

To protect and serve

I was walking on The Esplanade toward downtown just past dusk when I heard breaking glass, lots of it, in a crosswalk on the opposite side of the street near Bidwell Mansion. A



by
Bill Mash

This guest comment by the late community advocate was originally published March 24, 2016, and is reprinted to once again remind Chicoans of our shared humanity.

slim, long-haired man, his bicycle frame laden with possessions, was nervously surveying the remnants of half a dozen bottles that had tumbled to shards from his towed baby carrier packed with recyclables.

I spied one lonely unbroken bottle in the midst as the light turned green; headlights glaring on a man caught in the middle of a fine mess. The flashing blues of a Chico police SUV sprung into view 30 yards away. I reached the crosswalk just as the policeman parked, straddling both lanes of the roadway as traffic piled up behind the blocked intersection.

The police officer exited his vehicle,

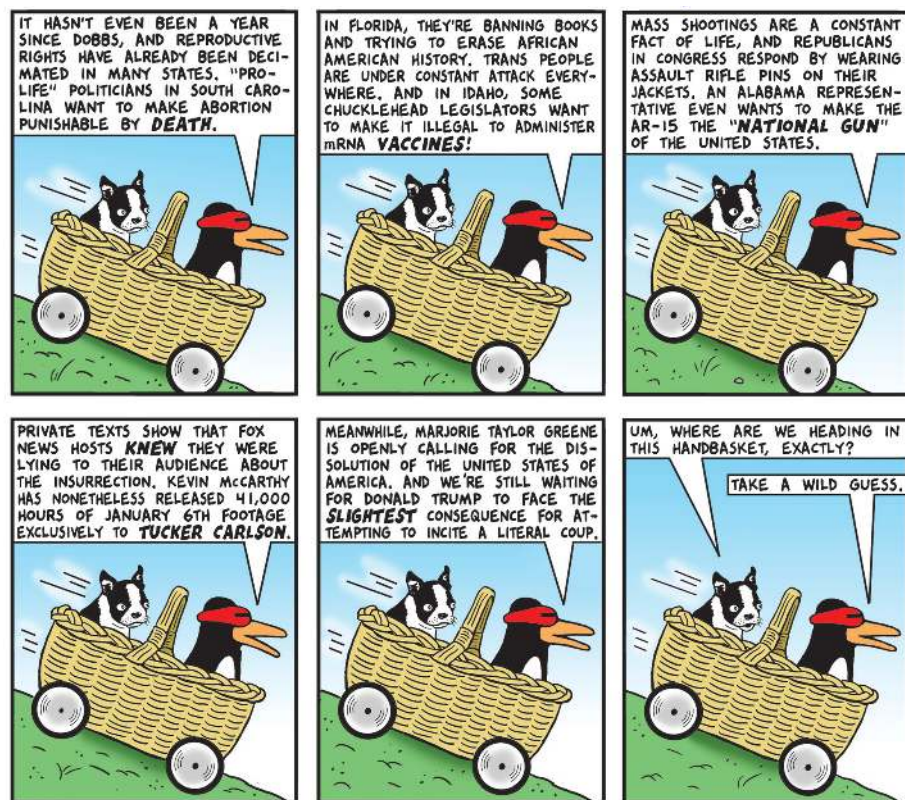
honing in on the unbroken bottle. He picked it up and gently passed it to the man. He then began moving the shards of glass with the side of his boot as he directed the man to the safety of the sidewalk. Halfway through this chore, another man hustled over and handed him a push-broom.

With a head nod and thank you, the officer proceeded to sweep the intersection clear of glass—a two-minute job that ended with a courteous conversation with the recycler before he got back in his cruiser and left, his flashing lights now dark.

Every character in this scene is vital. Removing any of them—the destitute man, the dozens of auto occupants, the police officer or the man with the broom—changes the demeanor and charm of the community humely coming together. We all lead busy and often chaotic lives, be it gathering bottles for a meager handful of change, or patrolling the streets of Chico from the vantage point of a police cruiser. Opportunities like this underscore how kindness and courtesy in the face of adversity are what constitute the human race and what make Chico a place we are proud to call our own.

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BY TOM TOMORROW



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