

FORUM

COMMENTARY FROM THE COMMUNITY

Don't let unruly teens ruin your summer fun



Summer festivals bring residents together and help bolster community spirit. But unruly behavior that can lead to violence can cause a strain on organizers and police. Guest columnist Cliff Anthony reminds us to be hopeful and not let the joy of summer slip away. *David Petkiewicz, cleveland.com*

The joy of seasonal weekend festivals can be marred by fights among young visitors.

Cliff Anthony

Call them by any name: home days, church festivals, or community unity days. These weekend events are much-anticipated summer attractions for staycation buffs like me.

These fairs, managed by volunteers, are designed to bring the residents together and bolster their spirits, like injecting steroids to inflate the souls deflated by the brutal winter.

It's fascinating to see teenagers standing in long lines for carnival rides, once on them, screaming in exhilaration and running back for another ride, resembling a mad dash for seconds at a buffet. Girls in short shorts would amble in groups while boys in tank tops flex their puny muscles and strut with a gait, as if they were Hulk Hogan in his 20s.

I suspect the boys talk about girls, and

the girls talk about Taylor Swift.

No community day is complete without food trucks. The aroma of the dishes prepared by these mobile kitchens — pizza, burgers, hot dogs, sandwiches, popcorn, fries, and elephant ears — would waft through the area, adding flavor to the festive ambiance.

Families that have moved away would return to reconnect with their buddies and rekindle their nostalgia. Their conversations would include recommendations for weight-loss programs and updates on their knee and hip replacement surgeries.

The dance floor would come alive, fueled by the beer and wine sold at these events and, of course, by the oldies belted out by tribute bands. It's not unusual to see a young mother holding her toddler onto her bosom, one hand clasped in her baby's, swaying to the music of "Dancing Queen." Amused, the toddler, with its tiny fingers, would tenderly grab her mother's nose. The mother would smile and continue to dance.

Pure joy is contagious.

Unfortunately, the joy of attending these celebrations has been marred by safety concerns triggered recently by fights among visitors, mostly teenagers.

In one such major incident, St. Clare Church in Lyndhurst was forced to cut its festival short on June 1 when multiple fights broke out. Authorities arrested 10 teenagers and recovered one handgun. They prevented the situation from turning into an all-out violent brawl. The suspects came

from other areas, according to police.

A week later, on June 8, St. Gabriel Catholic Church in Concord Township had to wrap up its celebration under similar circumstances. In that instance, four juveniles were arrested, and one gun was confiscated by the sheriff.

On the same evening, several shots were reported in Macedonia at the city's SummerFest. It prompted Macedonia Mayor Nick Molnar to call off the rest of the program and put future events on hold.

If this trend continues, the economic impact will be significant. It will hit the pockets of carnival ride operators, food truck vendors, musicians, area businesses and churches that hope to earn a few bucks.

More than the profit, the efforts to foster community unity will be the hardest hit.

I guess these fights, brawls and gun shots are random and not the new normal.

Hopefully, carnival rides will continue to hum, musicians will strum their guitars, moms will dance holding their toddlers, and senior citizens will share their experiences of knee and hip replacements.

Don't let the joy of summer slip away from you.

Anthony, a Highland Heights resident, is the author of "Tears in God's Own Country."

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COMMENTARY

Constitution was supposed to unite, not divide

Ramesh Ponnuru

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., in surreptitiously recorded comments, said that "there can be a way of working — a way of living together peacefully — but it's difficult, you know, because there are differences on fundamental things that really can't be compromised."

Some of his critics have read that remark as combative, but it should not be controversial. Maintaining cohesion in a society riven by deep differences is a serious challenge that has been recognized as such by a wide range of political thinkers.

Among those thinkers were the American Founders. Fostering a complex kind of unity was one of their principal aims in designing the Constitution.

That goal helps explain why they sought to create a system in which multiple, overlapping factions would have to contend and bargain with one another. No group was guaranteed to get its way all the time, or to be shut out of power altogether. Major changes in government would generally require broad and durable consensus.

In his new book, "American Covenant," Yuval Levin argues that we have forgotten the Founders' way of thinking about these issues, and that this forgetfulness is one of the sources of contemporary discontent.

A friend and American Enterprise Institute colleague of mine, Levin makes his case without over-idealizing the Founders or scanting their own disagreements. They weren't united even about just how divided we were. Arguing against those Found-

ers who insisted we were a culturally unified nation unmarked by European class distinctions — that we were already one people, as the Declaration of Independence somewhat wishfully suggested — James Madison noted that we were not and could not be made into "one homogeneous mass." He accurately suggested that future events, along with fading memories of the American Revolution, would make us more heterogeneous still.

Their work had flaws, some of which now seem obvious. Levin regards two crucial post-1787 developments — the modern party system midwived by Martin Van Buren and the Reconstruction amendments — as improvements that furthered the Constitution's original goals.

SEE PONNURU, E4

COMMENTARY

The subtle and slow crawl of displacement

Gentrification rolls forward on Cleveland's East Side, just as it did on the Near West Side.



Justice B. Hill

My childhood neighborhood fell apart while I had my head turned. I took notice of the decline a while ago, as I walked the pockmarked street and counted the vacant lots where friends once stayed.

The house where the Duckworths lived — gone.

The upstairs that the Cole family rented, a dwelling three doors down from where I was reared — gone.

Same for the Hodges house, the Mitchell house, the Holland house and the Strickland house — all gone.

Two dozen of them demolished, and no resident created a ruckus. The city councilmen who served the ward last century — or disserved it — watched as the housing stock collapsed.

The street now resembles the mouth of a 7-year-old boy who's losing his baby teeth: every other space is vacant.

I could play the conspiracist. I could claim the vacancies are a strategy that the moneyed interest in Cleveland is using to buy this prime-but-depressed real estate and convert it into property that the well-to-do would find appealing.

People who lived on East 126th Street and the streets that adjoin it might not notice gentrification of their aging neighborhood. But it's happened. The powers with dollars are pushing Black residents deeper into the first- and second-ring suburbs.

The displacement looks subtle, but I started thinking about it more after I checked the new housing that's sprouted around University Circle, where the Cleveland Museum of Art, Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals are, and saw prices of more than \$2,000 a month for apartment rentals.

The streets nearby provide a straight shot to downtown, an area that has blossomed in the past decade. From the fancy, fine-dining restaurants to the pricey condominiums, to the casino to the sports venues that NFL, NBA and Major League Baseball franchises call home, downtown holds much allure for men and women with corporate jobs and college degrees.

With the housing stock there in short supply, these professionals are moving eastward, going deeper and deeper into old neighborhoods that time and local politicians had long ago abandoned for dead.

Twenty-five years ago, the Near West Side was dead too, but now you can't find an inexpensive place there to stay. With its upscale nightlife, Ohio City and the Tremont area are templates for what Hough, Fairfax and Glenville will look like in 2050, which isn't as far off as some people might think.

By then, condos, apartments and townhomes like builders put up near the Cleveland Clinic will dominate the East Side landscape, which construction workers have been scraping clean of its neglected housing stock.

For now, Cleveland hasn't priced the poor out of its inner core altogether. The place remains relatively affordable, although not as affordable as it was 10 years ago. Still, the rents and the houses-for-sale don't compare with what people will find if they decide to move to cities like Atlanta, Austin, Chicago, San Francisco or Seattle.

Cleveland, however, is itching in the same direction as Detroit, not the bargain it once was either.

Gentrification rolls forward on the East Side, and as professionals take over the inner city, they'll change it in ways nobody could have imagined.

In a decade or two, they'll repurpose the vacant lot that housed the Duckworth clan, and the people who'll dwell in the new home won't mirror the ones from my boyhood.

Hill grew up on the East Side of Cleveland and still lives there. He practiced journalism for more than 20 years and later taught journalism at Ohio University. Since his retirement in May 2019, he's been devoting his time to travel and freelance writing.