

Editorial: End the gun epidemic in America

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the Dec. 4 New York Times.*

All decent people feel sorrow and righteous fury about the latest slaughter of innocents, in California. Law enforcement and intelligence agencies are searching for motivations, including the vital question of how the murderers might have been connected to international terrorism. That is right and proper.

But motives do not matter to the dead in California, nor did they in Colorado, Oregon, South Carolina, Virginia, Connecticut and far too many other places. The attention and anger of Americans should also be directed at the elected leaders whose job is to keep us safe but who place a higher premium on the money and political power of an industry dedicated to profiting from the unfettered spread of ever more powerful firearms.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Prevention can save lives

By Adam McGill

Like all of you, I am heartbroken about the mass murders that occurred in San Bernardino on Dec. 2. All of us were victimized. Of course, not at the same level of the victims'

families, the San Bernardino community, or the courageous first responders, but nonetheless many of us sensed some level of security slip away and more fear crept into our lives.

The frequency and severity of these events is cause for serious concern. Despite what the federal government may ultimately determine in San Bernardino, one of the principal objectives of terrorism is to instill fear in people and that objective was easily accomplished.



Adam McGill

In Truckee, your police department and its public safety partners routinely plan, train, and drill for events such as Wednesday's. I am very confident our staff would rise to the occasion and courageously respond to one of these horrific events and perform with valor. Our response would be heroic like the countless other police officers across the country who run toward gunfire on our behalf, but our response would not be the first opportunity to be courageous. That opportunity is reserved for you.

The first opportunity to be courageous most often occurs long before the first 911 call is made that someone is actively killing innocent people. In nearly every case whether it was a mass shooting or the Boston Marathon bombing someone was suspicious of the perpetrator's activity before the event and those suspicions were suppressed by the witness(es) for one reason or another. The police can respond admirably and even save some lives, but the vast majority of the carnage will have already occurred before they arrive.

Police response and training for these events is critical, but the most important effort must be in the area of prevention. In addition to the police, this responsibility falls upon the shoulders of all of you.

For the last few years, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has used the slogan, “see something, say something”. I believe we need to take it a step further – beyond “seeing” something. You must use all of your senses and instincts – report any questionable behavior whether we’re talking about true terrorism, workplace violence, or domestic violence, all can be equally as deadly.

Trying to triage or risk assess suspicious behavior on your own is woefully inadequate. The police are trained and equipped with resources not available to the general public. We have access to intelligence information and other tools to perform a thorough threat assessment of the suspect or situation. A threat assessment by the police does not automatically lead to public disclosures, arrests, or other visible police activity. Most often these investigations are very discreet with action only taken in situations that are imminent.

Reporting your suspicions to the police gives us the best opportunity to intervene and prevent a tragedy before it’s too late. We prefer you identify yourself so we can get the most accurate information about your suspicions, but callers can remain anonymous. Tips can be received in person, by phone, via email, or through our **online** tip system.

Tahoe Truckee Unified School District also uses a **text a tip platform**.

Living with the consequences of not reporting something or someone suspicious is a heavy burden that can be minimized by passing the information on to the experts and not either

ignoring your suspicions or “investigating” on your own.

If you find yourself in an active killing event, you must act. If you can run away, run. If you cannot run, try to hide, but if hiding is not possible or you’re about to be discovered, you must fight back.

Remember, run, hide, fight! A training video on this response can be found **online**.

Adam McGill is police chief of Truckee.

Editorial: Congress should approve Nev.’s daylight saving resolution

Publisher’s note: This editorial is from the Nov. 16, 2015, Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Daylight-saving time is a misnomer. Americans waste untold hours moving their clocks forward every spring and backward every fall, then dealing with the days of disorientation that accompany each adjustment. By ensuring that it stays hotter in summer evenings and gets darker sooner each winter, we end up saving neither daylight nor time.

Nevada could halt this counterproductive exercise if Congress would allow it. But the state’s congressional delegation doesn’t appear inclined to put in the time to make it happen. It will take some persuasion from the public to compel federal lawmakers to spare us from further falling back.

This year, the Nevada Legislature finally did something about

the clock changes that no one enjoys. Lawmakers approved a resolution to keep Nevada on daylight-saving time year-round, which would keep Nevada's clocks synced with most of the West through spring and summer, providing evening sunshine. But instead of falling back each November, Nevada would retain some early evening daylight in the winter. The darkness that falls so quickly after schools are dismissed and greets workers on their way home would be delayed.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Why some tragedies matter more

By Gregory Rodriguez

A terrorist attack on a familiar city can inspire a response among global observers not unlike that of motorists passing by a horrible car accident. We slow down to look, to try to understand what happened, see who was hurt, and wonder about the fate of the fallen. It isn't blood and gore we're after. It's recognition. Are the victims like us? Could that have been me?

The horrible events in Paris inspired a round of global rubbernecking and then a sloppy debate over whether the Western world cares more about the victims in Paris than those in Beirut or Kenya and now Mali. Predictably that debate quickly evolved into one over race and ethnicity.

But there's a deeper question to be asked here: How exactly does empathy work?

When the news of the Paris attacks hit, I was in a meeting in Washington, D.C., with a French-born publisher who quickly became anguished over the news. She grew up in Paris. Her daughter lives there now. In fact, her daughter frequents one of the targeted restaurants. While the events disturbed me, this French woman was clearly more pained. She was safe. Her family was safe. But the news invaded her consciousness in a way that seemed to affect her physically. At one point she sat down on the floor, hunched over, and stared gloomily at her smart phone.

It wasn't until I learned that Nohemi Gonzalez, a 23-year-old Mexican-American from Southern California, had been killed in the attack that news of the massacre struck me on a more personal level. Nohemi was an American. Like me. She was a Mexican-American. Like me. She was from Southern California. Like me. Suddenly the horrible events that occurred 5,600 miles away seemed closer to home. What I had seen as tragic now felt sad.

A few days after the attacks in Paris, I drove down to Cal State Long Beach, the university Gonzalez had attended, to ask some students how her death had influenced their emotional response to this act of terrorism.

At first what I heard were reactions not dissimilar to mine. People ticked off certain aspects of their multi-layered identities that connected directly to Nohemi's story, which, in turn, made them feel more deeply about the tragedy in Paris.

"All life is meaningful," 23-year old senior Ernie Smith told me. "But I related to the events more when I found out she was a student at Cal State Long Beach. Then it really hit home."

The distinction between generally caring and having that feeling really "hit home" is suggested in the difference between the origins of the words sympathy and

empathy. Sympathy derives from the Latin and Greek words meaning “fellow feeling.” The word empathy came to English from the German word *Einfühlung*, which means something like “inner feeling” or “feeling into.” While often used interchangeably, empathy carries a more intimate meaning than sympathy and suggests that the subject understands and is capable of sharing an emotion with the object. Sympathy, on the other hand, implies a greater distance. In a nutshell, you feel empathy when you can imagine being afflicted by the tragedy in question, and sympathy when you cannot.

What 26-year-old senior Catherine Gillespie then told me explains further how identifying—then empathizing—with a victim of a tragedy can help place you, at least on some psychic level, closer to the incident.

“The band that was playing at the concert hall where so many people were killed was from Palm Desert, California,” Gillespie told me. “I’m from nearby Indio. If I had been in Paris that night, I would have gone to see them play.” In other words, her identification with the band enabled her to imagine suffering the fate of the concertgoers, which therefore made her feel for the victims more deeply. Her response also suggests that there is a strong connection between empathy and fear.

Before the Paris attacks, I would have told you that selflessness is at the core of caring. But after the events in Paris and listening to people’s reactions, I realize that whatever else empathy does for our psyches, it is also a form of self-preservation. I empathize with you, because what happened to you could happen to me. And that would be really horrible.

Gregory Rodriguez is the founder and publisher of Zócalo Public Square.

Letter: Ameriprise invests in community by volunteering

To the community,

Every year in November, Ameriprise Financial advisors and employees participate in national days of service in partnership with Feeding America. This effort centers on helping the 49 million Americans, including 16 million children and 5.3 million seniors who face hunger in the United States.

On Nov. 9, the South Lake Tahoe Ameriprise Financial Services Inc. office sponsored a Bread & Broth Adopt A Day of Nourishment organized by Rick Gross, to join this nationwide effort to feed the hungry.

“We feel honored to help,” said Gross. “We would like to thank Bread & Broth for the opportunity to give back to the South Lake Tahoe community.”

B&B would like to thank Ameriprise Financial Services for the contribution of \$250 which fed over 100 dinner guests and helped provide giveaway bags filled with fruit, vegetables, dairy products, canned goods and breads/pastries.

Gross, a private wealth advisor, was joined by his Ameriprise Financial team members Melinda Gross, business development manager; Terry Hickey, financial advisor; and Liz Palmer, client service manager. These four sponsor crew volunteers are to be applauded for taking the opportunity to help people in need by giving their time and effort to support Feeding America and Bread & Broth’s goal of easing hunger for those in need.

Opinion: Casino industry regulation changes 'needed to happen'

By Howard Stutz, Las Vegas Review-Journal

The 2015 Nevada Legislature adjourned on June 1, but the session never ended for state gaming regulators.

Six bills passed by lawmakers and signed by the governor brought aspects of Nevada's gaming industry into the 21st century. But the legislation also required months of debate to change existing gaming regulations and write new laws.

"These were changes that needed to happen," said Gaming Control Board Chairman A.G. Burnett. "We've given the industry some good tools to work with."

Lawmakers and regulators addressed skill-based slot machines, increased sports book operations, specified the definition of illegal bookmaking, characterized equipment used to manage gaming, changed the effect of the state's live entertainment tax on casinos, and added rules requiring resorts to more stringently monitor their nightclub venues.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Questioning EDC CAO's past actions

By Larry Weitzman

Only five months into his tenure it is apparent interim CAO Larry Combs has firmly taken control of the county because the Board of Supervisors has all but conceded power to Combs. It looks as if the county has a new dictator. But are there problems developing as a result?

Before hiring Combs, the county was saddled with another interim CAO and still HR director, Pam Knorr. It is Knorr who brought Combs to this county to wreck his havoc. As with most recently hired high level county officials such as ACAO Kim Kerr, Knorr, interim IT Director Kelly Webb, and former CAO Terri Daly, background checks and a proper recruitment procedures were not followed. That now includes Combs.



Larry Weitzman

Combs has already dictated to the feckless BOS a reduction in road maintenance. It has been one year and yet no plan to find a quality CAO has begun. And with Combs, the climate of fear has turned into a climate of horror. Important tasks haven't been accomplished which will negatively impact the taxpayers, such as long overdue impact fee studies, yet not a peep from the feckless BOS.

Combs' background is easily accessible on a Google search. In a reading of various newspaper articles it appears Combs had a major hiccup in 2004 for "retaliation" against the then auditor of Sutter County, Robert Stark, (retaliation was the word used by Stark) where Combs was the CAO for about the last 20 years. How did it happen?

Combs in 2004 presented to BOS of Sutter County a huge increase in pension benefits for county employees, including himself, by about 30 percent. Combs said it would cost Sutter County about \$11 million. Unfortunately, Sutter auditor Robert Stark spoke up at the same BOS meeting and said the real cost would be almost double at about \$21 million. Before Stark became the Sutter County auditor in about 1984 the CPA worked for the state Controller's Office as a pension analyst. You could say Stark was a pension expert. But that didn't matter to Combs and instead of going with the expert, the BOS went with what Combs wanted and the increased pension benefits went into effect. In 2004 Sutter County pension costs were about \$1 million. Now they total almost \$13 million. Unfunded liabilities grew from what Stark said it would be at \$21 million to more than \$120 million.

Guess who received the largest benefit from the pension change in Sutter County? It is a rhetorical question as the answer is Larry Combs. How much you ask? Combs pension went from about \$120,000 a year to \$188,000 a year, which he is currently collecting along with about a \$14,000 annual pension from a short two-year stint as CAO of Merced County and \$4,159 annual payment from the EDD. Those numbers are from 2014. And he probably still cries all the way to the bank with his EDC annual paycheck of about \$92,000 for his half time job. For 2015, that will be more than \$300,000 a year, not counting his medical benefits.

But it's what Combs did shortly after the Sutter BOS meeting on the pension issue that is disturbing. It was widely covered in the local Sutter County Press. Combs sought to have Stark

indicted for misappropriation of funds when he transferred among other small book entries, about \$366,000 to a water district, a transfer that Combs' office signed off on and were approved by the BOS. These books entries also required an emergency declaration, something the CAO's office failed to put before the BOS, which created a technical violation, which could have been cured with a later emergency declaration by the BOS. Stark said it was an accounting entry that was necessary to balance the books and no money ever left the county treasury. But that doesn't stop Combs from his retaliation. How did Combs get the indictment? Was it because he had a friend in long time (since 1982) county District Attorney Carl Adams, who appeared to be in his hip pocket to do his bidding? Combs had many other issues with Stark such as when Stark questioned paying Combs' travel expenses that were submitted after they were 4 years old. Isn't that a standard business practice?

Not only did Combs set the DA's budget, after 20 years Combs probably knew where the bodies were buried. He controlled the DA. After eight years of legal wrangling, going to the California Supreme Court twice, the case was thrown out. It was a specious case that cost the county of Sutter well over \$1 million of taxpayer money in a totally failed prosecution, a county with an annual general fund budget of less than a \$60 million (El Dorado County's general fund budget averaged about \$200 million over the last 10 years and currently sits at about \$225 million). Combs during this period spent another \$70,000 of taxpayer money having an outside CPA firm audit Stark's work, only to find nothing. Combs obviously doesn't care about taxpayers. The bogus misappropriation case cost Stark his health and over \$400,000 in legal fees. Combs walked away from Sutter County in 2009 with a current \$188,000 pension, plus COLA.

In the aftermath, Stark won two re-elections; finally retiring from his position as Sutter County auditor in 2014.

That leaves us with what happened to Comb's friend, DA Carl Adams. Adams, a married man, was forced to resign from office in 2013 as a result of a well-publicized sex scandal when he was forced to admit after initially denying (lying about) he had an affair with a woman who was charged as an accessory in a murder case in Sutter County. Coincidentally that charged was dropped. Was that the first time for Adams or was this a pattern of behavior? Maybe Combs knows? Adam's pension, also enhanced by the Combs engineered pension increase is an annual \$142,895.64.

Larry Weitzman is a resident of Rescue.

Opinion: Snowmaking is logical even in a drought

By Richard Solbrig

Winter has arrived in the Tahoe basin with very welcome early snow events and freezing night time temperatures, allowing snowmaking operations to commence to help open ski resorts early. Given California's drought and the district's request for continued water conservation, one may wonder about the wisdom of using water for snowmaking.



While we are in a drought and are under state mandates to conserve water, we are not currently experiencing a water shortage in our service area. One of the challenges the district currently faces is balancing the needs of our community and our compliance with

California regulations. We are under a mandate to reduce water consumption by 20 percent, and we are required to enforce restrictions on landscape water use and certain commercial applications. There is no specific restriction in the regulations regarding the use of water for snowmaking.

District staff and the board of directors believe that we must take a prudent approach to conservation and attempt to minimize any negative financial impacts on our customers. The district has had extensive water conservation measures in place for more than 10 years. When considering additional restrictions to help meet our conservation target, it was decided to focus on landscape water use and waste. The restrictions were designed to allow our customers to maintain their existing landscapes, and their investment in them, while reducing overall water use and meeting state mandates.

Our community needs ski resorts and snow to continue to attract visitors because we have a tourism-based economy. Heavenly Mountain Resort is one of the largest employers in our community and provides abundant recreation opportunities for our visitors as well as our residents. By restricting the amount of water available to Heavenly for snowmaking, we could negatively impact our local economy and our community.

It should also be noted that Heavenly pays the same commercial rate for water as all of our other commercial customers. However, we have an agreement with Heavenly that allows us to immediately cease to provide them with water for snowmaking in the event that the district declares a water shortage emergency, such as during a fire event.

The sole source of the district's water supply is groundwater. We monitor the water depths in our wells regularly to ensure an adequate, stable water supply. In the event that our wells begin to show significant impacts from the drought, the district will implement additional conservation measures to protect our water supply, which could include restricting snow

making.

Richard Solbrig is executive director of South Tahoe Public Utility District.

Opinion: Can roads designed for cars be safe for bikes?

By Tim Hauserman, High Country News

Pam Jahnke was riding her bike on a section of Highway 89 near Lake Tahoe in an area where Caltrans had just installed a new storm-drainage system.

“The minute my tire hit the drain, I was air-bound and smacked down on the pavement in the middle of the road.” she says. The crash broke her collarbone and left the rest of her body so terribly bruised that for a while her skin resembled a garish sunset.

Riders confront a series of challenges every time they get on their bikes. Many roads are built too narrow for bikes and cars, and bike lanes on the edge of roads tend to get covered in debris or overgrown by vegetation, or else get blocked by unexpected construction signs. On some roads, traffic lights only work when cars reach the intersection; then they don't stay green long enough for riders to pass through before turning red. What's worse, storm drains are designed for the width of car tires, not bike tires, and what might appear like a small imperfection in a road to a car driver can prove a deadly obstruction to someone on a bike.

Read the whole story

Opinion: SLT – 50 golden years and counting

Publisher's note: *This is the final article in the series of stories about South Lake Tahoe's 50th anniversary. The other stories may be accessed by going to the top of the page, select Special Projects, then SLT Turns 50.*

By Wendy David



Leftovers are in the refrigerator and the feelings of gratefulness for being alive, having snow, wonderful snow and living in South Lake Tahoe are keeping me warm in spite of the cold temperature outside. We are fortunate indeed.

Fifty years ago today, I imagine many of the feelings were the same, but with a bit more excitement as the city of South Lake Tahoe was born. Happy Birthday South Lake Tahoe. As the only incorporated city in the Lake Tahoe Basin even 50 years later, the achievements of our forefathers are even more momentous and appreciated by all of us whom have followed.

My family came for vacation in June 1973, spent a month enjoying all the outdoor fun that a young family of four could have. At the end of July, we decided to stay. Staying and making South Lake Tahoe our home meant a commitment to investing in the future of our community. As the years passed we helped as new businesses were started, youth sports were initiated and expanded, bonds were promoted and passed,

amenities were added and South Lake Tahoe grew and matured.

Those that came to ski “just for the winter” bought homes, became parents, perhaps started a business and became leaders. Some of those leaders retired and moved to the sunshine. Children grew up. Some stayed and many left. New leaders emerged, loving South Lake Tahoe too, having the same dreams for their children as those of the previous generation. Our past has been celebrated all year as we thank and remember the people, the projects, the accomplishments and the evolution of the last 50 years of our city.



Wendy David

We have learned much in the last 50 years. We have learned that we cannot depend on the gaming industry to sustain our local economy. We certainly know our winter weather, or should I say the absence of such, can be devastating to our economy. We learned we are a community that cares for each other through good and bad times, as evidenced by the way we leveraged our collective resources during the Great Recession and every other recession: through a landslide that closed Highway 50 for months; through the devastation and loss of the Angora Fire; and in the good times we've come together to celebrate.

The flight of our middle class as home prices soared and families cashed in on the windfall also changed our community. We lost 25 percent of our school age population and some of our schools closed. Our neighborhoods changed from local, full-time families dominating ownership to having 75 percent

of our homes owned by second homeowners. Change is indeed the only constant.

The past is written and the future is yet to be. We are fortunate to be a part of the future for South Lake Tahoe today.

We are fortunate to be more collaborative than ever as we plan for the future. The TRPA adoption of a new Regional Plan that allows for a higher level of cooperation and partnership is leading the way. Douglas County, El Dorado County, the city of South Lake Tahoe and our public and private partners have been working on establishing a Legacy Action Plan together that will guide our future with shared goals.

The city of South Lake Tahoe is an integral leader declaring we are a premier recreation destination foremost. We are committing our efforts and investments in this priority. This goal includes the exciting expansion of our bike trail system and our new community play consortium in partnership with Lake Tahoe Community College. The consortium will add up to three additional fields at the college and renovate the existing soccer field, creating a central sports complex. In addition, we are continuing our progress on the master plan for the renovation of Regan Beach and will be inviting our community to help us envision a new city of South Lake Tahoe Recreation Complex on Rufus Allen Boulevard.

We continue our strong focus of economic development that improves our city. A citywide area plan will provide economic opportunities, and provide incentives toward improving the built and the natural environment. We will revitalize our hotel districts, implement our Tahoe Valley Area Plan, continue to invest in private and public partnerships while also continuing to restore and protect our neighborhoods and watersheds. We will encourage and incentivize partnerships and projects that will remove development from and restore environmentally sensitive areas.

I am often asked these two questions about being on the City Council. First question: Why did you run? The answer is simple. I have lived in and loved my community for more than four decades and want it to shine as it should. Second question: Are you crazy? Answer: I guess you need to be a little crazy to believe that you can make a positive difference. I extend the invitation out to join in being a little crazy with the rest of us in creating a bright future for our city as we begin our second 50 years.

This city is yours and at 50 years young, even with some of its age showing, and ours too, we have a very bright future together. Here's to you on your 50th, South Lake Tahoe. Cheers!

Wendy David is mayor pro tem of South Lake Tahoe.