

# OPINION

OUR VIEW

## More than just ick!

We’ve all smiled, and maybe even grimaced, when we’ve heard hardy Borderland folks cringe and recoil when talking about ticks.

Come on, we’ve thought, or even said aloud to these people. This is northern Minnesota, toughen up.

But with an increasing incidence of tick-borne illnesses, it’s time for all, even the toughest among us, to rethink how we approach the great out-of-doors.

Times, they are a changin’, said fellow northern Minnesotan Bob Dylan, and David Neitzel, a tick-borne disease specialist with the Minnesota Department of Health.

Neitzel warns ticks and the diseases they transmit are moving north and the number of cases of tick-borne diseases are on the rise.

Yikes, everyone should think. And we’re sure that’s how many people feel who have already experienced first hand the seriousness of tick-borne diseases — Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, Colorado tick fever, and anaplasmosis.

In an area like ours, where we work and play regularly in the outdoors, staying indoors is not an option. The first line of defense is to understand, assess and plan for the risks. That means know the black-legged, also known as the deer tick, can be found in wooded or brushy areas; the

American dog tick in grassy or wooded areas.

If you spend time in tick habitat, use repellent to reduce the risk of disease: DEET-based repellents (up to 30 percent DEET) can be applied to clothing or skin; pre-treating fabric with permethrin-based repellents can protect against tick bites for at least two weeks without reapplication. Or, try the old system involving tucking your plants into your socks. You won’t start a fashion trend, but it may keep ticks from easily getting to your skin.

In addition, check yourself, your children, and your pets several times a day for ticks. Catching them on clothing and fur before they get to skin can help avoid bites and keep from bringing them indoors.

Early detection of tick-borne illness is important to prevent potentially severe complications, so people should seek medical care if they develop symptoms that could be a tick-borne disease after spending time in tick habitat. And don’t forget to mention to your doctor that you may have been bitten by a tick, but not realized it.

Knowing about the potential for serious tick-borne diseases and taking steps to avoid contact with ticks is increasingly more important to prevent illness.

So, go ahead and say it: Ticks! Ick!



GUEST COLUMN

## Casual racism vs. institutionalized racism

We as a nation have become really good at punishing casual racism. You know, using the N-word or saying overtly cruel things about black people in the presence of a recording device.

Robert Copeland, an 82-year-old town police commissioner in New Hampshire, resigned this week after he unapologetically described President Barack Obama as the N-word. There’s not an equivalent thing to call a white leader of the free world. There’s just not. After Copeland’s resignation, Board of Selectmen Chair Linda Murray told reporters, “The town is pleased. This gives us the opportunity to move on.”

And public land grifter Cliven Bundy blew his chance to be a mainstream right-wing militia star when he uttered the sentence, “I want to tell you one more thing I know about the Negro...” He went from hero to “who?” in the right-wing echosphere in about two seconds.

When Los Angeles Clippers owner Donald Sterling was caught on tape telling his mistress not to take black people to his games or have her picture taken with them, he was banned from the NBA for life and ordered to sell his team (at a profit).

So we’ve grown adept at being disgusted when



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hearing racist things. Our corporate images are those of diversity. Sponsors flee from a hint of casual racism. Dr. Laura Schlessinger dropped a couple of n-bombs and was booted out of terrestrial radio, landing at XM Sirius.

We’ve gotten really good at denouncing the n-word.

We’re less willing to talk about, or even acknowledge, that institutionalized racism as a real thing. A word is easy to rally and tweet against: the long-term systematic subjugation of a people based on their skin color is...well...not as easy to solve with a catchy hashtag.

It’s like global warming: If we admit it’s real, suddenly there are a bunch of uncomfortable realities to face. Instead, we opt to teach the controversy and stall.

The Sterling example in particular illustrates my point: The Justice Department sued Sterling’s company in

2003 for refusing to rent to African Americans in Beverly Hills. That’s institutional racism and the billionaire had to shell out a measly \$3 million because of it, but took no hit to his reputation. What hurt him was his casual racism played back for all to hear.

Ta-Nehisi Coates’ seminal piece in The Atlantic, “The Case for Reparations” (one of the few magazine articles you’ll ever read with chapters) paints a vivid picture of institutionalized racism: Race-based government policies conspiring with private interests, what Coates describes as pirates with their plunder.

“Having been enslaved for 250 years, black people were not left to their own devices. They were terrorized. In the Deep South, a second slavery ruled. In the North, legislatures, mayors, civic associations, banks, and citizens all colluded to pin black people into ghettos, where they were overcrowded, overcharged, and undereducated.” He writes, “Businesses discriminated against them, awarding them the worst jobs and the worst wages. Police brutalized them in the streets. And the notion that black lives, black bodies, and black wealth were rightful targets remained deeply rooted in the broader

society.”

And strangely, “12 Years a Slave” winning Best Picture doesn’t change that. And electing Barack Obama doesn’t change that. And banning Sterling from the NBA doesn’t change that. Coates writes, “In 2012, the Manhattan Institute cheerily noted that segregation had declined since the 1960s. And yet African Americans still remained by far-the most segregated ethnic group in the country.”

Look, I’m not belittling the ease with which we organize against casual racism (I am a little). I think if we have agreed that using a word as ugly and dehumanizing as the infamous N-word means you lose credibility in public discourse then we can also see the policies which have contributed to continued inequality in the same way.

To quote Coates: “To celebrate freedom and democracy while forgetting America’s origins in a slavery economy is patriotism a la carte.”

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