

OPINIONS

OUR THOUGHTS

Disturbing images

When inmates in a Third World prison are treated like cattle, bad things will usually result

Our country is suffering from ugly images that should make Americans with hearts of compassion roll and toss at night.

Scenes of 238 men, heads shaven, all shackled and made to run with their heads faced down to their waists, as they were transferred from an American transport plane to a mega prison in San Salvador, resemble flickering films taken by Nazi anarchists in the 1930s and '40s.

The Salvadorian captors, working with our American government, took videos of the men, all dressed alike, as they sat on concrete floors in the prison, with heads bowed and lined up like cattle.

Yes, the Venezuelan prisoners deserved arrests in the U.S.A. but every one of them is afforded due process — a core right of every person accused of a crime or immigration violation. In short — everyone gets to see a judge, and a chance to tell his/her story.

Our U.S. Constitution promises that all persons arrested, whether U.S. citizens or immigrants, church attenders or gang members, are innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

But the U.S.A. sent these 238 immigrant prisoners to a notorious Central American prison where they remain unnamed, without rights and condemned to life in an inhumane place.

The images of those prisoners, lined up behind bars as our Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem posed in front of them, are hard to stomach. But such events are relished by President Trump when he invites cabinet members and top lieutenants to sit on couches in the Oval Office and bobble their heads as he boasts of how we treat law breakers.

During a week when we ponder the love of Christ, and hold to the humility that makes hearts break in God-given compassion, it makes us wonder what we have become.



Without habeus corpus, inmates in an El Salvadorian prison are nothing more than subjects under the weight of abuse and cruelty. PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES

Try to sleep on that. It will be difficult.

— Rudy Taylor, publisher

Property tax relief?

State legislature provides crumbs in overall quest to reduce taxes, which remain a local matter

The Republican-dominated Kansas Legislature drummed a heavy war cry during the 2025 legislative session that property tax relief to all Kansans would be its highest priority.

And, what did they create?

A measly elimination of the statewide 1.50-mill levy dedicated to state-owned building upkeep.

For a residential home valued at \$100,000, the property tax savings would amount to about \$17.25 per year.

Yippee. Don't spend it all at once, Kansans.

What Kansas legislators have realized is that property taxes are a local matter — the revenue-generating machines for city governments, public schools, community colleges, local libraries, county court-

house services, and city recreation sports.

State lawmakers do have control over a 20.0-mill statewide property tax levy dedicated to public schools (preschool-12th grade education). That state-imposed tax — much to the state lawmakers' chagrin — is rarely massaged, knowing that a reduction in statewide public school revenues would have a negative impact on the very schools in their own districts.

So, state legislators do what they do best: offering crumb-like solutions to a cake-sized problem.

We get it. Legislators get their ears filled constantly with complaints from local constituents about property taxes. That's nothing new. And, it'll probably never end.

But, rather than direct those constituents to their local city officials, county commissioners, school board members, and college trustees, the legislators take the complaint burden on themselves.

That's a foolhardy proposition. The long-and-short of the: there is little a state lawmaker can do in Topeka to provide property tax relief at the local level.

So, what is the answer?

Kansans have got to take their property tax complaints directly to the source: the local people who are elected to represent them in city halls, courthouses, and school/college offices. These are the people who impose taxes through the budgets they create each year (in fact, the budget preparation season is always in the summer months). The budgets are

passed through a public hearing process, which allows constituents and taxpayers a chance to voice their concerns or ask questions.

The problem is that many local elected officials are tone deaf at those budget hearings. They craft silly rules to limit the time that citizens have to ask questions. They also impose their self-imposed gag order at answering questions . . . which comes at at time when some citizens are simply trying to create a dialogue of Taxpayer vs. Taxspender.

It would help if locally elected officials acted more concerned or empathetic to the questions that are asked by citizens at those hearings and took those budget hearings seriously. Instead, they give off a vibe that a budget hearing is nothing more than a session for loud gripers and complainers. So, they go mute, look at their watches, and nervously hope they don't get hit in the jaw on their way to the parking lot.

Through 30-plus years of experience of attending budget hearings, this writer has seen one-too-many instances of officials using their seat at the table as a pulpit for sneering . . . or feigning total ignorance about citizens' concerns.

Seeing no recourse at the local level, the taxpayer takes his or her concern to the state legislators. In answering those concerns, the legislators do what they can — even though it is merely a drop in the bucket of overall property tax frustration.

Each year, this newspaper tells its readers about the upcoming budget hearings, which are all public meetings. We also tell citizens how those budget plans from city, school and college governments will impact their local taxes for the next year.

We'll do a better job this summer of making the often-confusing world of taxation easier to digest and follow. We'll also work with the local governmental boards to "break the ice" about dialogue. If a public hearing isn't the best way to express a concern, then the governmental boards should, at least, make their own contact information known publicly.

It's up to citizens to let their concerns be known.

And, it's up to local officials to be willing to lend an ear.

As for state lawmakers: they've got plenty of other issues to handle in Topeka without dipping their toes in the local government pool.

— Andy Taylor, editor

Inner peace comes with pondering Easter week

A calm is falling upon Christian believers during this week of Easter.

Time is spent contemplating Christ's ride into Jerusalem on a small donkey, arriving only to find the Temple full of money changers and gamblers, whom he cleared out with a red face and loud voice.

He then worshipped his Father in the same Temple and went about preparing himself to meet his Disciples in an upper room in downtown Jerusalem. There he celebrated the Jewish Passover and talked quietly with his 12 best friends, taking time to start a tradition still observed today through all Christendom — the Lord's Supper.

Jesus knew what was before him — an evening in the Garden of Gethsemane, singing hymns, praying and bracing for impact — the moment when Roman soldiers would arrest him and

shove him into a government courtyard with Pontius Pilate finding him guilty of blasphemy and treason.

He was marched to a horrid place called Golgotha, carrying his own cross, and feeling the agony of our sins heaped upon the only innocent human being ever to live.

Jesus was nailed to that cross, before it was jolted into a post hole, and he spent his final hours looking out to find his mother and friends, and scanning the heavens in desperation as he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken

me?" As always, he repeated his desire that "Thy will be done, not mine."

We all know the story of the three-day pause after Jesus was placed inside a borrowed tomb, and the victorious events that followed — the stone rolled away from the grave found empty!

For the next 40 days, he walked among his family and friends, sometimes slipping through them like a ghost, but other times eating fish at a wooden table alongside them.

Can you imagine the excitement he must have felt when it came time for his ascension into Heaven? Jesus took flight into the clouds to sit beside our Heavenly Father on a throne with a view — where they now oversee, reach out to us, speak, touch and comfort us through the Holy Spirit, and prepare a

place where all believers can come home some day.

So, this is a special week for folks who follow Jesus Christ.

We push aside the chaos

and divisions in our world, close our eyes, and feel the arms of a God who created love itself, applying it to every moment we live on this earth.

Happy Easter, friends.

We hope you will take time to find personal peace, because it was crafted with your name on it.

Life's Little Lifesavers

. . . Attending church followed by the fun of Easter family get-togethers . . . acts of kindness, no matter how small, are never wasted . . . benches under trees . . . even-numbered birthday years sounding better than odd-numbered birthdays . . . reading and contemplating Bible scripture pertaining to the last week of Christ on earth . . . the art of being a good listener . . . the debut of flip flops for spring and summer wearing . . . watching an interesting documentary on TV . . . a repeat of a favorite saying: "It's Friday, Jesus is buried. A soldier stands guard, and a rock is rolled into place. But it's Friday, it is only Friday. Sunday is a comin'!" Happy Easter dear readers!

Word of the Week

Take time to contemplate this word, use in your conversations, discuss the word with your children or grandchildren and exercise its meaning either internally or externally. The word this week is:

CONTEMPLATING: To think profoundly and at length; meditate; look at thoughtfully for a long time.

KATHY TAYLOR



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