

SAD AND SADDER ...

I almost never say this, but I'm at a loss for words. This is such an unusual event that I have to note it in passing. If I could find the words, they would be 'appalled', 'mortified', 'dumbstruck', or somesuch.

I am appalled at the lack of humanity that is being displayed not only in our country, but across the globe.

Our country has two separate anti-humanity situations going on simultaneously. Both are based in racism, both economic and true racial bias.

The first is the situation in Puerto Rico, where basic aid is being denied to American citizens who are the victims of a massive hurricane that not only destroyed their lives and property, but destroyed the basic infrastructure of water, power and transportation.

The throttling back of aid to the island is, in my opinion, racism at its core. The attitude of the government (and the president) seems to be 'let them eat cake.' While professing to do a 'great job' with a myriad of FEMA people, the actual aid like food, water, medical assistance, communications, and gasoline just isn't getting anywhere.

I read where some of the FEMA people were telling mayors of outlying villages to apply for aid 'online'. How they expect these authorities to apply through a non-existent Internet and totally trashed telephone systems is beyond me.

If this had been New Orleans again, the military would have been in almost immediately, flooding the area with truckloads of assistance of all kinds, and there would have been Army bulldozers clearing roads and restoring power within hours. But this is Puerto Rico.

While these are citizens of the United States, unfortunately, they are mostly poor, brown, and (as a territory) don't vote in federal elections. This puts them at a triple disadvantage with this administration, that is so concerned with 'dancing with them what brung 'ya'. Puerto Rico has no leverage and was already in territorial bankruptcy. The government seems to think that it has no humanitarian reason to help these poverty-prone people and is proving that on an almost hourly basis.

Whether this bias against assisting the territory of Puerto Rico (or the Virgin Islands, for that matter) is racial or not, it is, as the mayor of San Juan put it, 'equivalent to genocide by neglect.' The assistance to Puerto Rico is so miniscule compared to Houston, Florida or even Katrina's victims as to be laughable if it weren't so potentially deadly.

The second front on this humanitarian assault is squarely in the

middle of the country and isn't getting nearly the attention that it deserves. It is a problem that is rearing its ugly head in Kansas more visibly than elsewhere, but does truly exist in many rural areas of the country.

It is the refusal of state governments to expand Medicaid assistance. While this may appear to be a strictly economic decision, its impacts have profound effects to those rural communities that have small community hospitals. These rural towns rely on their local hospital (small as it is) to provide health care to widespread areas apart from the metropolitan cities and metroplexes. Medicaid is the one thing that keeps these rural health providers in business and rising costs are forcing them to reduce services or close their doors completely. Medicaid expansion is just about the only lifeline that will keep them open and functioning.

In Kansas, the problem is becoming acute, as it is elsewhere. If these hospitals close, it means that emergency rooms are no longer available, and in rural areas, this is critical because of the prevalence of serious injury due to farm accidents. Without that trauma care quickly available, the probability of higher mortality due to long transport times to the nearest E.R. is increased.

The 'why' of the states to refuse the Medicaid expansion money when it affects some of their own people, is unfortunately the result of it being tied to 'Obamacare'. And we all know that anything tied to our first black president is automatically rejected. But to put their own constituents lives and health at risk because of racial hatred almost unbelievable - if it weren't happening before our own eyes.

Other states have similar problems and are turning a deaf ear and blind eye to their non-urban citizens, most of whom voted for Trump and the Republicans. This is their return on their investment.

But this is in line with a Republican agenda that has tried over seventy times to repeal Obamacare and return millions of people to their previously medically-uninsured status and to the use of the Emergency Room as their primary care provider.

In addition, many of the bills proposed by the Republicans in Congress would drastically cut Medicaid itself, with the result of forcing the states to ration care even more than they are already. This would mean cuts in senior nursing home care, forcing many onto the street or back with family-living situations that can't afford it to begin with. This would mean that people with profound disabilities would be forced off of assisted-living programs and into institutional care.

The effects would be devastating to this permanent underclass.

But this is not the first time that humanitarian concerns have taken a back seat to partisan politics or hatreds.

But it's sad, and getting sadder.