

The Democrat

A roundup of events, ideas, and opportunities
for area Democrats and their friends.

Monthly Newsletter

Consolidated Series 2, Issue #5_ May 2018

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Statement from the Chair

Hello all,

What a busy time we have been having. I am so proud of all of our candidates that qualified for the upcoming election.

Thank you to all of you who participated in our May 12 Campaign kick-off. It was an exciting event. Thanks for coming and participating.

In addition, thanks to all our members who attended the State Progressive Caucus Meeting in Gainesville, and the meeting of the National Federation of Democratic Women in Tempe,

Arizona. Thanks for members of the Black Caucus and NAACP who attended a meeting with Bill Nelson.

We will be publishing a June/July newsletter soon with info about our Gala on July 21. Please plan on coming. We need to raise enough money to send out slate cards for both the Primary and the General Election. The newsletter will also feature our candidates and election info.

We will be announcing the opening of our Dem HQ along with that of the SE club. We will publish phone numbers, addresses, etc. The NW & SW club HQ are up and running.

First Annual

Mary McLeod Bethune Gala!

Volusia County Democratic Party

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Editorial

Ignorance of U.S. Voters

Wayne Dickson



“I think by far the most important bill in our whole code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness.”

Extract of a letter from Thomas Jefferson to George Wythe, 13 Aug. 1786.

As our democratic republic was being formed and our constitution written, one main faction argued that the more “substantial” (read “rich, propertied, and powerful”) of our citizens should exercise the most influence in our government. Another faction argued that influence and power should be shared as broadly and as evenly as was practical.

(The tension between those conflicting points of view continue to afflict us. For example, think about our most recent presidential election. Donald Trump lost the popular vote by 3,000,000 votes; but he won the vote in the electoral college—a dangerously obsolete institution reflecting the former, elitist point of view.)

In general, Thomas Jefferson leaned toward the latter perspective, but with the qualification that the people must be prepared for their responsibility through public education, and then kept informed through a free press.

(You may remember that several months back I wrote about what Jefferson wanted engraved on his tombstone—namely, what he considered his three greatest achievements: authoring the Declaration of Independence, authoring the Virginia statute on freedom of religion, and “Father of the University of Virginia.”)

Imagine that Jefferson were to visit the United States today, perhaps brought in his tardis by Dr. Who. Surely he would feel crushed on seeing the results of an imbalance of power and a corrupt and cowardly congress. And with what mixed feelings would he see this has been made possible by what he warned of: a weak and ineffective educational system; and a supposedly free press under attack by the president, under corporate control, and afflicted by “group think.”

Let me close by sharing two related resources, the first general and the second specific. The first is a video from a couple of years ago. Watch it, and prepare to be torn by wanting to laugh and cry simultaneously:



Click Me for Video

The second is a report issued by the SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center). Its title is *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*. Its executive summary begins with this:

American enslavement of Africans defined the nature and limits of American liberty; it influenced the creation and development of the major political and social institutions of the nation; and it was a cornerstone of the American prosperity that fueled our industrial revolution. It's not simply an event in our history; it's central to our history.

Slavery's long reach continues into the present day. The persistent and wide socioeconomic and legal disparities that African-Americans face today and the backlash that seems to follow every African-American advancement trace their roots to slavery and its aftermath.

If we are to understand the world today, we must understand slavery's history and continuing impact.

Please!

1. Go to the **website**.
2. Take the quiz.
3. Download and read the report.

Challenge!

Challenge everyone who has anything to do with educating the next generation of Americans— aspiring teachers plus incumbent and aspiring members of the School Board, the executive and legislative branches of government, and the judiciary.



Little Rock 1950



Charlottesville 2017

Feature

Members in Action



Vice-Chair Les Thackston is right up front for the campaign kickoff.



From the left, Danielle Neetz, Barbara Grimm, and Jewel Dickson at the national convention of the Democratic Women's Club.



U.S. Senator Nelson and state Representative Patrick Henry at a meeting of the Northwest Club.

Review

A Higher Loyalty

James Comey



Writing this review has provided a number of unanticipated challenges. Ordinarily, before reviewing a book, movie, or whatever, I avoid reading or listening to reviews by others. After finishing I might consult other reviews in order to test my own impressions and conclusions against those of other reviewers, but I want to start at least with a clean slate.

In the case of James Comey's *A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership* that was impossible. Even before it was officially published, the talking heads on TV were already responding on the basis of leaked or pirated snippets or even entire copies. After the official publication and the beginning of his book tour, Comey kept popping up on every broadcast and cable channel.

That was the bad part. The good part is that responses to the book (and its author) have been all over the map. There's been no question about being nudged one way or the other, let alone being pushed strongly by a consensus. The same has been true of Comey himself.

After beginning to quiet down, the brouhaha about book and author has suddenly become more intense than ever, fueled by successive reports from the non-partisan *Inspector General of the Department of Justice*. The first focused on the performance of the FBI's Deputy

Director Andrew McCabe, whom Jeff Sessions had fired 28 hours before his retirement was to take effect.

Rancor between McCabe and his former boss, Comey, had apparently been festering for some time, but it became more intense and more public after McCabe's dismissal. The crux is that there is at least one irreconcilable difference on a key point in their respective sworn testimony about release to the media of information about the investigation of Clinton's email.

The second report focused on the appropriateness and conduct of the FBI's investigation of the Trump campaign's interaction with Russian agents. (Conclusion? Totally appropriate—indeed, routine—and rigorously by-the-book. Didn't involve Trump personally, one way or the other, and absolutely did not exonerate him from anything.) A side issue that caught people's attention was the radical difference between the ways Comey handled release of information about the Clinton email investigation and the Trump-Russia investigation.

Responses to all this have been largely tribal. Republicans at first tended to think Comey was great, because he dared to "tell the truth" about Hillary Clinton's (alleged) "criminality."

Democrats tended to think he was the next thing to a traitor, because he had tilted the election results by drawing public attention to what was alleged against Clinton while remaining silent about what was both known and alleged about Trump.

Subsequent events have led many Republicans to see Comey as a turncoat. Democrats have been led to see him as a flawed and self-righteous idealist, one whose history changing sins have been mitigated but will never be erased. It's worth noting that Comey could not escape from such reactions, even at home. He himself has been a lifelong Republican, while his wife and daughters were strong Hillary supporters.

Having listened to the audiobook (unabridged, read by Comey himself), I've come away with the impression that the author has tried "to set the record straight," so to speak, while simultaneously explaining and defending the decisions he made. He has also leveled powerful criticism at Donald Trump and his administration and his enablers in Congress. To me, the resulting stew is self-compromising, unsatisfactory, at times off-putting – but at the same time revealing and informative.

Substitute "Jim Comey" for "Jack Horner"; "disfigured prune" for "plum"; and you'll have my general response to the book. Keep in mind that the prune is disfigured but not rancid. It's nourishing, and it suits some people's tastes. From my point of view it's still nourishing, just not attractive, and not nearly as pleasant eating.

Let me not sound overly critical, however. The book takes us inside the corridors of power; it



reveals many of the customs, protocols, and unwritten rules that govern interactions among many of our nation's most powerful leaders. It shows us this world through the eyes of a man who by natural gifts and extensive training can read people the way others of us might read a tweet.

In closing, I want to make sure I draw attention to another very important feature of the book. Comey believes strongly in career public servants, especially those involved with law enforcement. As much time as he spends defending himself, he spends as much or more defending the FBI. He describes the Trump administration as very much like a Mafia family. As a federal prosecutor in New York, Comey helped shatter the power of *La Cosa Nostra*. He argues passionately that we must do the same in Washington.

WD 6/16/18 6:45

Feature

Title

Author

The campaign season is well upon us, and with it a number of events that ought to be recorded in photographs: for keeping records for our archives, sharing events with those who could not be there, providing images for future publicity, etc. That being so, I thought it might be a good idea to share some suggestions for those who might be shooting those photos.

Checklist

- Review your camera's settings.
- Charge your battery.
- Get a backup memory card.
- Use high resolution.
- Take more candid shots than posed.
- Tell a story.
- Take lots of photos.
- Discard lots of photos.

Modern cameras function very well as fully automatic “point ‘n shoot” devices. However, by adjusting just a few settings one can often achieve significantly better results. Don't try to master them all at once. Learn one or two, practice them, and then learn one or two more. Don't forget to review every so often. :-)

For example, compare the two photos below:



Both show the “Cat in a Hat” approximately the same size and posed in exactly the same spot, on the retaining wall in front of our house. Both were shot with the same camera and the same lens. So why do they look so different?

The one on the left was shot from close to the Cat with the lens zoomed to its widest angle. The one on the right was shot from across the street with the lens zoomed to telephoto.

There's no reason not to keep an extra memory card with your camera. They're cheap, and they can save you from the frustration of having missed a once in a lifetime opportunity. Yeah. That's the voice of experience.

The higher the resolution you use, the more you can crop (trim the sides of) an image and enlarge it. Likewise, the more you can enlarge a picture without causing “jaggies.”



Smooth

“Jaggy”

There’s nothing wrong with formally posed photos (“On three, say ‘cheese’!). But there’s a

lot more emotional connection with those that are candid and spontaneous.

You can fit hundreds of photos on a memory card (and you have a backup, right?). So don’t dither and futz around trying to get just the right shot. Just take a bunch of probably OK pictures and even a couple of pretty durned good ones. Not perfect, maybe, but actually quite nice.

Most of your pictures won’t be either durned good or quite nice. So delete them. Don’t bore your friends or frustrate yourself trying to keep them organized. Toss ’em!

Shot List

1. Welcome/registration desk

Start the day off right by capturing a few shots of the registration, or sign in, desk. The registration desk will quite often get busy with people, which will make your event look full.

2. Event signage

If you can get a photo of attendees or speakers with the events signage in the background, then you will have an all-encompassing promo shot.

3. Shots of every speaker while presenting

Event speakers often provide their time pro-bono. Thank them by providing them with images of their talk that they can then use as they see fit. The more exposure your nonprofit gets, the better.

4. Shot of the organizer with the speakers

It is always a good idea to grab a photo of the event organizer, program lead or VIPs with all of the speakers.

5. Candid shots of attendees

If you’re looking for an inviting, happy vibe to entice more people to come to the next event, then candid shots are the way to go. Try to make sure that everyone in the selected photos are engaged and enjoying themselves.

6. Formal shots of attendees

Take a few formal group portraits. By getting 2-3 people together in a group photo you can be sure that you have captured all of the key players at your event.

7. Anything unique about your event

If you are doing something different with the way you structure your event then why not show it off? If you have an all-you-can eat ice cream bar, or a board games networking station then photograph them!

Quiz



- Which of these Supreme Court cases ended segregation in schools?
 - Roe v. Wade
 - Dred Scott
 - Brown v. Board of Education
 - Plessy v. Ferguson
- What year were American women granted the right to vote?
 - 1870
 - 1899
 - 1920
 - 1933
- What is the name commonly used to refer to the operation in which Allied Forces landed in Normandy in June of 1944?
 - Omaha Beach
 - D-Day
 - Norman Invasion
 - Dunkirk
- Where was the first Fourth of July celebration with a fireworks display held?
 - Boston
 - New York
 - Philadelphia
 - Richmond
- Independence Day was first established as a holiday by Congress in what year?
 - 1776
 - 1938
 - 1853
 - 1870
- Who was the first U.S. president to win election while losing the popular vote?
 - George W. Bush
 - Benjamin Harrison
 - Rutherford B. Hayes
 - John Quincy Adams
- Which president said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall"?
 - Richard Nixon
 - Gerald Ford
 - Ronald Reagan
 - Jimmy Carter
- Who led an armed slave rebellion in Virginia in 1831?
 - Nat Turner
 - John Brown
 - Booker T. Washington
 - Fredrick Douglass
- When did the invading British Army capture and burn the nation's capital?
 - 1835
 - 1814
 - 1778
 - 1863
- The Transcontinental Railroad connected in which state in 1869?
 - Texas
 - Nevada
 - Utah
 - Louisiana



Answers

- | | | |
|------|------|-------|
| 1. C | 5. B | 9. B |
| 2. C | 6. D | 10. C |
| 3. B | 7. C | |
| 4. C | 8. A | |



Blue Wave!, the new blog I've launched, is up and running. This is a private blog. It's intended for Volusia and other liberals, but it has no connection with the Volusia DEC, the FDP, or any other organization.

Caveat Lector!

The blog will post nothing I consider X-rated. However, at times it *will* post items that are potentially offensive: potty-mouthed, naughty, "adult" in content, juvenile in humor, etc.

Anyone can read the blog; anyone can post a comment in response to what I or others have posted; anyone who registers can add his or her own posts.

~Wayne Dickson
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