

Opinion

The New York Times



RENAULT MURAL FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

In 1896 my great-great-grandfather left his hometown, Chattanooga, and traveled north to purchase a small, fading newspaper in New York.

The moment was not unlike our own. Technological, economic and social turmoil were upending the traditions of the country. People trying to understand these changes and their implications found themselves confused by polarized politics and by a partisan press more focused on advancing its own interests than on informing the public.

Against this backdrop Adolph Ochs saw the need for a different kind of newspaper, and he committed The New York Times to the then-radical idea that still animates it today. He vowed that The Times would be fiercely independent, dedicated to journalism of the highest integrity and devoted to the public welfare.

His vision for the news report: "to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of party, sect, or interests involved."

His vision for the opinion report: "to invite intelligent discussion from all shades of opinion."

This mission feels particularly urgent to me today as I begin my work as publisher of The New York Times. Our society is again being reshaped by political, technological and environmental forces that demand deep scrutiny and careful explanation. More than 120 years after Adolph Ochs's vision was printed in these pages, the need for independent, courageous, trustworthy journalism is as great as it's ever been.

This is a period of exciting innovation and growth at The Times. Our report is stronger than ever, thanks to investments in new forms of journalism like interactive graphics, podcasting and digital video and even greater spending in areas like investigative, international and beat reporting. Our audience, once confined to a single city, now stretches around the globe.

This is also, of course, a period of profound challenge for The Times, for the news media more broadly, and for everyone who believes that journalism sustains a healthy society.

There was a reason freedom of speech and freedom of the press were placed first among our essential rights. Our founders understood that the free exchange of ideas and the ability to hold power to account were prerequisites for a successful democracy. But a dangerous confluence of forces is threatening the press's central role in helping people understand and engage with the world around them.

The business model that long supported the hard and expensive work of original reporting is eroding, forcing news organizations of all shapes and sizes to cut their reporting staffs and scale back their ambitions. Misinformation is rising and trust in the media is declining as technology platforms elevate clickbait, rumor and propaganda over real journalism, and politicians jockey for advantage by inflaming suspicion of the press. Growing polarization is jeopardizing even the foundational assumption of common truths, the staff that binds a society together.

Like our predecessors at The Times, my colleagues and I will not give in to these forces.

The Times will continue to search for the most important stories of our era with curiosity, courage and empathy — because we believe that improving the world starts with understanding it. The Times will continue to resist polarization and groupthink by giving voice to the breadth of ideas and experiences — because we believe journalism should help people think for themselves. The Times will hold itself to the highest standards of independence, rigor and fairness — because we believe trust is the most precious asset we have. The Times will do all of this without fear or favor — because we believe truth should be pursued wherever it leads.

These values guided my father and his predecessors as publisher as they steered this company through war, economic crisis, technological upheaval and major societal shifts. These same values sustained them as they stood up to presidents; battled for the rights of a free press in court; and overrode the financial interests of our business in favor of our journalistic principles.

The challenge before me is to ensure The Times safeguards those values while embracing the imperative to adapt to a changing world. I've spent most of my career as a newspaper reporter, but I've also been a champion of The Times's digital evolution. I'm protective of our best traditions, and I look to the future with excitement and optimism.

Much will change in the years ahead, and I believe those changes will lead to a report that is richer and more vibrant than anything we could have dreamed up in ink and paper. What won't change: We will continue to give reporters the resources to dig into a single story for months at a time. We will continue to support reporters in every corner of the world as they bear witness to unfolding events, sometimes at great personal risk. We will continue to infuse our journalism with expertise by having lawyers cover law, doctors cover health and veterans cover war. We will continue to search for the most compelling ways to tell stories, from prose to virtual reality to whatever comes next. We will continue to put the fairness and accuracy of everything we publish above all else — and in the inevitable moments we fall short, we will continue to own up to our mistakes, and we'll strive to do better.

We believe this is the journalism our world needs and our readers deserve. That has been the guiding vision for The New York Times across five generations and more than 120 years. Today we renew that commitment.


A.G. Sulzberger
PUBLISHER

LETTER

Rex Tillerson's View of World Affairs

TO THE EDITOR:
"I Am Proud of Our Diplomacy," by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (Op-Ed, Dec. 28), is as interesting for what it leaves out as it is for what it claims. There is, for example, no discussion of the United States' withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the withdrawal from the Paris climate accord, the decision to name Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, immigration restrictions for Muslim countries that have not, in fact, exported terrorists, and the flight of highly trained diplomats from the State Department.

Mr. Tillerson may (as my former ambassador friend claims) be a fine fellow, but the Trump administration is clearly making major mistakes.

PETER K. FROST
WILLIAMSTOWN, MASS.
The writer is emeritus professor of international studies at Williams College.

TO THE EDITOR:
Like Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, I, too, am proud of United States diplomacy. But as a recently retired career diplomat, I am deeply concerned by his support for 30 percent reductions to the State

Department and the United States Agency for International Development's budgets. These, in addition to the extensive personnel cuts in both organizations that Mr. Tillerson is unwisely pursuing, will do long-term harm to our country's diplomatic capacity.

At a time when the United States is facing serious national security threats around the world, we need robust leadership that strengthens this crucial capacity rather than undercuts and diminishes it.

MARK L. ASQUINO, SANTA FE, N.M.

TO THE EDITOR:

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's lopsided view of the world's hot spots conveniently ignores our Latin American neighbors. Clearly there must be some interest in a region where past efforts at regime change and military intervention have taught us lessons that could be applied to other parts of the world we struggle to understand.

As we lose our diplomatic clout throughout the Western Hemisphere, from Cuba to Argentina, we continue to treat the region as "banana republics."

DAVID W. DENT, BROOMFIELD, COLO.

The writer is vice president, Boulder-Cuba Sister City Organization.

Coping With the Loss of a Newborn Child

TO THE EDITOR:
Re "A Sorority No One Wants to Join," by Jen Gunter (The Cycle, Sunday Styles, Dec. 24):

I am an 88-year-old retired obstetrician/gynecologist. A week doesn't go by that I am not asked, "How many children do you have?" and a day doesn't pass that I don't think of our daughter, whom we lost at 48. But there is no need to say anything other than "we have three wonderful sons."

I recognize that a loss of pregnancy at any stage is an individual burden. Early in my practice, I learned how important it was to have the parents hold and bond with a stillborn or perinatal death child. Also to recognize that invariably the mother knew and mourned the anniversary of a pregnancy termination or a natural loss.

In my lifetime, I have experienced the grief of a miscarriage and the death of a daughter. It gave me added strength to counsel my patients. It never carried

"shame and stigma." Rather, it enhanced compassion.
WILLIAM F. BESSER
PRINCETON, N.J.

TO THE EDITOR:

Claiming that a woman cannot get over the loss of a newborn is a bleak and destructive idea. And it is not true.

I lost a newborn daughter when I was 25. It was my first encounter with death and the first time I had ever failed so miserably, so publicly, so completely. It was a shattering experience. But as the weeks went by, I saw the raw grief and loss morph into self-pity.

Grief does not last. Self-pity can go on forever. Recognizing the difference between the two was a formative experience in my life.

I wish that Jen Gunter, who, unlike most grieving mothers, left the hospital with two other, healthy babies, had better advice for her patients.

ANNE SCHOTT, GUILDFORD, N.Y.

Support for the 'Dreamers'

TO THE EDITOR:
I found "Dreamers' in Jeopardy, Get Support From Range of Stars and Businesses" (news article, Dec. 8) morally encouraging. But the success stories of young people in the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program are not being recognized and are being denied by a substantial number of Republican politicians in Congress.

Among today's Dreamers it is possible to identify future architects, engineers, social workers, lawyers, doctors, scientists, artists, business executives and so forth. Such a precious educational investment in these talented youths by thousands of teachers should not be underestimated.

Tragically, the Dreamers' deportation clock is still ticking. If thousands of educated Dreamers get deported as a result of politics in Washington, it will be at our own peril, particularly in the coming decades of global competition.

Today's Dreamers grew up American, socially, culturally and educationally! Legalization, and a clear path to United States citizenship, should be granted immediately to this vibrant sector of our future leadership.

ALEJANDRO LUGO, LAS CRUCES, N.M.

The writer is a professor in the School of Transborder Studies, Arizona State University.

Abuse of Afghan Women

TO THE EDITOR:

"#MeToo, Say Wary Afghan Women" (news article, Dec. 1) exposes the disturbing plight of Afghan women who face public humiliation for bringing instances of sexual abuse to light. But the consequences can be even more serious than being shamed by their community, as the state often brings criminal charges against women who speak up.

Public defenders at my organization, the International Legal Foundation, recently represented a 14-year-old Afghan girl charged with adultery after she told her parents that she was raped by her uncle. Because of the outstanding advocacy of our Afghan lawyers, trained and supported by international experts, the charges were dismissed, but only after the girl was incarcerated for four months.

The #MeToo movement must prioritize action, including where state institutions are the offender. As countries around the world seek to strengthen the rights of women, support should focus on organizations attacking this problem from all sides: protecting victims and fostering confident, capable female advocates who will shape society and the legal system.

JENNIFER SMITH, NEW YORK

The writer is executive director of the International Legal Foundation.

Splitting Up Families: A Heartless Migrant Policy

TO THE EDITOR:
Re "White House Weighs Separating Families to Deter Migrants" (news article, Dec. 22):

The Trump administration's plan to separate families caught entering the country illegally is not only cruel, but also runs counter to the tenets of sound, compassionate child welfare practice developed over decades. Doing everything possible to avoid unnecessary removal of children from parents is considered vital because it is in children's best interest and because it makes fiscal sense.

For children who must be separated for safety reasons, every effort should be made to place them with families. Child welfare systems

everywhere are reducing their reliance on residential care because institutions are no place for children to live even briefly and because they are extremely costly.

Simple humanity tells us that children and families who have endured the fears and dangers of fleeing their homes owing to poverty and violence will suffer lifelong trauma if also subjected to the destruction of the family unit. As a society we will be judged by how we treat the most vulnerable among us, and the draconian policy being contemplated here betrays a decidedly un-American heartlessness.

SUSAN NOTKIN, WASHINGTON

The writer is senior vice president, Center for the Study of Social Policy.