senators and representatives. We want every woman to have a healthy pregnancy and maintain her health in the long term. As physicians we want to provide every woman with every option so that she can make the best decision for herself, her health and her pregnancy.

Iowans for Health Liberty: Emily Boevers MD, Andrea Greiner MD, Jami Maxson MD, Jill Meadows MD, Francesca Turner MD.

INSIGHT

EDITORIAL FELLOW
SOFIA DEMARTINO

Resilience, connection

Why do some people thrive after events that bring lifelong hardship to others?

To some extent, it's about perspective. It can be easier to manage a narrow window of existence: your office, your corner grocery, your sister on the other side of town. It's not exactly comfortable all the time, but it's what you are accustomed to. Eventually even the parts of your day-to-day existence that are painful, the parts that are dangerous become more palatable than fear of the unknown. That's how you get stuck — mired in a combination of complacency and discontent. It's the kind of trap that gnaws you to the bone, and the longer you stay, the more difficult it becomes to envision anything else. The idea of making big change, even change for the better, can be especially paralyzing if you have experienced abuse.

Recently I sat on the rooftop of a villa in Phuket with a childhood friend for the occasion of a milestone birthday. The scene was serene: lush, tree-covered mountains rolled into the sea. This backdrop and our faces were illuminated with ambient city light from below and a billion stars piercing the black sky above. She paused and laughed softly in the middle of a reminiscent musing. "How did we get here?"

My friend and I had the kind of trauma that doesn't usually lend itself to a life of island getaways — statistically, we are outliers. Black swans.

What factors play a role in the long-term outcomes of those who experience trauma? Why do some people seem to thrive after events that bring lifelong chaos and hardship to others?

Sheldon Cohen describes resilience as "a social network's provision of psychological and material resources intended to benefit an individual's capacity to cope with stress." This would certainly align with both her experience and mine, although the network at play for both of us hinged on interaction with social service organizations. I have spent a great deal of time within the space of these columns extolling the virtues of the social services network as critical for community cohesiveness, sustainability, safety, public health and civic engagement.

Conversely, isolation and loneliness have adverse effects on those who have experienced trauma. The "rat paradise" study undertaken at University of Texas at Austin demonstrated that rats who were socially isolated were more vulnerable to substance abuse than those who were granted access to socialization. Brigham Young University research identified the impact of isolation and loneliness on health outcomes as equivalent to the health outcomes of smoking a pack of cigarettes per day. How we interact

For many people, achieving whole personhood is work that continues for the entirety of their lives.

with people matters — especially those who have already experienced hardship.

Unfortunately, for much of history the typical course of action in dealing with people who had symptoms related to trauma was banishment. Workhouses, poor farms, abusive orphanages, incarceration facilities, asylums and more were essentially warehouses where people could be kept out of sight and out of mind. Further, many of the challenges that led to people being relegated to institutions were directly associated with poverty. Clearly, there have been great strides made in how we address some of these issues today, but there still are many areas of opportunity to change the way we ostracize people — particularly when it relates to substance abuse disorder and policies that disproportionately impact those in poverty (like cash bail).

The key is connection. Having someone to turn to in times of hardship, doubt, insecurity, emergency. Someone able to connect you to opportunities for upward mobility; someone to say your name in the right room at the right time. It is mentorship and education, it is breaking bread and breaking the ice.

I believe it also is critical to be forthright about a common misconception associated with resilience, and that is the idea that someone who has achieved visible status, or financial stability, or has the public visage of what society would consider success after trauma no longer experience any negative effects of what they have survived.

That is simply not the case. For many people, achieving whole personhood is work that continues for the entirety of their lives. To go through difficult emotions, to lean on the support of others, to do the ongoing work of exposing and healing the parts of yourself that have been wounded, and to live with the invisible outcomes are all completely normal and valid experiences. To believe otherwise only lends itself to impostor syndrome.

It's about perspective. The way you view yourself and the way you view others can change immensely based on your vantage point. If it's time to make a terrifying change that will alter your path for the better, make today the day.

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Tim O'Connell, of Zwingle, Iowa, rides You See Me during bareback rodeo action last July at the Calgary Stampede in Calgary, Alberta. (Canadian Press via AP)

GUEST COLUMN | DEBORAH GALLAGHER

Rodeos can have harmful effects on kids

I recently became aware that a rodeo event billed as the Battle by the River (Wild Horse Productions, LLC/Sandburr Rodeo Productions Inc.) is scheduled to appear Jan. 13 and 14 at the Xtream Arena in Coralville. The rodeo is portrayed as a family- and kid-friendly event, with Saturday designated as "Kids' Day," which features a preshow expressly for kids.

As a career educator, I want to convey my deep objection to the city of Coralville's support of this rodeo. While many people oppose the animal cruelty endemic to rodeos (and I am one of those people), I want to add a concern that is not often considered, namely rodeo's negative effect on the emotional and moral development of children and young people.

Rodeos are not, as they are widely viewed, a form of "good, clean fun." To the contrary, they are inherently cruel, primitive and violent events. In the case of

calf roping, the animals are jabbed with electric prods and tormented into a frenzy of panic in the holding chutes and then roped at top speeds. Many are injured, maimed and even killed, especially in practice routines that take place before the public event. Bull riding events are no less brutal. The Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association's website reports that, "[I]n order to enhance the bull's performance, cattle prods are often used repeatedly to shock the bulls as they stand trapped in the bucking chute. Bucking straps and spurs can cause the bull to buck beyond his normal capacity and his legs or back may thus be broken."

At these events, children are essentially being taught that animals don't have feelings, or that even if they do it doesn't matter. Treating them in ways that control, distress or even harm them is not only perfectly acceptable but fun. And it is not only acceptable, but

applauded by adults.

But children are more perceptive than adults often give them credit for being. Simultaneously, it does not escape their perception that rodeo animals are frightened, stressed and in pain. It also does not escape their notice that these dominated animals are being used in ways that render them powerless for the purpose of "entertainment." A large body of conclusive research confirms that when children participate in or watch adult-sanctioned cruelty to animals, an automatic process of desensitization occurs to protect them from the trauma of what they are witnessing. The ultimate effect is that children's emotional and moral development is blunted by repressing what would otherwise be a naturally evolving sense of empathy, compassion and caring for others. This developmental impairment is why, since the 1970s, the Humane Society of the United States has expressed

serious concerns about the psychologically damaging effect of rodeos on children. Likewise, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has issued a policy statement opposing children's rodeo events for this reason.

Studies have also consistently demonstrated that children and young people learn cruel and callous behavior from those around them, and that witnessing and participating in animal abuse often precedes cruel, callous and even violent behavior toward their fellow humans. It is therefore not surprising that a number of school shooters had a history of cruelty to animals.

We are living in an era where public violence is becoming disturbingly commonplace. Why would we support events such as rodeos that result in another generation of citizens being desensitized to the consequences of such behavior?

Deborah Gallagher lives in Iowa City.

GUEST COLUMN | KURT ULLRICH

Preparing to travel without GPS

This morning five Canada geese flew low over the house, forming an uneven "v" formation, all chatting at once, heading northwest.

Knowing that out here there is no one within shouting distance, I did, in fact, shout, "You're headed in the wrong direction!" All quieted for a brief moment, and then continued on their way.

We're into the sincere, quiet grayness of January, a time out here when cold winds from the north howl through the trees, hurtling noisily past the northwest corner of my house, whooshing, hissing, whistling, awakening wind chimes a friend made for me, and sometimes waking me in the night.

A U.S. Department of State passport renewal application lies complete on my dining room table, awaiting action. All I need now is the obligatory mugshot, then I'm good to go. And go I shall, having long been an inveterate traveler.

Not sure to where I'll next travel, but one day I know that I shall travel to a place known only to those who have gone before, a place requiring neither passport nor special papers, a place where all are welcomed and remembered. I shan't travel today or tomorrow, but soon enough. Soon enough.

Last week I stood in line at a grocery store (no, I don't know how to check myself out) and after the person in front of me concluded her transaction, a young cashier/checker put her hands on her own back and arched it meaningfully.

"I'll bet you have a different reason for a back-ache than I," I said.

"Oh, my," she said, smiling. "I had a baby six months ago and my back has hurt ever since."

Asked how motherhood was going, she beamed, and said, "Oh, I love it. He's already trying to crawl!"

It was a brief, insignificant exchange of words

between two strangers who will likely never see each other again, a moment that made me happy for a fellow traveler on this earth. God bless, child.

Not learning how to check myself out of a grocery store is not indicative of my age but rather my simple approach to things. On New Year's Eve, I paid for a meal for three others and me, using a credit card. First time in my life I've used a credit card for food. Next thing you know I'll be using a credit card for groceries and gasoline, and perhaps parking meters or Starbucks. The mind reels.

I don't care to know how to use my car's GPS, and I've enjoyed stopping in gas stations or chatting with postal people making deliveries, to get directions. I have neither dishwasher nor cable television; no garage door opener, and I wear only analogue wrist watches from the 1940s and '50s. A cellular tele-

phone would make me available to others, thus I do not carry one. Only four people know my landline phone number, all women. I live in the woods for a reason.

On a recent damp, gray morning I was traveling up my gravel road toward the two-lane on the ridge, when an American bald eagle decided to be my escort, dropping to within yards of the hood of my car, safely ushering me out of the silence and aloneness to which I have become accustomed. Silence and aloneness comprise a specific destination, a place wherein most are not comfortable. The eagle couldn't know that I was headed toward the cacophony of civilized people, some known to me, most not. And she couldn't know that in the inherent messiness of our lives, her presence was both calming and profound.

Kurt Ullrich lives in rural Jackson County. His book "The Iowa State Fair" is available from the University of Iowa Press.

INSIGHT



EDITORIAL FELLOW | SOFIA DEMARTINO

School choice law set to defund the great equalizer

After a few years of red-faced diatribes at the school board and the Statehouse, parents horrified by their children learning U.S. history and being affirmed in their genders have been rewarded with public tax dollars to isolate their children in private schools. In the weeks that followed the passage of the “school choice” law, public school administrators, parents, lawmakers and concerned citizens have voiced their concern for the future of public schools. Once fully implemented, the project will cost an estimated \$345 million per year — money that Iowa public schools desperately need.

How did our tax dollars become a major funding source for public education?

In 1854, Iowa’s third governor, James Grimes, used his inaugural address to call on his new constituents to support a radical overhaul of the education system. His request? A tax on their property to fund a common public school system that would not place the burden of tuition on individual families. A state-wide unified “tax-supported free public school” system that would prepare the people for “careers of honor and purpose,” for everyone.

Although Iowa was the first state in the nation to institute a public school system, it was underused and under-resourced. Consisting of a hodgepodge of institutions unevenly scattered throughout the state, only 42 percent of school-aged children ever attended — and less than a quarter showed up regularly. This was partially due to the cost of attendance: Those who went to school were those with the means to cover tuition.

Having just achieved statehood in 1846, it was necessary to devise a more effective infrastructure for the growing populace. Iowa’s population tripled during the 1850s as wave after wave of pioneers fanned westward across the state. Grimes himself had stood on the west bank of the mighty Mississippi and presided over the signing of the treaty that ceded Sauk and Meskwaki land to the U.S. government as secretary to the Indian Commission at Rock Island nearly 20 years before he was sworn in as governor. No organized groups of Indigenous people remained by 1850.

Grimes’ ask for property taxes was a heavy lift. As any current or past member of a school board can attest, asking your neighbors to levy a tax for the purpose of public education is at the very least a request for dirty looks in the checkout line. He reasoned



A student’s desk is seen in 2015 in an Arthur Elementary School third-grade classroom in Cedar Rapids. (The Gazette)

that the most effective deterrent to crime, theft and poverty is public education. Private property benefited from lower crime rates — therefore property taxes should be levied to cover the cost of educating the masses.

After much delaying and debate over whether each district would be allowed to refuse Black children entry to public schools on a case-by-case basis (they were), Grimes’ bid for a property tax levy was successful.

The resulting education system has seen some of the highest graduation rates in the country, high rates of literacy, ACT scores above the national average and high rates of students going on to our highly regarded public universities.

You may find yourself now curious as to why over a century and a half later, we have opted to reroute those tax dollars to private schools. Teachers have already been leaving the profession in droves, pushed out by a hostile political climate, wages that don’t align with the demands of the work, and feeling they lack sufficient support from administrators.

Nearly half of Iowa’s counties are devoid of private schools; as families in those areas remove their children from the public education system, small rural schools will suffer most from lost funding as will urban public districts. Further, many private schools are exempt from federal laws requiring public schools to provide admission to children with disabilities. Private schools tend to be far more racially segregated, and are able to legally exclude children (and teachers) who identify as LGBTQ. The law puts public dollars to use at organizations that are not held to the same standard as public institu-

tions — the standards that we have decided are important as a state, like equitable employment practices and uniform performance measures. By decreasing resources available to public schools, the law also is in direct opposition to the purpose of creating and funding a public school system in the first place — equipping all of Iowa’s youth with the knowledge, skills and abilities to take on careers of honor and purpose.

So ... what are we preparing them for? Pardon me while I pull out my tin foil hat and eyeball the low-wage service positions employers still are struggling to fill post-pandemic. If I were attempting to motivate an unwilling labor force to accept positions without providing an increase in financial incentives, I suppose an overqualified candidate pool would be an unappealing proposition. Once you have shortened the length of time people can claim unemployment, developed policy you hope will decrease food access and required those on Medicaid to work (although only in positions earning less than \$18,070 per year) you might start to take the long view. What is the workforce going to look like in a decade or two?

The school choice law has no income limits for beneficiaries. A financial boon for those with the means to offer their children private education is an easy play to the conservative base, but will have long-term consequences for a public school system already strapped for cash, facing a shortage of educators and tasked with managing social services challenges faced by the students and families they serve.

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GUEST COLUMN
JESSICA WISKUS

Pipeline problems fall on deaf ears

All across the state, Iowans continue to take a stand against the proposed CO2 pipelines.

Members of the Sierra Club and members of the Farm Bureau.

Members of Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and members of the John Birch Society.

Why is it that opposition to the carbon pipelines is so broad?

Because the issue at stake is fundamental. It exceeds the normal boundaries of politics. It is about respect — respect for our neighbors, respect for land, respect for community, respect for our children’s futures and respect for the Constitution.

At a meeting of the Cedar County Board of Supervisors on Jan. 17 — where Chris Riley, ADM’s director for state government relations, was in attendance to respond to questions about Wolf Carbon Solutions’ proposed project — local residents repeatedly articulated their concerns about safety.

We know that the federal Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration has gone back to the drawing board “to strengthen its safety oversight of carbon dioxide (CO2) pipelines around the country and protect communities from dangerous pipeline failures.”

But Wolf Carbon Solutions wants to build their pipelines before PHMSA issues its new rules.

Nor does Wolf want the public to know about the safety risks that they, themselves, have already identified.

Recently, lawyers for Wolf — and Summit and Navigator — won the right to deny the Iowa Utilities Board access to their modeling of CO2 plume dispersion, risk assessment for communities and individuals along their routes, or even emergency medical services plans.

And so, the opposition to the CO2 pipelines is driven by moral outrage. At that Cedar County meeting, one neighbor stood up and addressed the only man in that room who was wearing a fancy suit and expensive

shoes, Chris Riley from ADM.

My neighbor said, “California has put a moratorium on carbon pipelines until PHMSA comes up with better regulations. Does that concern you at all? Does that concern you for the safety of the people?”

Riley replied immediately and without hesitation, “It does not.”

There was an audible gasp from audience members in the room. Some people were so upset that they stood up in shock and anger, overturning their chairs, and walked out. They took the politest action that they could manage under the circumstances — they removed themselves from the situation, lest a physical altercation erupt. They were “Iowa nice” to the core of their being.

But make no mistake — Iowa nice does not mean Iowa cowardice. And the words, “It does not,” are emblazoned on our hearts. Riley’s statement was the 21st-century equivalent of, “Let them eat cake.” It will not be forgotten.

Is it respectful for a corporate executive to tell us that the lives of our neighbors — of real people from our communities — of parents, children, grandparents — of elderly and disabled people — of landowners, renters, workers, retired people and schoolchildren — are of no consequence in light of industry’s appetite for profit?

One group of people has decided that it can make a lot of money from the CO2 pipelines. Does that justify the threat of eminent domain? Can they take away our constitutional rights — and potentially even our lives — against our will, so as to rake in more and more money for themselves, further strengthening their position among an elite class of corporate earners whose purchasing power buys them the allegiance of politicians all the way from Des Moines to Washington, D.C.?

Look in the history books. Understand what is at stake. We certainly do.

Jessica Wiskus lives in rural Lisbon.



GUEST COLUMN | KILEY MILLER

We must replant for future generations

Winter is a stark canvas. Against snow and gray skies, we cannot help but see the damage done to our trees and forests by the August 2020 derecho. The loss assaults us as we drive down streets empty of large, healthy trees or past woodlands reduced to piles of deadfall and the occasional standing oak. Our only hope is to mirror the resilience of those survivors. We must replant.

An estimated 670,000 trees were damaged or destroyed in Cedar Rapids under the onslaught of the derecho’s wind. The city went from 25 percent tree canopy to just 8 percent in a single hour. Houses that had been shaded were bared to the sun.

Distant landmarks became visible on the horizon. One elderly resident wrote to Trees Forever that she no longer recognized her own neighborhood.

I was living elsewhere at the time of the derecho, but I

traveled to Cedar Rapids soon after the storm. While I ached most for the families forced from their homes, I also was overwhelmed by the ruin done by nature to nature: city parks ramparted with broken limbs, streambeds choked by fallen trees. The destruction seemed impossible, insurmountable.

I should have foreseen that Cedar Rapids would respond with urgency. That is this city’s character. Within days of the derecho, city officials were determined to develop a comprehensive plan for replanting. The City Council approved \$10 million over 10 years (\$1 million annually) for the work. City Manager Jeff Pomeranz declared the vision: “The city is absolutely committed to doing our part. It’s going to take a lot of time. It’s going to take dollars. It’s going to take all of us working together.”

Trees Forever is honored to partner with the city’s ReLeaf Cedar Rapids, a \$37 million effort to restore green

to the Emerald City. We are one of many. Neighborhood groups have come together for plantings. Other nonprofits have handed out trees. Corporations are restoring their campuses. And innumerable homeowners have taken shovel in hand to bring beauty back to their yards. “All of us” truly are involved.

Now, two and a half years into recovery with spring planting season whispering on the breeze, the City Council is reemphasizing commitment to ReLeaf Cedar Rapids by increasing the annual appropriation to \$1.25 million. Thank you, Cedar Rapids, for making trees a priority.

A dedicated team of community leaders, along with the city and Trees Forever, is raising private donations to add to public funds.

More than \$3.5 million has been contributed, ranging from a few dollars to hundreds of thousands. Every gift is meaningful. Your words of encouragement have kept

us working toward our goal; each and every dollar adds up to more trees planted and watered. While we still have a long way to go to reach our fundraising goals, with your help we can get there!

Then there are the residents of Cedar Rapids who have stepped forward to do the hard work of planting trees and keeping them alive. The partnership has engaged hundreds of volunteers who collectively gave thousands of hours of their time. They came from everywhere and all walks of life. Trained TreeKeepers coached first-time planters. Employee groups showed up wearing company T-shirts and ready grins.

On the hottest of summer days, Growing Futures teens slogged water buckets along city streets, learning the realities of working life with each step.

While ReLeaf Cedar Rapids focuses heavily on public trees, far more trees were lost on private property.

Thousands of people have participated in our large-scale tree adoptions, the next of which will be held in May. Many more are signing up for our new tree vouchers created in partnership with area nurseries. I am especially excited by a program called Neighborhood Tree Captains, which leverages the power of friendship and peer-to-peer connections to encourage tree planting. All these initiatives are made possible by private donations. Thanks to city leaders, caring citizens and many partners for your commitment, vision and endurance.

I’ll close with a comment from Trees Forever board chair Lynn Manternach. “As a parent and grandparent, I think about the world we are leaving our children. They deserve beauty, trees and natural areas. What the derecho undid in minutes, we will restore for future generations.”

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