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SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2014 THE GREENVILLE NEWS

VOICES

THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

Sunshine Fund helps neighbors



Suzanne Fields Columnist

Court ponders speech

When the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court recites lyrics from a rap song about violence and murder, you can bet he's not rehearsing for a shot on "Saturday Night Live." He's inquiring into the redeeming value of the crude and coarsened language of social media.

Chief Justice John Roberts quoted the lyrics of rapper Eminem's popular rap about a man who killed his ex-wife and described the murder to their young daughter, whose help he seeks in getting rid of mommy's body: "Da-Da, make a nice bed for mommy at the bottom of the lake."

The justice asks whether such graphic language by a rapper embroiled in a current fight with his ex-wife could be interpreted as a real-life threat. "Could that be prosecuted?" he asked the lawyer for one Anthony Elonis, whose client had been sentenced to 44 months in prison in violation of a federal law making it a crime to communicate "a threat to injure another person" through interstate commerce, i.e., the Internet.

Elonis had created a fictional narrative about his estranged wife's "murder," which a jury determined made a "reasonable person" fearful. If Eminem's lyrics were created to entertain, so then were those of Mr. Elonis, his lawyer replied: The difference was in the reaction to them rather than the intent, and both should be protected speech.

What the Supreme Court has to figure out now are the legal distinctions, if any, between Eminem's brand of entertainment and the argument of Anthony Elonis that he is an aspiring rapper whose angry rap on Facebook about the wife who left him is merely artistic creativity. Not only that, the words were "therapeutic" for him, not threats aimed at her.

A sample of the Elonis Facebook "therapy" makes it a tough call: "There's one way to love ya but a thousand ways to kill ya. I'm not going to rest until your body is a mess, soaked in blood and dying from all the little cuts."

The court is thus asked to believe such violent rants are harmless creative stories, merely salve for the wounds to an angry husband's psyche, balm for the hurt feelings of an aspiring star.

Mr. Elonis' estranged wife testified that she was terrified for herself and felt she was verbally "stalked." After a lower court sent her husband a "protection from abuse" order, her fear increased when he asked, in a verbal post, whether the court order would stop a bullet.

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For 37 years, the Holiday Sunshine Fund has brought comfort and joy to thousands of area residents who need heat for their home, shelter from the cold streets, a Christmas gift for children who otherwise would go without, and groceries or clothes for people with limited financial means. This is the season of giving, and the Holiday Sunshine Fund is a popular and well-respected way for people who have much to share with those who have little.

This year the Holiday Sunshine Fund expands its reach at the same time it is working to better connect and help the Greenville area, as well as the Asheville region. The Asheville Citizen-Times is the newest sponsor of the holiday fund that was started in 1978 by Rhea Eskew, who then was co-publisher of The Greenville News, and Bern Mebane, who was the company's general manager at the time.

Ten years ago, WYFF joined as a partner in the Holiday Sunshine Fund, and the partnership with the two media outlets helped increase participation in this holiday charity. The addition of the Asheville newspaper is another exciting development, and it will enhance the involvement in Western North Carolina.

"We're proud to be part of this for another year. We're also excited about now including the Asheville market as part of it," Dave Neill, president and publisher of The Greenville News and the Asheville Citizen-Times, said in a Thanksgiving day story that kicked off this year's campaign.

"We're striving to better connect and help both communities, and this is just the perfect venue for us to do just that." The Holiday Sunshine Fund is one of the most efficient charities that you can find. The 501(c)(3) has no administrative costs or overhead. That means that every penny donated to the fund stays in our communities to help our neighbors in need. Agencies submit requests for grants, and the fund's board of trustees reviews those requests and distributes the charitable dollars raised each year.

This year's goal is an ambitious but fully attainable



Once again Greenville News employees will answer phones on Wednesday during the Holiday Sunshine Fund's on-air telethon during the WYFF 4 afternoon newscasts.

\$100,000. Last year, \$82,460 was raised through the Holiday Sunshine Fund, and a successful campaign in 2014 will put the fund's cumulative total near \$1.5 million. The fund is able to help others because this is a generous community, and people are inspired throughout the year, and especially during the holidays, to share with our less fortunate neighbors.

Some of the agencies that have been better able to carry out their work of helping others because of Holiday Sunshine Fund donations include The Salvation Army, Downtown Outreach Ministry, Trueme Mercy Center, United Ministries, March of Dimes, GAIHN, SHARE's Operation Warmth, Safe Harbor, Greer Relief, Operation Shoehorn and Pendleton Place.

Miracle Hill, for example, provides a bridge between homelessness and hopelessness to hope for many people in the Greenville community, as Jocelyn Slaughter, Miracle Hill's development marketing manager, shared with The Greenville News. She said the utilization rate at their shelters has increased over the years, and they are seeing more people needing services. Last year, Miracle Hill used its Holiday Sunshine money for general operations that included utilities, housing and food.

This year's Miracle Hill will go for services for homeless men and homeless families, and for a program helping women in the addiction recovery program. Clement's Kindness Fund helps families who are dealing

with pediatric cancer and serious blood disorders. Trueme Mercy Center is a mission church that ministers to and alongside Greenville's homeless population. Downtown Outreach Ministry helps needy people in many ways, including providing temporary assistance with utilities, appliances, furniture, clothing and food. These are just a few of the agencies that can do more good in our communities because of donations given this month to the Holiday Sunshine Fund.

Gifts to the fund are eligible for a tax deduction. Donations can be made at www.greenvilleanline.com/HSF, WYFF4.com, or the donation can be mailed to: Holiday Sunshine Fund, P.O. Box 1688, Greenville, SC 29602.

Another wonderful opportunity to learn more about the Holiday Sunshine Fund and make a donation will be Wednesday during the Fund's annual telethon on WYFF. Greenville News and Asheville Citizen-Times employees will staff the telephones during the afternoon newscasts so people can call in donations.

During this season of cheerful parties and lively family dinners, of dazzling lights and uplifting concerts, it is always good to remember our neighbors who are doing without this holiday season. There are many ways to begin to improve the lives of others. The Holiday Sunshine Fund provides an excellent way in this season of giving to reach out to those in our community who need a helping hand.



Charles Krauthammer Columnist

Party tries to regroup

Old habits die hard. The media are so enamored of the continuity (and largely contrived) story about the great Republican civil war that they fail to appreciate that the real internecine fight is being waged on the other side of the aisle.

I grant that there's a lot of shouting today among Republicans. But it's a ritual skirmish over whether a government shutdown would force the president to withdraw a signature measure — last time, ObamaCare, this time, executive amnesty.

And it will likely be resolved with the obvious expedient of funding the government through next year. That way, defunding the executive order could be targeted to just the issue at hand, namely immigration, and would occur when the GOP holds the high ground — control of both houses of Congress.

It's a tempest in a teapot, and tactical, at that. Meanwhile, on the other side, cannons are firing in every direction as the Democratic Party, dazed and disoriented, begins digging itself out of the shambles of six years of Barack Obama.

The fireworks began even before Election Day, with pre-emptive backstabbing of Debbie Wasserman Schultz, chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee, by fellow Democrats.

This was followed after the electoral debacle by bitter sniping between Obama and Harry Reid when Reid's chief of staff immediately — and on the record — blamed the results on Obama. In turn, Obama got his revenge last week by sabotaging a \$450 billion "tax extension" deal that Reid had painstakingly negotiated.

But the Democrats' civil war goes far beyond the petty and the personal. It's about fundamental strategy and ideology. The opening salvo was Chuck Schumer's National Press Club speech, an anti-Obama manifesto delivered three weeks after Election Day openly denouncing Obamaism. In essence: Elected with a mandate to restore the economy and address the anxieties of a stagnating and squeezed middle class, Obama instead attacked, restructured, reorganized and destabilized a health care system that was serving the middle class relatively well.

Eighty-five percent of Americans already had health insurance, argued Schumer. Yet millions have suffered dislocations for the sake of a minority constituency — the uninsured — barely 13 percent of whom vote.

This has alienated the Democrats' traditional middle-class constituency. Indeed, in a 2013 poll cited by The New York Times' Thomas Edsall, by a margin of 25 percent, people said ObamaCare makes things better for the poor. But when the question was does it make things better "for people like you," ObamaCare came out 16 points underwater.

That's how you lose elections, Schumer argues. And forfeit large

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LETTERS

Don't give Clinton credit for economy, welfare bill

In her article (in the Nov. 18 USA Today section of The Greenville News), USA Today's Washington bureau chief Susan Page credited President Bill Clinton with balancing the budget and signing a major welfare bill. Clinton supporters love to credit him with these accomplishments. However, it would be more accurate to say the budget was balanced in spite of Clinton, not because of him.

You may recall he did such a poor job with the economy in his early years that Newt Gingrich and his Contract With America were voted in. That slowed Clinton's spending at the time of the dot.com surge, which made the budget appear balanced briefly. As for welfare reform, Clinton vetoed it twice, then signed it with no significant changes a few weeks before his re-election, when his polls showed he needed to support it to win.

In truth, Clinton brought us two recessions, the first under way when he left office. The second was the Great Recession we are still trying to get out of. Even Warren Buffett cites the housing bubble as the cause of that, which Clinton, along with Barney Frank in the House and



Christopher Dodd in the Senate, passed to garner votes among low-income voters. It changed common-sense sub-prime home loan rules, resulting in the flood of defaults and foreclosures its opponents said would happen.

God help us if Hillary Clinton gets in, though it's safe to say her failings will also be spun into glorious accomplishments.

Frank Lennon Piedmont

Family structure is key to financial stability

This is in response to those who write about the economic inequity in our country. It has been cited that in spite of an improving economy, the poor are seeing less income, while the top earners are getting richer. It has been suggested that the federal government must step in to make things more equitable.

It is my belief that the problem has its roots largely in our declining social structure. To just try and solve it by moving money around is not a long-term solution to financial comfort or happiness.

A recent editorial cited that in the 1950s, the top earners reaped 20-30 percent of an increasing economy, while the lower tiers saw as much as a 70-80 percent increase. What did our country look like then in terms of the family? I contend that there was a much stronger family struc-

ture. What we teach children in their younger years about their self worth and morality is of vital importance to our future as a country.

I contend also that our moral laws are deeply rooted in Christianity. Financial security is important, but some of the happiest and most content people I know have little materially (but a faith-based life), while some of the most unhappy are wealthy.

So if the goal is financial security, I suggest we attack one of the main roots of a very complex problem. A root that is rotting due to the decline of the family and morality.

Vickie Shallcross Piedmont

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