

Standard online reader survey



Q: Do you think having a new head coach will help the Tennessee Titans?

YES 41%
NO 59%

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Addressing our county officials should be easier

TO THE EDITOR:

I read the *Southern Standard's* editorial in the Friday, Jan. 12 edition seeing no small degree of irony.

The viewpoint expressed was their indignation that a teacher in "faraway Louisiana" had been physically removed from a school board meeting during the public comment time allotted. The irony, of course, is the same would likely occur here in a Warren County Commission meeting, should a citizen not jump through all the hoops erected by the commission to keep them from voicing their views.

It wasn't that long ago, by my recollection, that citizens were not even allowed to speak except by permission of the county executive at a commission meeting until a 3rd District commissioner took the initiative to provide them with a platform to air their thoughts on local issues, be it taxes, the animal shelter, etc.

Still, in order to speak,

a citizen must provide notification two weeks prior to the meeting as well other details. Does that sound like the commission really wants to hear from those they work for?

So, while I applaud the *Southern Standard* for supporting the right of citizens to be heard, I have yet to see an editorial that takes to task the County Commission here in Warren County for erecting a process that basically says: We don't care what you think and don't have to listen to you.

One would have to ask why the county's paper of record hasn't commented on this form of repression right in their backyard. Could it be that the editors travel in the same social circles as many of those commissioners and wouldn't want to offend them? As Mark Twain once said: "Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often."

Jeff Mathes
Peach Ave
Morrison

WE HAVE A NEW PSYCHOTIC KILLER AROUND TOWN...



OLD MAN WINTER



ROBERT H. BLOOM 2018

Keeping the president honest

As Donald Trump marks his first year in office, this question is more critical and consequential than ever: How should the media be covering the president?

There's no doubt Trump has changed the rules of the game. He fabricates repeatedly and never apologizes. His vast social media network enables him to communicate directly with his supporters. He withholds critical information that other presidents have routinely released, like his taxes. And he regularly attacks the credibility of the press.

The president's aim is clear: to undermine an institution that is empowered by the First Amendment to hold him, and politicians of all stripes, accountable for their actions. Sen. John McCain criticized Trump's campaign in the *Washington Post*: "Journalists play a major role in the promotion and protection of democracy and our unalienable rights, and they must be able to do their jobs freely."

Journalists are taking a more aggressive stance in covering the Trump White House, and that's a good thing. The voting public deserves to know that what the president tweets at midnight, or rants at a rally, is not the whole story.

One key moment came in September 2016, when *The New York Times* used the word "lie" in a story about Trump's promotion of the "birther" conspiracy. NPR asked *Times* editor Dean Baquet, "Has something changed in the way the paper covers

and writes about Trump?" And Baquet answered, "Yes, the simple answer is yes."

Trump "sort of crossed a little bit of a line," explained Baquet, and what he said "was just demonstrably a lie. ... And I think we owed it to our readers to just call it out for what it was."

Baquet was right about that. So were the news organizations that labeled Trump a "racist" for favoring immigration from predominantly white countries like Norway over predominantly dark-skinned nations in Africa and the Caribbean.

The risks for the media are considerable. Incendiary words like "lie" and "racist" have to be used rarely and precisely, saved for the president's most egregious and destructive comments. Otherwise, words lose their power and journalists lose their credibility. And as Baker warns, even small mistakes have to be avoided at all costs.

Brian Ross of ABC made a serious error, going live on the air with a story the former national security adviser Michael Flynn was going to testify that Trump, during the campaign, had instructed him to contact Russian agents. The story missed a key fact — that this happened after Trump was elected, not before — and ABC News President James Goldston was furious.

Journalists cannot afford to get it wrong. In covering Trump, they have to be as fearless, as accurate, and as fair as possible. Otherwise, they jeopardize their essential role in keeping the president honest.

Steve and Cokie Roberts can be contacted by email at stevecokie@gmail.com.

COLUMNISTS

STEVE & COKIE ROBERTS



Oprah Winfrey and religion

No one has to tell Marcia Nelson about America's rising number of "nones" — people claiming zero ties to a religious tradition — because she meets them day after day while working as a hospital chaplain in Chicago.

"Lots of people want you to pray with them, but they'll also make comments that let you know they really don't like the institutional church," said Nelson. "They want you to pray, but they don't want traditional religious language. ... When you're in that situation, what you have to do is try to pray like Oprah."

America had another Oprah Winfrey moment the other day, when the 63-year-old billionaire media maven delivered a Golden Globes sermon that created rapture in Hollywood and a heady buzz among journalists and politicians. NBC gushed on Twitter: "Nothing but respect for OUR future president."

Winfrey raced from the birth of the Civil Rights movement to today's headlines, while focusing on the pains and triumphs of abused women.

"In 1944, Recy Taylor was a young wife and mother walking home from a church service she'd attended in Abbeville, Ala., when she was abducted by six armed white men, raped and left blindfolded by the side of the road," said Winfrey. "They threatened to kill her if she ever told anyone, but her story was reported to the NAACP, where a young worker by the name of Rosa Parks became the lead investigator on her case. ... But justice wasn't an option in the era of Jim Crow."

The men who tortured her were never prosecuted, a common story in a "culture broken by brutally powerful men. But their time is up ... It was somewhere in Rosa Parks' heart

almost 11 years later, when she made the decision to stay seated on that bus in Montgomery, and it's here with every woman who chooses to say, 'Me too.'"

If Winfrey seeks the presidency, she might offer Democrats a friendlier approach to faith and some of the hope Barack Obama brought to discussions of race, said Nelson. And it's hard to name another American with Oprah's ability to face a camera and tell women — white and black, suburban and urban, rich and poor — that a specific belief or decision will change their lives.

"Oprah can say, 'This will work,' and people believe her," said Nelson.

Clearly, this is linked to Oprah's vague, "spiritual but not religious" approach to life.

The result, according to Ross Douthatt of *The New York Times*, is a "religious individualism that blurs the line between the God out there and the God Within, a gnostic spirituality that constantly promises access to a secret and personalized wisdom, a gospel of health and wealth that insists that the true spiritual adept will find both happiness and money, a do-it-yourself form of faith that encourages syncretism and relativism and the pursuit of 'your truth.'"

Is Oprah the "pope" of the religiously unaffiliated? If that label fits anyone, it would be Winfrey, said Nelson.

"She talks about God, but for Oprah that can almost be the God of the week, the spiritual flavor of the week. ... How she talks about spirituality and about truth is constantly changing. That's her gift. That's who she is. For her, that stuff will preach."

Terry Mattingly is the editor of *GetReligion.org*. He lives in Oak Ridge.

ON RELIGION

TERRY MATTINGLY



STAHLER. 1/20

© 2018 Jeff Stahler/Dist. by Andrews McMeel Syndication

Established 1879

Southern Standard

Publication No. 506-840

Patricia Zechman, Publisher
James Clark, Editor

Phyllis Vanatta, Business Manager
Jeffery Simmons, Advertising Director

Phone: 473-2191
105 College St., McMinnville, TN 37110
FAX: 473-6823

Email: standard@blomand.net
Website: www.southernstandard.com

Copyright Standard Publishing Company,
All Rights Reserved

