

## The slow creep of extremism

There were many thoughts rushing through my head when Chase Bliss Colasurdo, 27, was arrested in Kent last month for threatening to bomb synagogues and kill President Trump's children.



**RAY MILLER-STILL**  
EDITOR

First and foremost, though, was, "Chase — what the hell happened to you?"

You see, we grew up together on Seattle's eastside, and lived in the same neighborhood. We'd play Spyro and Gex on the PlayStation, pretend we were Pokemon trainers with our figurines, or come up with schemes to annoy his older brother. If I remember correctly, his house was where I learned to make doubly sure I let go of the swing chains before taking a flying leap.

It was quintessential childhood.

We grew apart even before 6th grade, as kids do, and I almost never saw him again.

But now I can't help but wonder what kind of life he led, between the innocent days of childhood and the harsh reality of now, pleading guilty to making terrorist threats.

Without actually speaking to him — and to be fair, I'm not sure I want to, as he's also under investigation for cyberstalking and threatening journalists — details of his life are scarce. It's possible, even likely, his worldview is skewed due to his paranoid schizophrenia, though I would argue that's only small piece of the puzzle.

Whatever happened, he was in deep, as his Instagram page showed (I was unlucky enough to find the page before it was taken down, and spent at least an hour scrolling through some of the most hate-filled, misogynistic, and racist memes and videos I've seen made by someone I personally knew).

Unfortunately, I can't even say I'm surprised

See **SLOW**, Page 8

## Caught between two giants

*"Someone who takes the middle-of-the-road approach ends up being hit by traffic going in both directions."*

I never forgot this quote from a college friend. It applies to Canada today.

The Canadian government did a favor for the U.S. government when it arrested Meng Wanzhou, Huawei's chief financial officer, in December 2018, at the Trump administration's request. China responded by arresting two Canadian nationals, including former diplomat Michael Kovig.

China was trying to bully the Canadians to release Meng. When that didn't work, Xi Jinping upped his game by cutting back Canadian access to the Chinese market for export of soybeans, canola oil, peas, and pork. This tit-for-tat approach has hurt the Canadian economy. By February 2019, exports to China



**RICH ELFERS**  
IN FOCUS

had declined by 25 percent.

Canada is now caught between two major economic powers, China and the U.S., and has found itself being pummeled by both sides (Shapiro, Jacob L., "Canada: A Casualty of 'America First'" May 9, 2019).

China's moves have been passive-aggressive enough to give them "plausible deniability." As an example, the Chinese government revoked the export permits of two Canadian pork suppliers over a "labeling problem." In February, China banned the importation of Canadian canola oil because of "pest problems." In April, the government filed a quality complaint against a third Canadian canola oil exporter. Inspections and hold ups have increased beyond the norm for food products.

Canadian provincial governments have tried to act as if there is really no

problem at all, but that doesn't make a lot of sense given that the Chinese are currently suffering from an African swine fever epidemic where they have had to slaughter more than a million pigs. The Chinese need imported pork to compensate.

The Canadians have seen their exports cut off, forcing them to sell to Bangladesh and Pakistan at steep discounts.

There is nothing Canadians can do about it, so the government reached out to the Trump administration for help. They wanted the U.S. government to pressure China for them. The U.S. is Canada's biggest trading partner, but no help has been forthcoming. The U.S. government made a few supportive comments, but no attempt has been made to come to Canada's aid. The approach is "America first," with no help to a long-time ally.

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### LETTERS

#### Make developers pay for growth

Growth must pay for growth! This needs to be repeated now that we are beginning to see the reality of OakPointe development.

The Black Diamond City Council should consider that both the state of Washington and King County have bigger problems than the state Route 169 corridor between Renton and Enumclaw. The issues of traffic and general capacity of infrastructure need to be addressed by municipalities. The only reasonable path for Black Diamond is to require growth to pay for growth.

To maintain the quality of life, the rate of growth must be controlled to our area's ability to adjust. Presently there is no balance between requiring developers to make capacity increases before they are allowed to build more.

The city of Black Diamond has been letting OakPointe build too much, too fast and Oakpointe has taken advantage of the city's unwillingness to stand up to them. In the past two years, all of the following requirements have been deferred or waived:

- Meaningful open space conservation
- Road improvement design (SR 169/Ravensdale Road, Rock Creek Bridge)
- Water quality in our salmon-bearing streams (construction pollution running directly into Ginder Creek), low-impact development requirements and better stormwater treatment options ignored in favor of less effective underground storm water vaults
- Design of our city springs water system repairs
- Complete fiscal annual review

We need to require new development to pay more for their infrastructure needs and protect more of our natural areas.

We can't rely on the state, the county or

larger cities to protect our rural town. We have to do this for ourselves. If we fail, the declining quality of life is going to cause the people who can to move away. These are the people that keep the local economy healthy with money they earn regionally and spend locally.

The longer the city takes to properly address these matters the harder it will be to clean up the mess!

**Gary Davis**  
Black Diamond

#### Our national flag is being disrespected

National Flag Day is a celebration of the adoption of the flag of the USA by the Continental Congress June 14, 1777. Flag Day was officially designated by an Act of Congress Aug. 3, 1949 during Harry S. Truman's administration. Although the flag of the USA was flown June 14 on public buildings in cities before 1949, it was not official. Today, public buildings, schools, and private residences raise the flag from a pole or hang it in front of the building. A national flag flown at half mast tells us a national tragedy has occurred or a statesman has died.

Our national flag consists of 50 stars in a blue field for the number of states, and 13 red and white stripes for the number of English colonies that won their independence. The star field has evolved over the centuries as the nation expanded.

A flag carries enormous significance. It is a way for a country to portray itself to the rest of the world. For Americans, the national flag stands for freedom, pride, and justice. The flag inspired lawyer Francis Scott Key to write a poem called "The Defense of Ft. McHenry," later put to music as the "Star Spangled Banner." Ft. McHenry, Maryland, was bombarded by the English for 25 hours during the War of 1812, Civil War, and Mexican War, but no longer. The military now wears flag patches on the arm of the uniform.

Citizens lovingly refer to our national

flag as "Old Glory" or "The Red, White, and Blue," or the "Stars and Stripes." One is filled with great pride while driving down the highway and unexpectedly coming upon a huge flag streaming in the distance! Our national monuments in Washington, D.C. proudly furl flags on our around them.

Recently, flags designed exactly like the flag of the USA but using a black or other color stripe halfway between blue and white stripes are appearing. An organization called The Thin Blue Line USA states these flags are flown to show support for police with a black line. Apparently, the "thin blue line" design began as a "blue line between two black rectangles." You can now buy a flag with a red line for firefighters, a green line for border patrol, a grey line for correctional, a yellow line for dispatchers and a white line for EMS with blue and white stripes.

What happened to that original design? What is happening to our national flag? It has been infringed upon — hijacked. Altering our national flag by changing the color of its stripes to honor an organization is disrespectful. Companies that make such a flag and people who buy it are disrespecting our national flag.

Citizens, proudly display the "Stars and Stripes" in your neighborhood on national holidays — or everyday!

**Margaret Sikorski**  
Enumclaw

#### Thank you for the rhodies

We want to give a big thank you to GE&B Nursery for their generous donation to Enumclaw Evergreen Memorial Park. We had a few places that needed rhododendrons on the fence line at the cemetery, and with the donation of 11 large rhodies, we were able to fill them all. Thank you Ridge, Ellen and Dottie for the amazing service and generous donation.

**Enumclaw Evergreen Memorial Park**

## THE COURIER-HERALD

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# Slow

From Page 4

at his diatribes aimed at Jews, women, and politicians — it was the same drive spouted by the Pittsburgh and New Zealand shooters, and countless others before.

But I never, ever thought I'd know someone driven by these views, let alone be called to act on them.

It reminds me a little bit of a story my old journalism college adviser told me.

He was in a big city (Chicago?) when there was a spate of killings, and people were heavily encouraged not to be out at night.

Thinking themselves clever, my adviser and his friends came up with a

buddy system when they went out on the town — they'd still go out at night, but they'd pair off when they were done based on the proximity of their various homes.

One of the pair was a woman and a man, and he would consistently drop her off at her apartment before heading out himself. Until, one time, he didn't show up to get drinks.

Obviously concerned that no one knew of his whereabouts, a search commenced. Mind you, this is before cell phones, so who knows how long it took for them to find out their friend was alive and well... behind cell bars.

Because, as it turned out, this man would get blackout drunk with his friends, walk this one particular woman home, and then go

kill someone.

My adviser told me the woman went to visit him, to try and figure out how in the world this could happen to either of them.

I have no idea how much, if any, of this story is true, but the point I'm trying to make is that these sorts of things only happen to other people — until they happen to you.

There's no arguing that mass shootings have increased in the recent years, and I would suspect gun violence in general has as well. In fact, according to a Washington Post article, more than 6,000 people have died due to gun violence (not including suicides) since the beginning of the year to now — roughly 1,600 more deaths than the number of Allied soldiers who went to meet

their maker on D-Day.

But at the same time, the odds of being killed in a mass shooting is estimated to be 1-in-11,000, whereas the odds of dying from heart disease and cancer is 1-in-7.

There's data that says hate crimes have been on the rise in recent years, though there is other data that claims it only appears that way because more people are reporting hate crimes than in previous years.

But those numbers don't matter. What really counts is that I feel afraid.

I'm afraid that if someone I know — who grew up in the same suburban neighborhood and attended the same schools and had similar friends — is able to become so radicalized, so detached from reality, so sick, then this can happen to anyone.

I'm afraid that if Enumclaw is ever unlucky enough to be traumatized by a mass shooting, or an attack of hate, that as a community, we'll have to sit across the person responsible for injecting us with such a poison and ask them, "What happened to you?"

I'm afraid we would get the same empty answers I've come to about Chase: everything happened to him, and yet at the same time, nothing. There's not one, or ten, or a hundred things that would be able to adequately explain why he became the person he did.

There is just hate. Unquenchable, reckless hate turned my old friend into a monster.

That's what the Allies were fighting at Normandy Beach. Enemy soldiers, yes, and the Nazis and the Axis,

but the real foe was hate.

We won the day, but we have not won the war, and Chase was just one of its countless casualties.

He'll leave prison in a few years, and the system will keep an eye on him for a few years more. But after that, what is going to happen?

I can only hope he'll see how much pain his hate has caused him and everyone around him, and learn to let it go.

I've never liked relying solely on hope. Maybe that's why this has caused me so much grief, because I feel powerless to do anything.

All I can do is show love and compassion for everyone as best I can, Chase included.

I guess that's all anyone can do.

Love, and hope.

# Elfers

From Page 4

Shapiro's observation was: "The U.S. is pursuing negotiations with China to secure better trade terms for American companies — not for Canadian ones, even though China's economic expansion in recent decades has posed similar

problems for both countries."

American practice for decades was to not put "America first." Instead, by helping other nations, the U.S. developed close relationships and bonds of friendship and cooperation. The adage, "What you give to others you give to yourself" worked well in the past. The source of our past power has been in our positive relationships with other nations. China has few friends,

except dysfunctional North Korea.

Canada is too closely tied to us economically, politically and militarily to be able to break off relations, but by being as self-centered as we have been under the current administration there is going to come a time when Canada and our other allies are not going to be as quick to aid us when we need their help. When we give others criticism, arrogance and disregard,

we should expect that behavior to be returned to us.

In the world in which you and I live, having close trusting relationships with those around us makes our lives more harmonious and less stressful. What is true for us as individuals is also, to a great extent, true for relationships between nations.

Canada tried to be a friend and ally to the United States by

arresting the Huawei CFO. At the same time, it hoped to maintain good relations with China. It tried to take a middle-of-the-road approach. It is now being hit by traffic going in both directions. Next time — and there will be a next time — they may not be willing to be so cooperative with their neighbor to the south.

Trust has been corroded. Once lost, trust is very difficult to regain.

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## Independence and Imperialism

Tomorrow, America celebrates its independence. Independence means so much to so many. As Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl is quoted saying, "You can sing a song to 85,000 people and they'll sing it back for 85,000 different reasons."

Every day, we debate and challenge our freedoms — our rights to free speech, bear arms, vote, marriage, religion, privacy, and countless others — and their limits. Freedom is not, and never should be, a static concept; it must change with the times, but not without extreme consideration.

Of course, how those freedoms should be adapted is a matter of opinion; when one part of the country cheers, another feels trampled on.

But no matter which way the pendulum swings, you know you have allies in your local, state, and federal government, someone whose voice, values, and most importantly, votes, match your



**RAY MILLER-STILL**  
OUR CORNER

own, and that's a blessed concept.

Which is why I'd like you to imagine having no political voice, at least in your federal government.

Not just that you think your voice isn't heard, which is an understandable feeling. I literally mean no senators. No representatives, or at least any with a vote on the floor. And no right for you to fill out a general election ballot to

choose the next president of the United States.

That's the reality 4 million Americans live with, and the only reason they're saddled with fewer rights than the rest of us is because they were born in one of five American "territories" (read: colonies): Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

And just so I'm explicitly, exceptionally clear, these people are 100 percent legal, bona fide, red-blooded, sure-as-shooting American citizens.

Well, except for American

Samoans — they're U.S. nationals, which means they have even fewer rights than their occupied peers, as they can't vote in any election or hold any public office.

That, of course, is ridiculous, and is made ludicrous once you factor in that American Samoa had the highest military recruitment rate in 2014 and 2015 (153 and 171 recruits respectively) out of the 885 total recruitment stations across the country, other colonies, and allied nations.

Yes — there are hundreds of U.S. soldiers who will gladly fight for the freedoms you are about to celebrate while those rights are denied to them.

Guam and Puerto Rico are in the same boat: One in eight Guaminians — an estimated 20,500 people — are U.S. veterans, and more than 200,000 Puerto Rican soldiers have served in every military conflict since World War I, but their representatives to the House can't vote on a declaration of war, they have no senators, and they have no right to pick their commander in chief.

(That doesn't stop Guam from

holding a straw poll for president every four years, which, interestingly enough, has predicted which candidate received the most electoral votes since 1980, the only exception being the 2016 election.)

Speaking of Puerto Rico — home to 3.4 million Americans (roughly six times the population of Wyoming) — it would get five representatives in the House if it became a state. That's nothing to sneeze at, since that's more or equal to nearly half the representation other states get.

Additionally, becoming a state would give Puerto Rico seven electoral votes, more votes than 21 other states.

But whether the colony wants to become a state is still up in the air. There was a 2017 referendum where 97 percent of people who participated voted to become the 51st state — but only 23 percent of the population voted.

It's unclear whether other colonies want to be independent or try to become a state. In 1987, Guaminians voted to become a commonwealth like Puerto Rico (meaning it would have its own local government) but it was rejected by Congress, and there hasn't been another referendum on its political status with the U.S.

since. Other colonies had similar discussions in the 1950s and 60s, but I found little information on how their residents feel about their second-class citizenship in the present.

That should really change, because while Americans enjoy freedoms that can't be found anywhere else in the world, we are not free to be unequal, and despite the fact inequality is pervasive in all of American history, we should always be striving toward that shining standard.

And what better place to keep that momentum going than with our colonies.

It's long past time for Congress to lead the statehood debate, and for Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Northern Mariana Islands to seriously consider what they want — to be fully incorporated as a state, with full access to the rights and responsibilities all Americans shoulder, or to become independent nations, with constitutions and governments of their own.

All people are equal. No "ifs," "ands," or "buts" about it.

The song of the American Empire must end; let's sing to the United States of America.

## A simple rule for a better life: just tell the truth

*"If You Don't Know What to Do, Be Honest, Or At Least Don't Lie."*

These words are Rule No. 8 of Jordan Peterson's bestseller, "12 Rules of Life: An Antidote to Chaos." This axiom is helpful to me because I often find myself in situations where I



**RICH ELFERS**  
IN FOCUS

don't know what to say. Peterson's solution is simple and it usually works.

Peterson gives a narrative of how he came to this concept. He was a young clinical psychologist at McGill University in Montreal. As part of his training, he and his classmates

worked at Montreal's Douglas Hospital where they came in contact with the mentally ill. In this instance, they were standing in line awaiting further instruction from their professor when one of the female students was confronted by a fragile, long-term patient with schizophrenia.

The patient, a woman, asked the student in a friendly way, "Why are you all standing here? What are you doing? Can I come along with you?" The student turned to Peterson and asked what she should say. Both were concerned that their answer might either be seen as a rejection or a

reprimand.

There were no set rules or cues to guide them. Peterson saw two options: the first, a face-saving story, the other a truthful answer. To say, "We can only take eight people in our group" or "We are just leaving the hospital now" would fall into the first category.

Peterson instead said that they were new students training to be psychologists and the woman couldn't join them for that reason. The patient's reaction was at first crestfallen and then accepting. It was all right. That was reality.

On another occasion he was working with

a dangerous paranoid patient. Paranoid people see conspiracies everywhere. They become hyper-alert and hyper-focused. Nonverbal cues are intensely observed way beyond normal human behavior.

This patient began to tell hair-raising fantasies about flailing people for revenge. Peterson listened carefully and responded in a way to show how the patient's words affected him. Peterson said that his words scared him and that his behavior was misguided and would get the patient in trouble.

Peterson's words calmed him. This open, honest response built a level of trust between the psychologist and his patient. To get

a paranoid patient to open up to you, you need to speak carefully and truthfully.

In another case, Peterson and his wife had a big, strong, ex-con, alcoholic, French-Canadian biker landlord who was trying to stop drinking and would go on days-long binges. On some of those binges he would knock on their door at 2 or 4 in the morning, offering to sell his toaster or microwave so he could buy more liquor to drink.

At first, Peterson bought the items. Finally, his wife convinced him he couldn't do it anymore.

When the biker landlord came again, Peterson carefully and thoughtfully

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### THE COURIER-HERALD

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Elk on Trail update

There is so much excitement about our elk herd, we wanted to give an update and tell you about us.

The Enumclaw Garden Club is a nonprofit 501c(3) organization, established in 1922. As a nonprofit, we strive to serve the needs of the Enumclaw community. Throughout the years EGC has created and maintained many projects within the Enumclaw community, such as establishing and maintaining the Foothills Trailhead, Blue Star marker,

picnic tables with benches, free standing benches and the arbor. In addition we added the Pony at Dwight Garrett Park. We continue to maintain and plant flowers at the City Hall, the Senior Center, and VFW Memorial.

Our current project is the elk on the Trail, which is nearly completed. The overall response has been so positive! We continue our fundraising as we had unexpected expenses due to the need to hire certified welders to grind out the original welding and re-weld the Elk again to ensure the safety of the community.

We want to thank the community for their continued support and everyone that has contributed to the Elk on the Trail project.

Enumclaw Garden Club

#### Thank you for your kindness

The family of LeRoy Sonneson would like to thank everyone for the cards, letters, flowers, and gifts of food during his illness and passing.

The care, compassion, and kindness shown to him and his family by the staff of St. Elizabeth Hospital, Buckley Fire Department, and friends and neighbors will never be forgotten. Thank you.

Lucille Sonneson, Pam Wik, and family  
Enumclaw

## White nationalism comes to Enumclaw

Let's just get down to brass tacks — Patriot Front is a vile organization.

Maybe you're not familiar with the group. Remember the 2017 "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, where protesters chanted "Jews will not replace us"? Where James

Alex Fields drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, injuring 19 and killing Heather Heyer?

Yeah. That was them.

Or, rather, that was their start. Shortly after the rally, Patriot Front split from Vanguard America (the organizers behind the rally and another explicitly white supremacist group) in order to take on a new image — one that (poorly) attempts to hide its racism behind a screen of patriotism.

And sometime after the new year, Patriot Front came to town.

Enumclaw wasn't the only city to be peppered with posters



**RAY MILLER-STILL**  
EDITOR

promoting Patriot Front (I counted 27); my peers in other South King County cities have reported fliers being put up there as well.

On the surface, they look innocuous, even patriotic, as they sport the colors of Ol' Glory and promote messages inviting to the political right.

"Will your speech be hate speech?" one poster in downtown Enumclaw read.

"To ourselves and our posterity," another said.

"Better dead than red," was a third.

"Keep America American.

Report any and all illegal aliens; they are criminals," read a fourth at the Veterans Memorial Park, followed by the phone number for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

To anyone who wants to point out that none of those posters were racist, I will say this: you're right. I have ideological differences and disagree strongly with their messages, but they don't exactly scream "white power."

They save all that for their website.

This is literally the start of the second paragraph of their manifesto: "When our European ancestors first came to this savage continent they had a variety of purpose. Set against the harsh life on the frontier and the common enemy in the strange, unexplored reaches of America yet to be touched by civilization, they found a common cause and a common identity as Americans."

It quickly gets worse.

"Those of foreign birth may occupy civil status within the lands occupied by the state, and they may even be dutiful citizens, yet they may not be American. Membership within the American nation is inherited through blood, not ink. Even those born in America may yet be foreign. Nationalhood cannot be bestowed upon those who are not of the founding stock of our people, and those who do not share the common spirit that permeates our greater civilization, and the European diaspora."

And worse.

"The nation will see the thin veneer of civilization begin to wane as resources are diverted from them to the replacement population. The same population that has been imported to supersede the nation will then be enslaved upon our ashes. Those of our people in witness to this orchestrated tragedy will then be compelled towards the only body whose vision of the future includes them."

And worse.

"We can have peace and security only so long as we band together to preserve that most priceless possession, our inheritance of European blood, only so long as we guard ourselves against attack by foreign armies and dilution by foreign races."

That last quote came from Charles Lindberg, who's fame for flying solo from New York to Paris nonstop is rightfully shadowed by his Nazi sympathies.

I could hardly stand even reading their manifesto, and putting those words to paper made my

stomach churn.

But their encroachment on our community cannot go unrecognized or be met with apathy and silence.

These are not "very fine people." They are the echo of an evil so great that more than 14 million Allied soldiers, and countless civilians, were sacrificed before it lay smoldering at the world's feet.

But it did not die.

A few dozen posters and stickers may not seem like much. Some may ask, "What's the harm?" or even agree with the messages posted around town (after all, "Reclaim America" isn't that far off from "Make America Great Again"). Others may even defend Patriot Front's right to free speech.

That's exactly what they want, even more than recruiting zealots to join their march toward holocaust — they want to be accepted as harmless. Mainstream. A part of everyday life.

They are not harmless. This is not normal. And their legal right to free speech does not absolve us of the responsibility of challenging what we know to be wrong.

There is no place for their hate in Enumclaw.

## Student testing, as it exists today, creates a world of trouble

When I was teaching high school social studies, students were required to take the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) which was administered to K-12 students between 1997 and 2009.

Starting in 2015, public school students have been required to take the

Smarter Balanced Assessment. This assessment for English Language Arts 9 (reading, writing, listening and research) and math is administered in grades three through eight and 10. Science is tested in grades five, eight and 11. There are also interim tests. This testing is required by both the federal and state governments.

Sometimes, though, government gets it wrong, at least from one teacher's perspective.

Since I hadn't helped administer these statewide tests for several years, I asked a couple of teachers I know what their thoughts were about this standardized testing. Their attitudes reflect the same viewpoint I had 13 years ago.

The tests consume teaching time and change the focus at the schools. Much of the curriculum has been adjusted to prepare for these tests. The tests themselves usually consume three half-days of the 180-day school year. Since time is finite, something has to go. Rather than spending time on course material, it is spent either preparing for or taking the test.

No school and no teacher wants to be branded for poor student performance on these tests. That's the major problem: students are not held accountable, teachers and administrators are.

There is no incentive for students to do well. Students are neither rewarded nor punished if they do well or poorly. Parents are not held responsible, either. Although students only



**RICH ELFERS**  
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attend classes about 6.5 hours a day, schools and teachers are expected to be able to overcome outside influences on student attitudes and behaviors. Other factors also come into play.

At home, students are affected by parental attitudes

about learning and the importance of education. Since both parents work in many American homes, they are often tired. Also, parental attitudes about the importance of getting a good education vary among families. Some value education highly while others see no point to getting much of an education. Their experiences in school were negative and they pass those attitudes on to their children.

Students are also affected by their peers. If their friends don't value the testing, those attitudes are passed on, affecting student scores on the standardized tests.

Additionally, according to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction website: "Test refusals penalize schools and districts. Students who do not test are counted among the number of students who do not meet standard. This is reflected in the Accountability Index.

Schools and districts that fall below a 95 percent participation rate on state tests jeopardize eligibility for any state or federal awards or recognitions."

If parents and students opt out, there is nothing the schools can do other than cajole and encourage. The tension among teachers and administrators is palpable, according to one teacher I talked with.

Political realism has been built into the system as seen in this OSPI comment: "Meeting standard on the high school test is *one* (emphasis mine) of the pathways a student can use to demonstrate post-secondary career or college readiness." If doing well on the tests was required for graduation, student attitudes about the testing would change dramatically.

Since there are parents who rebel at these standards and those parents might vote against the legislator or state elected officials who set up mandatory requirements, options have been created. Angry parents might complain to district administrators about those expectations. Angry parents vote against school levies and bond issues which provide much of the revenue for public schools. It becomes a question of

politics, not what's best for the students.

Teachers and school officials bear the brunt because they stand between the parents and the politicians. This tension doesn't create high test scores or good public education.

What are the solutions? Find a way to create accountability for the students. Train parents to become more involved in the education of their children. Find a way for politicians to come up with good laws that reinforce the importance of learning and help preserve the family, which is really the basis for good student performance. Change the way of assessing student progress that is realistic and doable.

All of these proposed changes require cultural and political rethinking. Politicians as a group are cowards. They're more concerned with getting re-elected than they are in doing what's good for society. We live in a nation, though, where "We the People" are actually in charge. That's you and me.

As anthropologist Margaret Mead noted, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

### THE COURIER-HERALD

Send letters to [rstill@courierherald.com](mailto:rstill@courierherald.com) or 1627 Cole St, Enumclaw, WA 98022. Deadline is 5 p.m. Thursday. All letters should be typed and must include a name and phone number or email address for verification. Letters should not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for content. The opinions of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Courier-Herald.

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