

OPINION

Change and our reaction

“The Mill” gives us the opportunity to recognize and learn from our past and plan for our future.

Kudos to Backus Community Center leaders for bringing the production to the community that inspired the play, and to author and Falls native Jeannine Coulombe, as well as cast and crew, for truly bringing the story home.

Few who lived here in 1989 were not touched in some way by the events that led up to and followed a labor riot here that year. The riot evoked a gamut of emotions that varied from person to person on a day that will never be forgotten by those who witnessed or took part in it in some way.

In an after-performance discussion about the play Saturday, Coulombe said the play was about change, which was occurring all over the world that year. Recall the the Tiananmen Square protests led by students, the Exxon Valdez oil spill that polluted Alaskan waters and several other historic events that changed the way we viewed our world. And

International Falls — a place with a passionate and strong work ethic — was no different. We, too, were experiencing change that helped shape what we are today.

“The Mill” truly reminded all who have experienced it of the common desire among working people to put food on their plates and take care of their families. And it’s a story that reminds us that there are often many sides of an issue, none completely right, none completely wrong, but all with the human element at its base.

A part of the performance includes a speech by the main character about how we are all cogs in a machine, regardless of the level of our positions or who we are. And we must try to understand that each of us struggles with similar concerns, while attempting to maintain our dignity and pride.

Let this production remind us that change comes regardless of our desires, but it’s our reaction to that change that is important. Let this be the beginning of a conversation about our future that began many years ago.



PAID ELECTION LETTER

Less St. Paul in northern Minnesota and more northern Minnesota in St. Paul

**To the editor,**  
My name is Eric Johnson and I am running for Minnesota House of Representatives. I own International Dental Arts here in International Falls where we manufacture crowns, bridges and dentures for the dentists in the region. In fact, if you have a false tooth, it likely was manufactured in my lab.

I serve on the board of directors of several non-profit groups in the area, including Ash River Kabetogama Snowdrifters, International Voyageurs Snowmobile Club, Voyageurs Trail Society Inc., Destination Voyageurs National Park, Voyageurs National Park Association and I am on the design team for the National Geographic Geo-tourism initiative. I’m running for the Minnesota House for several reasons; the most

important is because I feel a duty to give back to a region, an area, and a community that has not only been very good to me but also to my family. This is, and always will be, the land that I love and call home. Service in public office is just a small way that I can give back and say thank you.

I’m also running because I believe that our voices and our ideas are being neither heard nor listened to in St. Paul. There has been too much political pandering by career politicians for far too long. It is time that we get community-minded leaders in office who will do their jobs and represent the people who elected them. Following their own agendas and the agendas of people and special interest groups outside of their district isn’t working for us and is no longer acceptable.

We need to vote smart. We need to get to know the people who are running for office and vote for them because we believe that they will best represent our voice in St. Paul and across the country.

Vote for me because I am the person who will best represent your thoughts and ideals in the Minnesota House of Representatives. Vote for me because I will be there to listen to your concerns on the issues that affect Northern MN. Vote for me because I will deal with the issues in the way that you would want them dealt with. Vote for me and I will bring more northern Minnesota to St. Paul and bring less St. Paul big government to northern Minnesota. You need to vote wisely, there is just too much at stake not to.

**Eric Johnson**  
International Falls, MN

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Mail letters to The Journal, 1602 Highway 71, International Falls 56649. Letters can also be sent by e-mail to laurel@ifalls-journal.com.

GUEST COLUMN

It’s not the hate, it’s the stupidity

Alright. Woo-hoo. We’re partying now. With the kind of enthusiasm normally reserved for sorting Phillips head screws from flat head screws, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer publicly vetoed SB 1062, legislation that would provide legal cover to businesses denying services based on the operator’s religious beliefs. The return of Jim Crow with a cactus beat.

Yes, the finger jabbing governor banged down the brakes of the bigot bill. And the disappointment rumbling through the evangelical community caused snakes to be mishandled all the way to Eastern Tennessee.

Give the lady credit. She hemmed. She hawed. She deliberated. Took her time like a molasses coated snail slogging up Everest against the wind in the dead of winter. The right thing was done; for the wrong reasons. The same way deciding not to drink that 8th beer was a smart move whether the cause was self-restraint or misplacing the bottle opener under the front seat.

Mostly it was the threat of another state-wide economic boycott including the possibility of losing a second Super Bowl that did the trick. Once again, the NFL trumps religion. Of course, if those darn liberals hadn’t put up such a stink, she would have signed it so fast it would make a roadrunner’s head spin, mid beep-beep. Ironically, Brewer’s

painstakingly lackadaisical response was responsible for ratcheting up the backlash that inflamed the country. She inadvertently gave the press time to trumpet the story. And the resulting uproar bodes as well for the umpteen other states considering similar legislation as a dead gila monster-head in your Frosted Flakes.

This is what happens when the tourist industry, the business community, the state’s two GOP U.S. Senators and even some of the bill’s co-sponsors turn against it. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

You’d think that vetoing a bill that sanctioned discrimination would be a no-brainer, but no-brainers aren’t quite the sure thing in Arizona. This is the state famous for voting against recognizing Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday as a holiday and encouraging local police to stop anybody with a tan on both their arms. Not to mention Alice Cooper.



**Will DURST**  
RAGING MODERATE

Perhaps Arizona legislators are unaware that religions other than Christianity exist, because depending on the faith of the business owner, this bill would have allowed folks to refuse service not just for sexual orientation but for sporting nail polish, fastening pants with zippers or eating shellfish. The burning hunger for desert shellfish having been dealt with many millennia ago.

Not wearing a hat offends some gods. While the wearing of hats offends others. The gods, they are sartorially conflicted. Suspected of engaging in premarital sex? No ice cream for you! Divorced patrons can purchase their organic rutabagas somewhere else, thank you very much. Wear a turban? Don’t need a couch. Customers would need to take a urine test every time they dropped something off at the dry cleaners.

With every piece of ludicrous legislation, it becomes increasingly apparent that AZ-the postal abbreviation for the Grand Canyon State- stands for “Angry Xenophobes.” And yes, xenophobe is actually spelled with an X, but the insensible and intolerant denizens of Arizona are probably unaware of that. Arizona: the American Uganda. It’s not the hate, it’s the stupidity.

*Durst, distributed by the Cagle Cartoons Inc. syndicate, is a political comedian who has performed around the world.*