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Protect residents' right to own rentals

By Julie Meier

The Hawaii Legislature is considering two bills related to short-term rentals: Senate Bill 2919 and House Bill 1838 would allow counties to effectively ban legal short-term property rentals. Hawai'i Realtors does not support illegal actors, but these bills would not give counties more power to address illegal rentals. Rather, legal short-term rental operators would be impacted. Due to potential negative social and economic consequences, Hawai'i Realtors strongly opposes these measures.

There are many misconceptions regarding legal short-term rentals in Hawaii. First, they are not just for vacationing tourists. They are also a vital resource for Hawaii's families and workers, fostering community connections and contributing to a thriving local environment.

Lengthy hotel stays are often prohibitively expensive and impractical. This creates a barrier for mainland-based family members who wish to visit to care for loved ones. Legal short-term rentals provide a cost-effective, welcoming environment, allowing ohana to stay connected.

For those who live here in Hawaii, legal short-term rentals provide a convenient place to stay while their homes are uninhabitable due to damage, fumigation, renovation or between moves. Legal short-term rentals also provide an affordable option for construction workers, farm laborers and other seasonal employees who need a temporary place to live while working on other islands.

The same is true for visiting health care workers. With a reported 4,000 vacancies in the field statewide, our residents rely on traveling nurses and other medical professionals to close the gap. Eliminating legal short-term rentals could discourage health care workers from working here, and potentially make it even more challenging for our residents to get the medical care they need.

Many local families who provide legal short-term housing rely on their rental income to help pay hefty mortgages and secure financial stability. For some, losing this income will make it impossible to stay in their homes, especially kupuna on a fixed income. Legal short-term rentals also provide income for those who provide services to these homes, including property managers, cleaners, contractors, landscapers and maintenance vendors.

Some proponents of SB 2919 and HB 1838 argue that eliminating short-term rentals will alleviate Hawaii's affordable housing shortage. But this is simply not the case. The true cause of our affordable housing crisis is onerous regulations, excessive red tape, and high building costs that make it difficult for developers to build new homes at the right price. Data from the University of Hawaii's Economic Research Organization (UHERO) Hawaii Housing Fact Book confirms Hawaii has the most expensive housing in the nation and the total supply has not grown significantly. This is primarily attributed to the

ISLAND VOICES



Julie Meier is 2024 president of Hawai'i Realtors.

most restrictive housing, including lengthy permit delays, land use restrictions and legislative hurdles.

Hawai'i Realtors strongly supports the provision of more affordable housing, but it must be the appropriate type of housing to best serve housing needs.

For example, a studio or one-bedroom located in the heart of Waikiki would not be an appropriate home for a family of five.

Loss of revenue is another drawback of SB 2919 and HB 1838. Because legal short-term rental owners pay real property, general excise and transient accommodation taxes, phasing out these properties could have significant consequences for state and county budgets.

Our group opposes all illegal rentals. We advise our members and clients to follow current laws. Unfortunately, some property owners routinely violate these regulations. Rather than penalizing the legitimate small business owners who provide legal short-term rentals, the state would better serve its residents by cracking down on illegal rentals. SB 2919 and HB 1838 do not address this concern. Counties can already create and enforce reasonable regulations for this industry. Enhancing those efforts would be a much more effective use of government resources.

We urge our state legislators to preserve Hawaii residents' right to own and operate existing legal short-term rental properties by voting against SB 2919 and HB 1838.

In U.S. academia, the empires finally begin to strike back

With all that is occurring in our political and cultural life, there are signs some Americans have had enough.

Google recently fired 28 employees from its New York and Sunnyvale, Calif., offices for protesting the company's cloud-computing contract with Israel. The reason given by the company's vice president for global security, Chris Rackow, as reported in The Wall Street Journal, was that the sacked employees "took over office spaces, defaced our property and physically impeded the work of other Googlers," violating company policies. They apparently aren't familiar with this sage advice: don't bite the hand that feeds you.

Another optimistic sign. Columbia University decided it had enough of protesters disrupting the campus and shouting antisemitic, anti-Israel and pro-Hamas slogans. Police were called and arrested 108 protesters who had set up shanty-like tent camps on school property. Columbia President Minouche Shafik said the occupiers posed a "clear and present danger to the substantial functioning of the University."

The definition of "student" ought to bring some humility to these don't-know-it-alls: "a person formally engaged in learning." For too long and in too many places — and not only on many college campuses — adults have ceded their leadership responsibilities to teenagers and 20-somethings, too many of whom regurgitate what they have been told by leftist professors and friends on social media.

At Columbia, at least three tenured professors dispense propaganda about the history of the



A sign is displayed in front of tents erected at the pro-Palestine protest encampment at the Columbia University campus in New York on Monday.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Middle East. The New York Post identified them: "Joseph Massad, a professor of modern Arab politics and history, has faced widespread calls to be fired ever since he referred to the Oct. 7 attack inflicted by Hamas terrorists (on Israel) as 'awesome.'"

Mohamed Abdou, who is described on Columbia's website as "a North African-Egyptian Muslim anarchist interdisciplinary activist-scholar of Indigenous, Black, critical race and Islamic studies, as well as gender, sexuality, abolition and decolonization." Abdou declared on social media, "Yes, I'm with Hamas and Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad."

There is also Hamad Dabashi, a professor of Iranian studies. The Post reports Dabashi "has come under fire in recent years for a slew of controversial social media posts, including a since-deleted one in which he blamed Israel for every "dirty" problem in the world: "Every dirty treacherous ugly and pernicious happening in the world just wait for a few days and the ugly name 'Israel' will pop up in the atrocities," Dabashi wrote in a 2018 Facebook post, cited by the Jewish Journal."

There are likely more professors

with views like these at Columbia and elsewhere, but you get the picture.

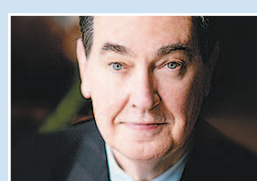
It may be a generalization, but too many young people have been treated as though they were the font of all wisdom while older, wiser and more experienced people have been sidelined and their views silenced. Few speak of responsibility or accountability for actions once deemed illegal, immoral, impractical, uninformed, duped and just plain stupid.

Students who take out big loans to learn propaganda and worthless subjects at too many universities now expect those loans to be forgiven at taxpayer expense.

When I flunked out after my freshman year at American University in Washington, my father said he wasn't going to pay the bills anymore. When I went back a year later and paid my own way a remarkable thing happened. My grades went up because I was now invested in my education and had to take responsibility for the outcome. I also paid back my student loan.

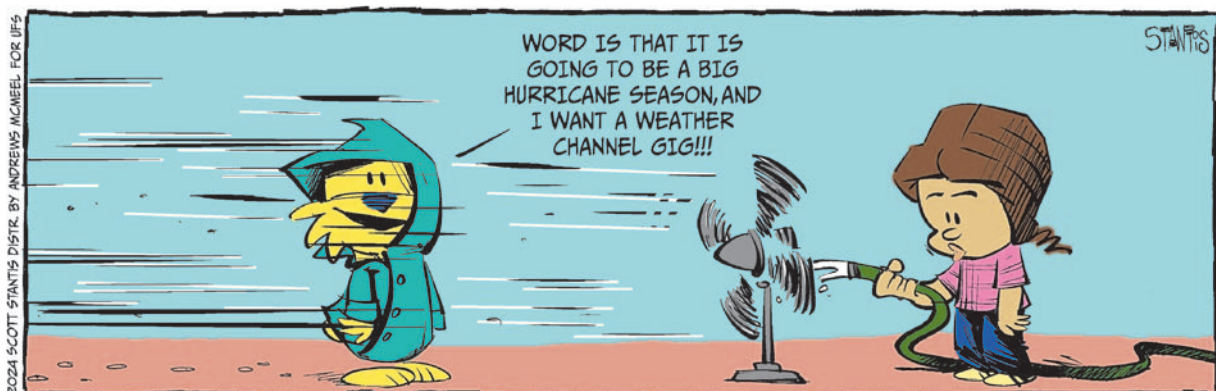
Let's hope that others follow the lead of Columbia's president and Google management and we stop wet nursing kids who for too long have demonstrated their ignorance and in some cases denounced America while reaping its benefits.

Cal Thomas writes for Tribune Content Agency.

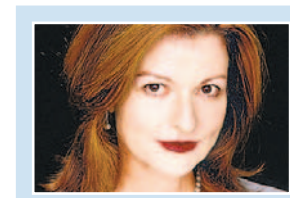


CAL THOMAS

Prickly City >> By Scott Stantis



Melania's trials continue as Donald Trump goes to court



MAUREEN DOWD

WASHINGTON >> Outside my office, there is a picture of the Slovenian Sphinx visiting the Egyptian Sphinx, taken during a 2018 photo shoot in Giza nine months after Melania Trump was blindsided by the steamy news about her husband and Stormy Daniels. The pairing evokes the riddle of Melania: How much can she put up with from a husband who betrayed and humiliated her in the basest possible ways?

As Donald Trump's hush-money trial begins, we'll be reminded of what a heel he is. And like Hillary before her, Melania will have to hold her head high as she stands by her Lothario. Melania will also put political and personal prospects above mere resentment.

As her White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham wrote in her memoir, Melania wanted no Hillary Clinton comparisons. When the Other Women stories broke, Melania told Grisham she wanted to drive to Air Force One ahead of Trump.

"I do not want to be like Hillary Clinton, do you understand what I mean?" Melania said, according to Grisham. "She walked to Marine One holding the hands with her husband after Monica news and it did not look good."

Hillary was able to use her husband's infidelities to redefine herself with a more sympathetic aura and slingshot to a Senate seat.

This trial may help cement Melania's image as a Trump, a loyal citizen of Trumplandia who thinks the system is rigged against her husband, and who will stand with Donald as he tries to regain the Oval — no matter his perfidies toward her and others.

As Katie Rogers wrote in The New York Times, Melania shares Donald's view that the trial is unfair and the prosecution is a disgrace, engaging in a proceeding that is, itself, tantamount to election interference.

When the Stormy story broke, Grisham thought Melania would storm. But the presence of anger was conveyed by absence. Melania, who rarely visited her East Wing office anyhow, holed up in her suite and at the spa in Mar-a-Lago. This most elusive of first ladies became even more elusive, skipping dinners with her husband on the patio; striking references to him and avoiding the word "wife" in tweets; dropping her plan to accompany Donald to Davos, Switzerland; taking a separate car to her husband's first State of the Union address.

Melania must have grit her perfect teeth through Stormy's "Make America Horny Again" strip tour, her tell-all in In Touch magazine

saying she could describe Donald's anatomy, and a cringey "60 Minutes" interview.

Stormy, a star of "Sexbots: Programmed for Pleasure" and the director of "Lust on the Prairie," told Anderson Cooper that she had asked about Melania during her condom-free liaison at a celebrity golf tournament at Lake Tahoe in 2006: "And he brushed it aside, said: 'Oh, yeah, yeah, you know, don't worry about that. We don't even —. We have separate rooms and stuff.'"

Lovely.

So far, Melania has not deigned to play Maureen Dean, sitting behind her man in court every day for support. Melania has long called Stormy "Donald's problem," noting to Grisham: "He got himself into this mess. He can fix it by himself."

She is, by all accounts, angry that she has to be dragged through this X-rated circus again, especially while she is still mourning the death of her mother.

What could be more absurd and hypocritical than the putative Republican nominee selling Bibles and promoting an America with draconian abortion laws during his trial over a \$130,000 payment to keep a porn star from telling voters about their dalliance?

Melania surely recoils from the prospect of testifying, which Justice Juan Merchan suggested may happen. He has also ruled that jurors may hear about Trump's affair with Karen McDougal, but not about how it continued while Melania was pregnant.

The former first lady, who is helping her son prepare for college, perhaps at New York University, does not want Barron's name thrown around in a New York court. Trump made Barron an issue, asking for a day off for his son's high school graduation.

Signaling that she will be part of the campaign, Melania was headlining a Log Cabin Republican event at Mar-a-Lago last weekend. In an interview with Fox News Digital previewing her remarks before that LGBT group, Melania said America "must unite." It's not the first time her message has been at odds with her husband's behavior.

As first lady, Melania clearly styled herself after Jackie Kennedy, wearing high-fashion clothes that seemed to be not only art but also armor and maintaining poise through a parade of indignities.

"Like Jackie, Melania foregrounded her role as mother, and that enabled her to keep a degree of distance," Dawn Tripp, the author of the upcoming novel "Jackie," told me. "Both had that guarded, sphinxlike quality. But Jackie used that quality to maintain her independence from her husband's administration and used her power in public and private ways. Melania often simply seems complicit in Trump's irresponsibility."

Complicit, to borrow from the "SNL" skit about Ivanka, the perfume of Trump women.

Maureen Dowd writes for The New York Times.

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