

Editorial Opinion

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THIS WEEK ON 'NAPLES DAILY NEWSMAKERS'

The intersection of school board policies and politics, and the new dean of the Ave Maria School of Law are up front for "Naples Daily NewsMakers with Jeff Lytle" on Sunday morning at 10 on ABC7. Kelly Lichter, left, Collier County School Board member-elect, discusses whether Collier schools will join the testing opt-out debate, while Roy Hyman, new Lee County GOP chairman, says Common Core should be a part of that debate. Kevin Cieply from Ave Maria discloses potential joint programs with Florida Gulf Coast University. Video highlights will be posted at naplesnews.com/newsmakers.

Guest commentary

Gentle'men can begin changing generational cycle of abuse

By Linda Oberhaus

Naples
Executive director, The Shelter for Abused Women & Children



Linda Oberhaus

There is an adage that "seeing is believing" and for many Americans, the video of Ray Rice punching his then-fiancée Janay Rice and dragging her unconscious body from a casino elevator delivered a sharp slap of reality that we face every day at the shelter.

The 49 seconds of footage catapulted Rice's two-game penalty into an indefinite suspension of his football career, but more

importantly spiraled the issue of domestic violence straight into our homes, our workplaces and our daily lives.

There is plenty of blame to go around as to the mishandling of this case. We can point fingers at the legal system, NFL leadership, Ray Rice and, oh yes, there is abundant blame directed at the victim, Janay Rice. I would like to focus my comments on the bigger picture.

For too long, domestic violence has been seen as a "woman's issue," giving men license to tune out and largely be erased from the conversation. Victim blaming is pervasive in our society, as evidenced in Janay Rice's highly publicized apology for "her role" in her own beating. Many ask: Why did she marry

him — and why does she stay?

The real questions should be directed at the abuser — the source of the problem. As a society, we should be asking: Why does he beat his partner? — or: Why does he abuse young children? or: Why does he rape?

The answer to these questions and the solution to change patterns of abuse lies in the hands of men themselves. Silence, as too long demonstrated by the NFL, is a form of consent. We need to break the silence and we need more men willing to step forward as allies in our efforts to end violence and abuse.

In 2008, an all-male group of shelter supporters did just that by establishing Gentle'men Against Domestic Violence. Inspired by the shelter's ground-

breaking Raising Gentle'men program, these role models provide funding and support to stop the generational cycle of abuse.

Raising Gentle'men has been presented to more than 2,000 young men in local middle and high schools, challenging their beliefs about men, women and their roles in society. Traditional stereotypes of men as controlling, aggressive and gaining power through violence are replaced with truths that men can be gentle, compassionate and kind without risking their "manhood."

The shelter is proud of these highly recognized community leaders who have stepped forward to take ownership of this issue to positively impact the lives of our mothers, daughters,

sisters and loved ones who are routinely impacted by gender violence.

"The Raising Gentle'men program will have the longest-running effect on reducing domestic violence in our community," explained Gentle'men Against Domestic Violence founding member Jim Jessee. "Bringing this concept to men and boys who are most likely to be involved in an incident of domestic violence is attacking the problem at the grass-roots level. We must continue to expand this program."

If you are a gentle'man who wants to help prevent, protect and prevail over domestic violence in your community, call me at 239-775-3862.

Change begins with you.

On this date

Today is the 255th day of 2014 and the 84th day of summer.

Today's history: In 1609, English explorer Henry Hudson entered the river that would later bear his surname.

In 1940, four teenagers discovered prehistoric paintings, estimated to be 15,000 to 17,000 years old, in a cave in Lascaux, France.

In 1953, Sen. John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier in Newport, Rhode Island.

In 1959, the Western series "Bonanza" premiered on NBC.

In 2011, the National September 11 Memorial and Museum opened in New York City.

Today's birthdays: H.L. Mencken (1880-1956), journalist/critic; Ian Holm, actor, is 83; George Jones (1931-2013), singer-songwriter; Barry White (1944-2003), singer-songwriter; Joe Pantoliano, actor, is 63; Ben Folds, musician, is 48; Louis C.K., actor/comedian, is 47; Jason Statham, actor, is 47; Paul Walker (1973-2013), actor; Jennifer Hudson, actress/singer, is 33.

Today's fact: In 1992, the space shuttle Endeavour embarked on the 50th NASA shuttle mission. Dr. Mae Carol Jemison, the crew's science mission specialist, became the first African-American woman in space.

Today's quote: "Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard."

— H.L. Mencken, "A Little Book in C Major"

Today's number: 45 — minutes it took track legend Jesse Owens to break three world records and tie a fourth, at a college track meet in 1935.

Bible quote: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." — Matthew 28:18

NFL chief falls short in his quest to measure up



MARTIN SCHRAM
COMMENTARY

Proudly displayed on the wall of the commissioner of the National Football League is an instant replay, of sorts — a freeze-frame of Commissioner Roger Goodell's personal hero, in his most famous performance.

It provides the ideal yardstick by which America can take the measure of how our society can sometimes be shamefully wrong in dispensing ultralite celebrity justice. And it provides Goodell with the ultimate instrument for measuring his own morality-lite mishandling of a case in which Baltimore Ravens football star Ray Rice punched his then-fiancée (now wife) unconscious in a casino elevator and dragged her into the hallway where he dumped her with all the compassion one might reserve for, say, a sack of potatoes, and walked away.

It is an especially apt yardstick because, ultimately, this media-driven controversy is really about far more than sports. And that old freeze-frame on Roger Goodell's wall has nothing to do with sports at all.

It is a framed page from the U.S. Congressional Record, dated Sept. 25, 1969. It features a speech by a new Republican senator who was appointed by Republican Gov. Nelson Rockefeller to complete the term of Democratic Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1968.

It was a now-famous speech by a then not very famous man, Sen. Charles Goodell, Roger's father.

Charlie Goodell, an easygoing, rather conservative Republican from upstate New York (whom

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I'd gotten to know soon after arriving in Washington as a neophyte correspondent for Newsday), came to the Senate as a staunch supporter of the U.S. war in Vietnam.

But in 1969, Goodell's view of the Vietnam War sharply changed. The catalyst was an event at Cornell University, where a panel of students pounded him with sharp, detailed questions, challenging him to defend America's long war.

"It was as punishing as anything I've ever seen in politics," recalls George Mitrovich, a former RFK aide who was then Goodell's press secretary. On the plane back to Washington, the senator told aides he wanted to talk to several prominent anti-war leaders. He also met privately with RFK's widow, Ethel Kennedy.

Soon after, Goodell delivered the Senate speech now hanging on his son's NFL office wall. It begins: "Mr. President, the war

drags on.

"It still bleeds the human, moral, and economic strength of our people.

"Its slaughter reaches ever deeper into the ranks of our youth.

"It still brutalizes our collective conscience, distorts our priorities, and frustrates our good intentions.

"It knew no real beginning, and it seems to know no end..."

Seeking that end, Goodell introduced the Vietnam Disengagement Act, joining prominent Democrats to set a date terminating funding for U.S. combat in Vietnam. Goodell's bill never passed. Predictably, the Nixon White House eventually retaliated; Vice President Spiro Agnew called Goodell "the Christine Jorgensen of the Republican Party" — a smarmy reference to the 1950s recipient of a sex-change operation.

One day, as Charlie Goodell and I shared a

Senate subway bench while riding from the Capitol to his Senate office, I asked if he had any regrets about taking a leading role to end the war, a move that alienated many expected big contributors and could cost him the 1970 Senate election (which it did).

"No regrets at all," said Goodell (who died at age 60 in 1987). "Sometimes we need to act simply because it's the right thing to do."

Because it's the right thing to do. I've thought about those words from Charlie Goodell several times this year:

First, when son Roger let Rice off with just two lashes with a wet noodle (just a two-game suspension). Also when New Jersey authorities let him off with no jail, just counseling. Also on Aug. 28, when son Roger proclaimed of his mini-punishment of Rice: "I didn't get it right." And this week when a website aired

the inside-the-elevator video the NFL always assumed existed but apparently never specifically demanded: We saw the horrible punch we'd all known about but hadn't seen in all its ugliness.

And finally, I thought once again this week about Charlie Goodell's admonition of the need to take tough action simply "because it's the right thing to do." It was after reading an excellent 2011 Sports Illustrated article that quoted a letter Roger had written his father.

"If there is one thing I want to accomplish in my life besides becoming commissioner of the NFL, it is to make you proud of me," Roger wrote to his dad, in 1981.

One way or another, we are all caught up this week in a clash of culture and conscience, in this sad controversy that transcends mere sports.

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Sound off

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