

SunSentinel OPINION

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ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

It's now 'Us v. Us': Rethinking terrorism after Jan. 6 riot

America has long understood terrorism as us versus them. That is, acts of terrorism were an assault on shared values of democracy and political stability. Terrorism was found only outside our collective ethical and moral conscience. It was grounded in far-away lands and based on someone else's cultural, national or religious extremism. The goal was to repel it, even if that meant limiting civil liberties and curtailing privacy in the cause of defeating the enemy. We may have debated the means to fight terrorism, but we seldom questioned its nature.



By Michael McAuliffe

The United States experienced this special brand of horror and harm over several decades as terrorists used repugnant methods to scare us into leaving a region or to force us into cowering at home. The bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the coordinated bombings of embassies in several African countries in 1998 and the attacks of 9/11 are well-known examples of Americans being targets of violence as a means to inflict a broader fear. These acts and others defined the modern era of terrorism for a world-dominant America.

The bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building and the mass murder of 168 people inside in 1995 was the domestic exception to the perceived pattern of foreigners using violence to defeat the American system. Timothy McVeigh didn't match the accepted profile of a terrorist; he was white and a veteran. His crimes were addressed through the existing federal criminal laws, and after conviction, he was ultimately executed as punishment. But he was considered an outlier.

The country now faces the cold, damning reality that McVeigh wasn't so rare a phenomenon. The attempted takeover of the Capitol by violent means on Jan. 6 wasn't by foreign enemies fueled by hatred of America. A loose constellation of American far-right extremists planned and perpetrated the Capitol assault. They justified the attack with an obscene vision of their America. One might be tempted to believe this is a shift, a change, from foreign terrorism to homegrown terrorism. However, the emergence of domestic terrorism isn't really an emergence at all, but a belated recognition of what has existed for many decades in this country. And the common thread is bigotry.

Civil rights crimes and domestic terrorism are borne of the same union of hate and violence. For example, the Ku Klux Klan was founded on white supremacy and a twisted notion of Christianity, but the organization also possessed political goals that propelled its early growth. The end of Reconstruction with the retrench-

ing and enforcement of discriminatory laws meant that the Klan, in large measure, achieved those goals. The group's reemergence in the 1920s and again in the 1950s and '60s were responses to economic and social issues, not any sudden rise in racism. The bigotry was always present. And importantly, the Klan's use of violence wasn't an anomaly or an exception, but a natural extension of its very DNA.

Other American extremist groups built on the racial goals and violent methods the Klan, including various neo-Nazi and skinhead groups. Now, it's time to combine these hate groups with the Three Percenters, the Oath Keepers, the Proud Boys and others under the label of domestic hate-based extremism. The list is long.

Once we reframe most acts of domestic terrorism as essentially civil rights/hate-based crimes and many civil rights/hate crimes committed by members of groups as terrorism, the notion of us versus them has to change too. It is now us versus us. The body politic isn't being invaded by an external threat as much as it is now harboring, even hosting, the danger.

An updated paradigm of thinking about violence by domestic extremists should result in new and creative ways to hold them accountable. One recent example is U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., filing a civil suit against Donald Trump and Rudy Giuliani relating to the Capitol attack using a Reconstruction Era civil rights statute. Some of the Capitol attackers could also be charged with criminal civil rights violations. It is a federal civil rights crime to use violence to interfere with the exercise of a person's protected activities when the violence is committed with a particular intent. The extremists who were spewing forth racial insults while invading the Capitol, shouting antisemitic slogans or seeking to find and attack the Speaker of the House and other female House members all while threatening them with gender-based slurs should be candidates for criminal civil rights charges. Those charges may well require heightened proof to obtain a conviction, but sometimes the harder truth is worth telling.

The country must confront in and out of court the enemies who would injure and kill based on hate. It's past time to identify who they really are — they are some of us.

Michael McAuliffe is a former federal prosecutor serving both as a civil rights prosecutor at the Department of Justice and as a supervisory assistant U.S. attorney in the Southern District of Florida. Currently, he is an adjunct professor at William & Mary's Law School and a senior lecturing fellow at Duke University School of Law.

SUN SENTINEL ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS MIRAMAR CITY COMMISSION

Changes desperately needed on commission

There aren't many similarities between Miramar, hugging the Miami-Dade border, and Coconut Creek, the "Butterfly Capital of the World" on the opposite end of Broward County. But election-wise, there are a couple. Both have three seats up in the March 9 election. And in both cases, the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board recommends throwing out every incumbent running. In the case of Miramar, however, we are more emphatic about it than in Coconut Creek. This town badly needs a change.

City Commission Seat 1

In a Facebook video posted two weeks ago, Miramar Vice Mayor Maxwell Chambers referred to opponent Chris Koval as "Chris Covid." That's just childish and not something we'd expect from an elected official. He then claims Koval has friends in the Proud Boys, the far-right group of thugs that participated in the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. Koval calls himself a lifelong Democrat and of course denies any ties to the Proud Boys, and there is no evidence to suggest he's not telling the truth. But what really caps off the name-calling and the lies is Chambers' donning of a Florida National Guard cap and jacket, complete with first sergeant's ranking and a combat badge, during both this video and other campaign appearances — even though Chambers has never served in the military.



Nesbeth

In an interview with the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board, Chambers said the jacket was a gift from a veteran friend and that he threw it on before taking the Facebook video because he was cold. (The video was filmed outdoors, in South Florida.) A WPLG Local 10 reporter asked veterans at a local American Legion Post what they thought of the quasi-uniform. They found it "insulting."

In addition, Miramar has settled lawsuits for more than \$200,000 after two female city employees accused Chambers of retaliating against them, one after repeatedly refusing to hug him. Chambers denies the allegations and says it was simply cheaper for the city to settle than go to court. Meanwhile, Chambers has voted to increase his salary by more than \$10,000. Between the lawsuits and the gratuitous pay raise, Chambers is a liability to his city and needs to go.

But challenger Koval is not the answer. Koval makes his living publishing a magazine that features regular contributions from city commission members, including the mayor. When asked whether he would stop selling ads for his magazine if he was on the commission, Koval answered that not only would he continue to sell advertising to entities with business before the city, but that he would be "proud" to do so. This is a major red flag that raises questions about Koval's judgment.

Instead, we recommend the third candidate in this race, Kerri-Ann Nesbeth. Despite being younger than her opponents by more than two decades, Nesbeth, 31, was clearly the adult in the virtual room when the three candidates interviewed with the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board over a video call. While Koval's campaign seems largely about removing the incumbent (and we can't help but understand that given the quality of the incumbent), Nesbeth has focused her campaign on fiscal responsibility and sustainability in this fast-growing city of more than 140,000 residents. Miramar needs more forward-thinking people like Nesbeth at City Hall.

For Miramar City Commission Seat 1, the Sun Sentinel recommends Kerri-Ann Nesbeth.

City Commission Seat 2

As in the Seat 1 race, there's little love lost in the Miramar City Commission Seat 2 race between incumbent Yvette Colbourne and challenger Darline Riggs. Riggs previously held Seat 4 on the commission (all seats are at-large, so there are no issues with living in a particular district), but she lost reelection in 2019 to Alexandra Davis in a heated campaign. Two years later, Riggs is challenging Colbourne and the campaign is once again a fireworks display, with Riggs slamming Colbourne for voting to raise her own salary even as city workers were furloughed due to the pandemic.



Riggs

Colbourne, in turn, finds fault with Riggs' time on the commission, saying Riggs voted for projects tied to her employer. The campaign has turned especially nasty, as mailers from a group called the Resiliency Coalition have gone out, placing a

photo of Riggs next to one of former President Donald Trump. That's poisonous in a solidly Democratic city like Miramar. It's also untrue. And while Colbourne denied any knowledge of the mailers, among the very few recent donors to the Resiliency Coalition is B&B Professional Consultants, the consulting firm of Billy and Barbara Hardemon of the Hardemon family in Miami-Dade, a political dynasty allied with Colbourne.

Putting a long-time Black Democrat on a mailer with Trump is dirty politics, but we're not recommending voters opt for Riggs just out of the nastiness of the Colbourne campaign. Since leaving office, Riggs has remained active in the community, trying to address the issue of food deserts in Miramar. Since the pandemic, she organized a nonprofit that provides masks to the community and assists with funeral costs.

It's Darline Riggs' demonstrable dedication to the Miramar community that causes us to endorse her for Miramar City Commission Seat 2.

City Commission Seat 3

It's with a heavy heart — and with the knowledge that his re-election is quite likely — that we recommend voters remove iconic Jamaican-American radio host Winston Barnes from the Miramar City Commission, where he has served since 2003. With four other candidates in the race, whatever anti-Barnes vote exists will be split among them, giving the incumbent a greater advantage than incumbents usually have. That's a shame, because from what we saw in an interview with the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board, Barnes' heart is clearly no longer in elected office.



Glenister

Several other candidates criticized Barnes for not being visible in the community and not giving time to constituent services. Bewilderingly, Barnes replied that the existence of his radio show on WAVS 1170 "negates" the necessity that he meet with city residents.

"They can call in the show, and any problems they have, we can pass them on to the city manager," Barnes said.

Telling the people of Miramar that, should they wish to reach their city commissioner, they must listen to his radio show and call in, hoping to get connected, is not good enough. Not by a long shot.

Barnes also claimed to be heavily involved in his church, but another candidate, Nari Tomlinson, questioned that as well.

"A commissioner is literally the closest elected official to the people so I believe that they should be way more accessible. These are the people that should be actively watching over the community making sure that the will of the people is being done," Tomlinson wrote in his questionnaire.

Indeed, we found the 32-year-old with a law degree from Florida A&M University a compelling figure in the race, and may have endorsed him over Barnes, were it not for the presence in the race of 30-year-old Val Glenister, whom voters should elect as their next commissioner.

A fourth candidate in the race, Lixon Nelson, did not return our interview requests.

Glenister jumped into this race in May of last year and has been campaigning hard on pandemic relief for small businesses and sensible police reforms that look at benchmarks and transparency rather than big cuts in the name of defunding departments.

She is smart, engaged in the community and thinks quickly on her feet. During the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board's endorsement interview, when the fifth candidate, Sylvia Grandberry, questioned Glenister's ability to do the commissioner's job because she is pregnant, Glenister turned the attack around, making a positive statement on women in the workplace and laughing off the idea that expectant mothers in the 21st Century have no place in politics.

"As a community engagement and public affairs professional, I have the experience not only in creating change at a municipal level and beyond, but also in creating spaces and opportunities for residents to be fully heard and represented, no matter the color of their skin, their beliefs, where they're from, who they love or their economic status," Glenister said.

We believe her. The Sun Sentinel endorses Val Glenister for Miramar City Commission Seat 3.

Editorials are the opinion of the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board and written by one of its members or a designee. The Editorial Board consists of Editorial Page Editor Rosemary O'Hara, Dan Sweeney, Steve Bousquet and Editor-in-Chief Julie Anderson.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What's next for Moskowitz?

It's not any surprise that Jared Moskowitz is leaving the DeSantis administration. ["Jared Moskowitz, Florida's top crisis manager who led pandemic response, is resigning," Feb. 15] He has done his job being the designated Democrat in a very Trumpian Republican state administration. He has been getting lots of good press in his years of political roles. He is sensitive to many social issues, including the COVID response, gun safety, alimony reform and school security. So it's not a surprise, that the timing of his leaving gives him plenty of time to mount a campaign to be the next governor of Florida. With the abominable state of the Republican Party and the present governor showing about as much courage as the two Florida senators, I wish him much success in his most likely quest to lead the state of Florida into the 21st century.

Jeff Dombeck, Boynton Beach

The fresh breeze of Biden

It's like a breath of fresh air in D.C. The rotten smell of cronyism, nepotism and jingoism is starting to dissipate in the nation's capital. We have people being appointed to Cabinet posts for which they are actually qualified. We see many of those unfit leaving or being asked to leave. After four years of estrangement from our allies, we are reestablishing ties with them again. We are no longer going to be at odds with science and will make judgments based on sound evidence. Make no mistake, President Biden has his work cut out for him. Trying to undo the harm that was done by his predecessor will take time, and we still have those in Congress with unwavering fealty to the former president. Environmental and health care issues need to be addressed. Domestic terrorism flourished during the last administration, and laws need to be passed to deal with these merchants of hate and bigotry.

Howard Olarsch, Boynton Beach

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