EDITORIALS

Missed-information

Claims are a swing and a miss

We're not going out on a limb here when we say that this morning there are bad things happening to folks in Florida. On Wednesday morning, as this was being written, forecasters said Hurricane Milton was set to land near Tampa. (If there are copy editors out there thinking about the headline "Paradise Lost" just now, we remind them that we have large books and our aim is accurate.)

Americans know from hurricanes, and know what it must be like for folks to go without electricity. Around here, though, when tornadoes blow through, the linemen are usually able to get the juice back on in a couple of hours; days at the most. But when big-time hurricanes hit the coast, electricity might be out for weeks. Freezer food ruined. Sleepless nights. No communication.



So we all pitch in. It's the American way.

Whether we pitch in by donating to the Red Cross & Wonderful Co., or whether we pitch in with our tax money through FEMA, Americans will come to the aid of our neighbors.

Which is why misinformation hurts so much.

Friends have posted, or reposted, some of this on social media, and we struggle to tell them that they've been fooled. Again.

It seems they've been told, by you-know-who, that those in the path of Milton, or Helene before him, are only going to get $750 from the federal government in relief, while FEMA would rather spend its money giving thousands of dollars every month so illegals can live at ease.

That would be worth pounding the table over.

If it were true.

At a campaign rally in Michigan last week, Donald Trump said: "Kamala spent all her FEMA money, billions of dollars, on housing for illegal migrants, many of whom should not be in our country." Adding, "They stole the FEMA money, just like they stole it from a bank, so they could give it to their illegal immigrants that they want to have vote for them this season."

From the fact-checkers that he appreciates none too much:

Yes, in fiscal 2024, Congress appropriated $650 million to pay for a program that helps your local government(s) house migrants. FEMA runs that show. But the $650 million for this program is separate from the FEMA disaster budget. Congress funds that annually too, *to the tune of $36.3 billion.*

If you don't trust the fact-checkers at CNN or The Washington Post, or even us, just Google the numbers. They are there for everybody to see.

Now, about that $750 to folks who've lost everything:

Donald Trump on Saturday: "They're offering them $750, to people whose homes have been washed away. And yet we send tens of billions of dollars to foreign countries that most people have never heard of. They're offering them $750. They've been destroyed, these people have been destroyed."

He added, "Think of it: We give foreign countries hundreds of billions of dollars and we're handing North Carolina $750."

Because of this particular misinformation, FEMA had to add another page to its website. The $750 is for short-term immediate aid so survivors of the hurricane can buy stuff at the store this very day. Like baby formula, water and food. Folks in the path of Milton or Helene can also apply for all kinds of other federal help/money, such as temporary housing or repairs. (The current maximum to fix up your house is $42,500—from FEMA alone. Which doesn't include state or other aid.)

The $750/FEMA/hurricane rumor isn't the only one being peddled.

On Monday, Donald Trump claimed that the Republican governor of Georgia has been trying to call the current president, but Joe Biden won't pick up the phone.

The Republican governor of Georgia, Brian Kemp, says otherwise. He says Joe Biden told him to call back, to the Oval Office directly, if his state needed anything.

Donald Trump claimed, also on Monday, that the response in North Carolina showed a bias toward not helping Republican areas of the state. He provided no evidence of that one.

In Pennsylvania over the weekend, he said: "Kamala wined and dined in San Francisco, and all of the people in North Carolina—no helicopters, no rescue—it's just—what's happened there is very bad."

The North Carolina National Guard reported "146 flight missions, resulting in the rescue of 538 people and 150 pets" after Helene. The Florida Guard is very likely in the hangars right this minute, waiting to go in a few hours after their birds can get in the air. (And other Guard units, like from Arkansas, are helping.)

So, some may think, aww, how's this hurting anything? It's Trump being Trump. Let him rave; his people love it.

Well, the folks running the shop at the American Red Cross say misinformation hurts that outfit by discouraging people to give to relief efforts. Some may think twice about kicking in $20 or $50 if they believe some of these false rumors.

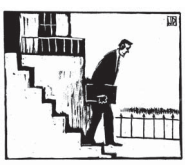
Sticks and stones may break your bones, but sometimes words will hurt others. It sure would help matters if the rest of us wouldn't automatically repost social memes without spending five minutes checking them out first.

OTHERS SAY

NYC deserves explanation

BLOOMBERG OPINION

New York City Mayor Eric Adams insists he's innocent of the bribery and campaign-finance charges that federal prosecutors brought against him last month. As a citizen, he has a right to make his case in court. As an elected official, he has an obligation to convince the public he's still worthy of their trust. He's not off to a good start.



As news of the indictment broke, Adams tried to dismiss the case by peddling a baseless conspiracy theory: that his criticism of the Biden administration's handling of the southern border had made him "a target." After the Justice Department released the indictment, he held a defiant news conference that was more like a rally with his most loyal supporters. "This is all part of the process," he said at a later event, after appearing in court. "My attorney will handle it."

A poll released Friday suggests that's not going to cut it. A staggering 69 percent of New Yorkers, including 71 percent of Democrats, say the mayor should resign. If he's going to remain in office, as he says he will, he needs to offer a plausible explanation of his conduct.

If Adams acknowledges lapses in judgment and accepts accountability for them—he can maintain his innocence and still do so—he could well survive in the court of public opinion. But if he digs in and doubles down on his conspiracy theory, voters will likely conclude that he's no longer worthy of their trust.

If the feds leaped to the wrong conclusions, as Adams claims, he shouldn't wait for his day in court to explain himself. Citizens deserve a full and honest accounting from the mayor.

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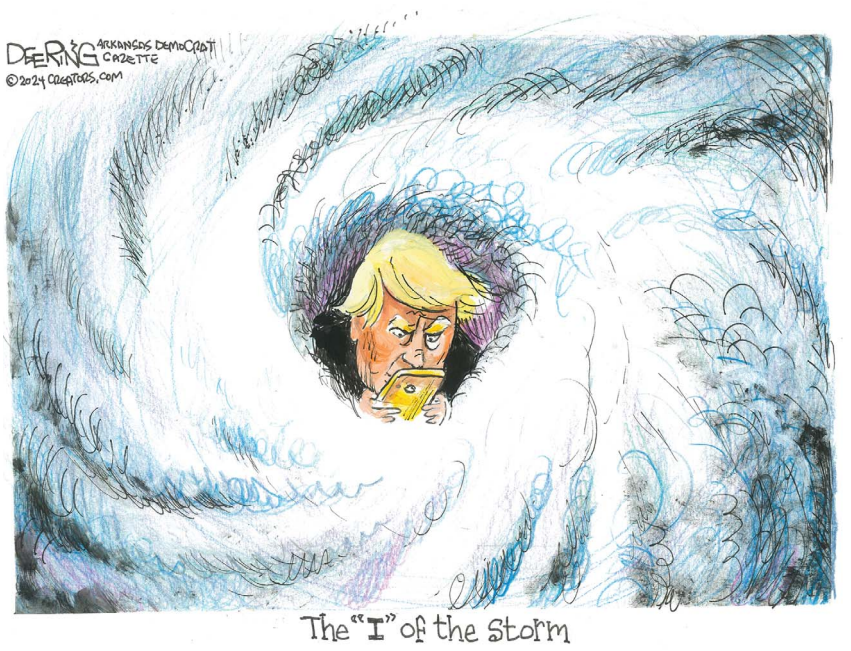
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COLUMNISTS

Speaking up for friends

OPINION



Star Parker

Earlier this week, on Oct. 7, my organization CURE (Center for Urban Renewal and Education) co-hosted with Michigan Lighthouse Ministries a press conference with more than 50 pastors from across the state of Michigan, noting the atrocities committed last year by Hamas terrorists against Israeli citizens and expressing solidarity with the State of Israel.

We chose a church in Michigan for this program because Michigan is home to the largest Arab-American population in the country.

It is also home to Rep. Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American representative in the House of Representatives and one of the nation's most strident voices against Israel.

Were these clergy, mostly Black, expressing opposition to Arab Americans? Certainly not. On the contrary, their support of the Jewish state, and the values it embodies and expresses, is an expression of support for the welfare and betterment of all mankind.

Of great concern to these Christian evangelicals is the cloud of darkness spreading and enveloping so much of our world today.

The miraculous return of the Jewish people to their historical homeland after 2,000 years in dispersion, and their transformation of desert and swamp into a thriving modern state, with per capita income higher than most European countries, shines laser-like light into the thick dark cloud of evil around us.

Hamas terrorists noted the anniversary of Oct. 7 by firing missiles into Israel, saying that, given the opportunity, they would commit the same atrocities again and again.

By atrocities, we're talking about murder, rape, beheadings, burning of babies, mutilation of corpses.

How is it that there is sympathy for this depravity?

Iran, which provides the billions financing Hamas, Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations, had, per tradingeconomics.com, $5,740 per capita GDP in 2023. This is just 13.5 percent of the $42,674 per capita GDP of Israel, despite Iran having the fourth-largest holdings of oil reserves in the world.

The difference is that Israel is about choosing life and personal responsibility and creativity, and Iran is about a government stealing the wealth of its citizens to finance a hateful, destructive ideology.

Similarly, the Hamas terrorists. The billions infused into Gaza over the years from Iran, but also from European countries and from the USA, was used to fund terror rather than build a country and create wealth.

When I first visited Israel, I saw the similarities of the culture of blame and denial of personal responsibility among the Palestinians that have caused so much destruction in America's inner cities. We see a corrupt political leadership exploiting the worst tendencies in people by attributing their suffering to others, fostering a culture of blame, rather than taking personal responsibility for their own lives.

Inscribed on America's Liberty Bell in Philadelphia are the words from the book of Leviticus in the Hebrew Bible, "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the Inhabitants thereof." The bell was commissioned in the state of Pennsylvania in 1751 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of William Penn's first constitution of the state in 1701. Penn observed, "If we will not be governed by God, we must be governed by tyrants."

This is the message our pastors convey to a world swimming in darkness.

The appeal of our pastors is unwavering support for the one Jewish state, for the Bible we have received from the Jewish nation, and to end, everywhere, the sick and evil culture of blame.

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

Harris on '60 Minutes'

OPINION



Cal Thomas

It took two and one-half months for Kamala Harris to agree to an interview with a national journalist. She was interviewed on "60 Minutes" by Bill Whitaker. But her answers are not likely to help her with the few voters who say they are still undecided.

Asked by Whitaker to explain her economic plan and how it would be paid for, Harris' response bordered on the meaningless: "My plan is about saying when you invest in small businesses you invest in the middle class and you strengthen America's economy. Small businesses are the backbone of America's economy."

Whitaker: "The question was how are you going to pay for it?"

Harris: "I am going to make sure that the richest among us who can afford it pay their fair share in taxes. It is not right that teachers, nurses and firefighters are paying a higher tax rate than billionaires and the biggest corporations. And I plan on making that fair."

"Fair" must be a poll-tested word, but it has no meaning unless it is defined. Democrats have been invoking it for years, but they never say what they mean. In some states, the successful are paying more than half their income to federal, state and local governments. Is it fair when governments penalize success and subsidize its opposite? And who will define affordable? Whitaker should have asked Harris what she would do to cut spending, the main driver of debt, and how would she reform Social Security and Medicare, which will run out of money in the 2030s.

Whitaker asked Harris how she would get her plan through Congress.

Harris gave her usual nonsensical answer: "You know when you talk quietly with a lot of folks in Congress, they know exactly what I'm talking about 'cause their constituents know exactly what I'm talking about. Those constituents are those firefighters and teachers and nurses ..."

I don't know what she is talking about.

In reporting on some of the same claims that President Joe Biden made in his last State of the Union address, Reuters reported: "The average American worker paid about a 25 percent tax rate in 2022, the OECD reported. White House research found the wealthiest individuals paid about 8 percent from 2010 to 2018."

White House research? According to The Cato Institute: "The 8 percent is a concoction by Biden political appointees at odds with data from the U.S. Treasury, Congressional Budget Office, Internal Revenue Service and Joint Committee on Taxation. All these official sources find that tax rates on high earners are much higher than tax rates on lower- and middle-income folks."

On another topic, Harris was asked about Israel and the attacks by Iran and its proxies.

Whitaker: "Do we have a real close ally in Prime Minister Netanyahu?"

Harris: "With all due respect, I think the more important question is do we have an important alliance between the American people and the Israeli people? And the answer to that question is yes."

The Biden-Harris administration, like the Obama-Biden and Clinton-Gore administrations, have repeatedly tried to impose their will on Israel to get the Jewish state to act in ways that would put it in greater peril. For Harris to try and separate Israel from its duly elected leader is to give aid and comfort to Israel's enemies, who are also our enemies.

After the "60 Minutes" interview, Harris decamped to more friendly territory, appearing on "The View" and Howard Stern's radio program. It is unlikely any of these interviews will change the minds of entrenched voters.

Cal Thomas is a columnist for the Tribune Content Agency.