

The Washington Post

Opinion: Readers critique The Post: This photo choice was irresponsible

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Every week, The Post runs a collection of letters of readers' grievances — pointing out grammatical mistakes, missing coverage and inconsistencies. These letters tell us what we did wrong and, occasionally, offer praise. Here, we present this week's Free for All letters.

A Trump supporter holds an anti-vaccine sign at a protest in D.C. on Jan. 5. (Erin Scott/Bloomberg)

A sign of the times

I enjoy reading Margaret Sullivan's column and agreed with her words in her March 8 Style column, "Education is crucial in vaccine coverage." However, I'm sure she didn't select the photograph that appeared with the column.

She wrote in her last paragraph, "Vaccine coverage — with its life-or-death implications — is even more consequential. We need to get it right." Yet somebody opted to include a picture that certainly didn't get it right. Yes, the caption explained that the sign, which says "COVID 19 VACCINATION = DEATH," is being held by a Trump supporter, but somehow the attention-grabbing image makes a strong case for exactly the opposite of what Sullivan was fighting for. Weren't there any images promoting the positive side of the vaccine?

Stephen Marschall, *Burke*

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There's no such thing as a free lunch

Steven Pearlstein's final column ["Bowling out in the era of the free lunch," Business, March 7] failed to grasp the catastrophic effects of the coronavirus on workers, especially women.

Instead of potent policy solutions to alleviate the multilayered, crater-size and deepening economic crisis, he warned of the trade-off of a higher budget deficit. Never mind the trade-off that women are forced to make every day between their families and their paychecks, their health and their jobs.

He also claimed these policies are put forward with "nary a mention of what moderates or business leaders have to say." Some news for Pearlstein: Progressive proposals such as paid sick days and paid family leave have the backing of businesses big and small, and Americans across the political spectrum support them.

Most galling was the columnist's lament that race and gender have recently gained consideration in economic issues and business practices. It seems Pearlstein views White men as the default group in America and examining policies through any other lens is a waste. This viewpoint is unjust, plain and simple.

With women, particularly women of color, on the front lines as essential workers, with women dropping out of the labor force in record numbers and bearing an outsize burden from the crisis, we need relief.

Debra Ness, *Washington*

The writer is president of the National Partnership for Women & Families.

Steven Pearlstein's March 7 Business column started out great. It's time to hear the rational debates about what we are doing in this nation for the current issues, but, more important, for the long-term future. The points he made for more open discussion of government decisions need to be championed. The public needs to be informed of the risks and benefits of each major piece of legislation from Congress and each major policy change from the administration.

I was a bit disappointed, though. He stepped up to the plate, reared back to hit a homer, then dropped his bat and stepped out of the box. I was excited because I thought that Pearlstein was about to take us to the next step of informed knowledge.

I honor his 33 years of dedicated service to Americans as a voice of reason. And I wish him well in his new adventures. I can only hope that some young journalist will rise up to take his place. Someone needs to do it.

Dan Busch, *Fairfax Station*

I was saddened to read Steven Pearlstein's sign-off column. I had come to rely on his balanced and erudite commentary, explaining the nuances of the national and world economy. His insights were one of the main reasons I looked forward to reading the Sunday edition of The Post. After his columns started appearing monthly rather than weekly, I noticed a lack of space in the Sunday business section dedicated to thoughtful explanations of the larger economy. I hope The Post will soon fill this void.

My thanks to Pearlstein for his decades of service to his readers. He will be greatly missed!

John von Reyn, *Manassas*

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Jermaine Fowler wears a Len Bias jersey in Sherman Oaks, Calif., on Feb. 26. (Ryan Young/For The Washington Post)

Two generations of stars, one high school

Thanks for the March 7 Sunday Arts article "[Jermaine Fowler seeks a name for himself.](#)" Jermaine Fowler sounds like a wonderful young man in many ways, and even more so it should be acknowledged that he knows his basketball history. The Maryland basketball jersey Fowler is wearing in the featured photograph is a Len Bias jersey — University of Maryland gold, red and black, and No. 34. As the article pointed out, Fowler graduated from Northwestern High School

in Prince George's County, the same school as Bias. Northwestern deserves to be extraordinarily proud of its graduates separated only by time: one of whom, Bias, is already a legend, and not just locally, and the other, Fowler, who, we hope, becomes one.

David Sommers, Kensington

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Good game

Among the many puzzles, crosswords and games available in The Post, my favorite is the acronym game, which can often be found on any page, wherein the reader tries to guess what the acronym or abbreviation represents. Of course, the game is no fun if the abbreviation is defined, which, I gather, is why The Post rarely defines them when first used.

The March 4 article on Rep. Ronny Jackson (R-Tex.), a former White House physician, was a good example [["IG: Physician Jackson bullied staffers," news](#)]. The article discussed Jackson's service at length, referring to him by name 21 times, and quoted a report in which "witnesses expressed concerns about RDML Jackson's ability to provide or supervise medical care" in the penultimate paragraph. What kind of medical credential could that be? The game began with a visual search backward through the article for the initials "RDML" and, failing to find that, a second reading of the article searching for clues (Googling violates the game's rules). Indeed, in the fourth paragraph, we learn that Jackson retired as a Navy rear admiral. An admiral is abbreviated ADM, and a vice admiral, VADM, so you might have expected a rear admiral to be abbreviated RADM. Turns out the Navy has not one but two kinds of rear admirals, the more reasonably abbreviated rear admiral upper half (RADM) and the lesser rank, rear admiral lower half (RDML). Who knew?

Jack Connerney, Annapolis

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A D.C. book worth checking out

Regarding the March 5 Weekend article "[The best books about D.C.](#)":

Noting books about D.C. is a great idea, but surely one was left out: "Spring in Washington" by Louis J. Halle, a former State Department official. Published in 1947, the book captures many of the Washington region's loveliest natural sites: Rock Creek Park, the Tidal Basin, Dyke Marsh. Halle wanders and explores, a chapter a month, and describes changes in bird migrations, emerging spring plants and trees, and seasonal weather patterns. Written during World War II, the book has a somber feel, but Halle's love of nature and literary imagination leave the reader inspired. A gem not to be missed by anyone, especially in dark times when hope is needed.

Carol Goodloe, Arlington

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Measurements were off base

I'm glad to see that, according to the March 12 Sports article "[New minor league rules include anti-shift change](#)," minor league baseball players will have bases about 4.25 inches on a side

instead of about 3.9 inches. They will be much easier for base runners to find this year. There's a huge difference between saying that the increase is from "15 square inches to 18 square inches" rather than saying "15 inches square to 18 inches square"; that is, from 15 inches to 18 inches on each side. Someone should take remedial math.

John Swenson, *Burke*

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Lessons learned

I agree with the general thrust of the March 7 editorial "The right lesson from globalization ." However, I take issue with its reference to the World Trade Organization's "often biased forum for appealing trade rulings." A fair accounting of the decisions of the WTO's appellate body shows that the United States won some and lost some, and that the appellate body sometimes found domestic laws to violate WTO rules, while it other times offered up more deference to these laws than the WTO's "lower court" (called "panels") did. If there is a bias, it is not obvious what it is. I worked as a staffer supporting the appellate body's "judges" from 1999 to 2001, and I can say with certainty that every decision was based on a good-faith effort to interpret and apply the rules.

That doesn't mean the appellate body got every decision right, of course. All courts make mistakes. And it's fine to revisit the appellate body's role. It is certainly the right of the governments who make up the WTO to reconsider the scope of appeals. But "often biased" is a strong charge that should not be tossed around lightly, and in this situation overstates the case.

Simon Lester, *Falls Church*

The writer is associate director of the Herbert A. Stiefel Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute.

Why make numbers harder than necessary to understand? The second sentence of the March 7 editorial "The right lesson from globalization" read, "Yet the share living in extreme poverty fell from more than a third to less than 10 percent." For many people, the comparison of fractional and percentage parts is just confusing. Wouldn't it have conveyed the editorial's point more directly if it had read, "Yet the share living in extreme poverty fell from more than 33 percent to less than 10 percent"?

Joan Reintaler, *Washington*

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Curtis Samuel (10) passes Jimmy Moreland (20) and Ronald Darby (23) in Landover on Dec. 27. (John McDonnell/The Washington Post)

We needed more teamwork

It seems as if The Post could have picked a better photograph to run with the caption that said, "Ronald Darby is a candidate to re-sign with Washington after he helped stabilize the cornerback position" ["With ample cap space, Washington is free to spend," Sports, March 6]. The photo, however, shows Darby decidedly unstable on his rear end after avoiding a collision with Jimmy Moreland as Carolina Panthers wide receiver Curtis Samuel runs free with the ball. Perhaps that

photograph was intended to show Samuel's prowess, as the article reported that Samuel would be a good option for Washington.

I suggest the reporter, the photo editor and the caption editor work together a little better.

Steve Johnson, *Rockville*

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Quotes tie together a friendship

Roxanne Roberts's March 4 Style article about Vernon Jordan, "A one-of-a-kind presence," noted that Jordan would admonish people for not wearing neckties. I first met Jordan at a black-tie dinner. I was an awardee for inner-city work in Washington but had not realized that honorees were to give short speeches. So, I told a story about a school counselor who abandoned me when I decided not to pursue an appointment to the Naval Academy. I ended with a quote. Soon, an elegant man approached me, put both hands on my shoulders and said, "You must send me your talk with that quote." He wanted it for a graduation speech.

Thereafter, I often sent him quotes, and we exchanged notes and books. Later, I was invited to his law firm to talk about a book I was co-editing, "DC JAZZ." Before the event, we met in his photo-laden office. He told stories not of presidents or Wall Street but about driving a bus in Chicago and D.C. jazz clubs in the 1950s and 1960s. He knew my interests. As he straightened my tie, before my presentation, I told him about a quote of his, from my youth. Criticized for his moderation, he said, "I was elected to lead the Urban League, not the Black Panthers." I explained that I did not understand his words then but did now. We all had different roles. He smiled, gave me a pat on the back, walked me to the podium and made me feel as if I owned the place.

Maurice Jackson, *Washington*

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We were too slow

I just want to send a heads up to the Sports department that the Georgetown University women's cross-country team won the Big East cross-country championship on March 5, led by a one-two finish by Sami Corman and Maggie Donahue. Georgetown took second place in the men's championship.

I imagine the meet ended too late for my early home edition because the meet was held close to noon.

Jim Gilroy, *Falls Church*

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Suffix to say, we should have caught this

The March 7 front-page article on New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's allegedly toxic and hostile behavior, "Cuomo's 'hostile' workplace culture," said, "As the eldest son of three-term New York governor Mario Cuomo (D), Andrew M. Cuomo emerged as his own political force."

When a standard grammar rule promises pertinent information — in this case that Cuomo, since he's the eldest son, must have at least two brothers — then it should be used correctly. Mario Cuomo did have five children, but only two were boys, so Andrew M. Cuomo is the elder son, not the eldest.

I rely on the information imparted by that word choice, and I rely on The Post's copy editors to catch such errors.

Emily Rocque, *Washington*

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Bush deserved better

Though former presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama and their spouses are “having a blast,” hobnobbing with celebs, raking in prodigious sums through their books and media projects, and, in general, promoting their brands, the contrast with former president George W. Bush is striking, though not in the way the March 8 Style article “Commanders in content” stated.

After noting in passing Bush's two collaborative endeavors with Clinton, the article summed up Bush's post-presidency as him opting “for a quieter life, preferring to paint.” By failing to mention Bush's major post-presidency endeavor, the article is either showing political bias or a lack of awareness of how Bush has shaped his retirement. The George W. Bush Presidential Center does deeply serious work in the areas of human rights, health, education, good governance and economic development.

The article's dismissive reference to the 43rd president painting pictures might serve to cast the self-promotional activities of the Clintons and Obamas in a better light, but given his consequential post-presidency, both Bush and Post readers deserve better.

Laurie Gershman, *Rockville*