

Opinion

A4 WEDNESDAY, MAR 11, 2022

THE FARMVILLE HERALD

YOUR VIEWS I

A perspective according to history

To the Editor:
So much turmoil, too much anger, who or what is the cause.
The history that I have read tells me that all of this has happened over and over. There is so much distress during and after a disaster and there have been many in the history of the world. The European black death in about 1350 caused horrible havoc. Some blamed the Jews, there were many employment problems. Peo-

ple were dying. No one to work the farms.
The Great Depression of late 1920s that effected just about the whole world. Country blamed country. Would they work together to solve the problems? No.
The COVID pandemic has had the same results. Employment problems, inflation, blame for these things. Will people, governments work together for the best outcome for

society? No. Like always people support their own self interest. History repeats and repeats.
Why does the war in the Ukraine unite the caring and opinions of people and countries? Why didn't people and countries of the world care as much when the people of Rwanda were being butchered? I think everyone can see the danger of a world war in the Ukraine.
One thought about gun violence. It

is getting worse. Do we equate freedom with being able to be safe or is it "I want what I want no matter what." That looks like the mind-set of Putin. There will always be some disaster, but life will go on and as in history, people will survive. Let's care about our human family during good and bad times.

Marie Flowers
Buckingham

Flag misrepresents who we are

I read the letters to the editor supporting the flying of the Confederate flag and removal of the Confederate statue from High Street. The writers admonish readers for not respecting their views of history and references their "right" to stand up to the historical wrongs done to their ancestors. They call those of us who might see this symbol differently as "uneducated" or "communists." They provide a series of justifications for the unasked for raising of a Confederate flag over the entrance to our town and our community. Such a unilateral act of oppression has consequences.

This assault on our community is hardly a demonstration of "respect for each others views." If the writers had taken time to investigate when and why the statues were erected in the first place, if they had actually proposed a county-wide referendum on whether to raise the Confederate flag, then perhaps, it might have been a way to initiate a conversation about history. But like so many in the "alt-

right" today that promote hatred and white-supremacy, they do not want dialogue. During the 1860s-1880 statues were erected to honor the Confederate dead but most erected after 1890 during Jim Crow promoted the Lost Cause mythology that claimed that slavery was not the cause of the war. This disenfranchisement of African Americans was to keep the postwar political power in the segregated hands of whites who had lost economic power after the war with the loss of slavery and wanted to not only regain and retain it, but through Jim Crow laws, continue to oppress Black citizens by restricting access to voting, to fund a separate and unequal education which resulted in the Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision, and deny African Americans civil rights.

These issues are still alive in our community and in our country today. The Neo-Confederates in The League of the South carried the Confederate flag in the Unite the Right riot in Charlottesville and with their neo-Nazi

and so called "alt-right" allies brought it into the United States Capitol in Trump's failed insurrection to overturn a presidential election. Unfortunately, what may have originally been an attempt to honor those who died in the Civil War has been recast as a symbol of hate and oppression by Trump supporters and "alt-right" groups. According to a 2016 article in the Daily Beast by historian and writer, Kevin M. Levin, "For the Virginia Flaggers, It's Hate, Not Heritage," "many members have direct ties to White Nationalist groups such as the League of the South." Susan Hathaway the group's founder was photographed in 2012 with Matthew Heimbach who became the League of the South's training director and considered by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) to be "the new face of white nationalism" and agreed to join Kirk Lyons of the Southern Legal Resource Center, another group the SPLC cited as "Extremist."

Is this the message we want to send to parents bringing their children to



YOUR TURN
DR. CHAPMAN HOOD FRAZIER

college at Longwood University or Hampden Sydney College? Is this what we want those passing through Farmville or stopping at Green Front or hiking the High Bridge Trail to remember about our community? Personally, as a citizen of Prince Edward County, this image misrepresents who we are and what we stand for as Americans.

DR. CHAPMAN HOOD FRAZIER is a Professor in Residence from James Madison University in Prince Edward County Schools and Co-Founder of Sunrise Learning Center with his wife, Deborah Carrington. He can be reached by email at hoodfrazier350@gmail.com.

Gold mining comes with risks and rewards. But those aren't equally shared.

Buckingham County faces the prospect of a gold mine within its borders. Many of the county's residents are opposed to it. If it is permitted, there will no doubt be other companies looking to mine elsewhere in Virginia. The state has enlisted the help of the National Academies of Science and established an internal working group to assess possible environmental and social ramifications of mining. This is a conversation that needs to happen more widely because the stakes are very high.

Gold mining entails both risks and rewards. Who bears the risks and who reaps the rewards? That is a critical question for Buckingham County and for Virginia.

The principal risks are environmental. These include acid mine drainage, cyanide spills and the failure of tailings storage dams.

Mining involves a lot of earth moving – no surprise. The snag is that the same geological processes that produce valuable metals such as gold also tend to produce sulfide minerals – compounds of sulfur and minerals. The digging and churning bring the sulfides to the surface. They react with water to form sulfuric acid. This creates acid mine drainage. The acid promotes the further release of toxic metals that may be present,

such as cadmium, mercury or arsenic, into adjacent surface waters. A special feature of acid mine drainage is that it continues even after mining has stopped – essentially indefinitely.

Gold ores are processed with cyanide. The cyanide dissolves the gold which is then precipitated out through a variety of methods. Let's suppose that heap leaching – where cyanide is sprayed onto a huge pile of ore in the open air – would not be permitted. The processing would then be contained in large vats which don't pose any particular hazard. Nevertheless, large spills can occur during the transport and storage of the cyanide and the environmental impacts of those can be considerable.

The most common cause of mining-related environmental disasters is the collapse of the dam that contains the tailings. Tailings are what is left over after the ore is processed – a mixture of processing water, dirt and chemicals. Tailings dams are not built like ordinary dams. Instead of concrete, they are built with mine wastes – the worthless material shoudered aside as the mining progresses. Behind the dam, water management is the critical problem. The water needs to be kept away from the dam, held apart by a buffer of waste. Otherwise, seepage and erosion may

lead to breaching.

The design of a tailings dam is normally calibrated on maximum likely storm activity. Increased storm intensity and frequency are one of the most likely consequences of climate change. Many dams that have remained intact for decades may be vulnerable to a new climate regime. Since the tailings never go away, a tailings dam in principle needs to last forever. This is, plainly, a tall order.

It is possible to mine without creating environmental disasters. It costs a great deal more and companies will generally prefer to avoid the additional costs. For Virginians, protecting against disaster requires at the least a stringent regulatory regime backed up by adequate resources for enforcement. Additional safeguards would be very high bonding re-

quirements and independent engineering review of the plan for the mine and the tailings facility. All of these provisions require significant state resources.

What about the distribution of risks and benefits? The mining company gets any profits. Locally, there will be some increased employment and incomes although a good share of these benefits will go to workers from elsewhere who have specialized skills. It's fair to say that the potential rewards of a gold mine are heavily tilted towards the company.

The risks, on the other hand, are concentrated on the immediate area and downstream. Any negative environmental impacts will be felt locally. Any environmental disasters will be disasters for all the people in the way. There is abundant evidence

that low-income communities and communities of color throughout the U.S. are disproportionately exposed to environmental harms.

This fact has fueled what is known as the environmental justice movement. It recognizes that environmental and social harms cannot be disentangled. In essence, social justice and environmental justice are one and the same thing.

The people of Buckingham County are not rich. The median household income in the county is just shy of \$49,000 per year compared with \$76,000 for the state. About 34 percent of the county's population is African American compared with 20 percent for the state.

Buckingham County exactly fits the description of a community that faces a major environmental justice challenge. But it is not alone. Environmental justice is for everyone.

ERICA SCHOENBERGER teaches in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University.

To submit a letter to the editor please email

Editor@FarmvilleHerald.com



The Farmville Herald
Member: Virginia Press Association

All communication and monies should be addressed to The Herald, P.O. Box 307, Farmville, Virginia 23901 (USPS 188-020)

Published Every Wednesday and Friday Entered as periodicals at the post office at Farmville, Virginia under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879