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OPEN MIC

'Bird Box Challenge' is foolish, dangerous

In an era when public taste and behavior are often influenced by unseen forces of the media, it is not surprising how many otherwise rational people will ignore common sense and risk their own safety to be fashionable.

The latest example of this phenomenon is the Bird Box Challenge, an internet-based trend that dares glib subjects to emulate characters from the horror film, "Bird Box." These people attempt feats of skill while blindfolded.

While some have tried harmless stunts, like applying lipstick or eating soup, others have foolishly driven cars or crossed heavily trafficked roadways while blindfolded.

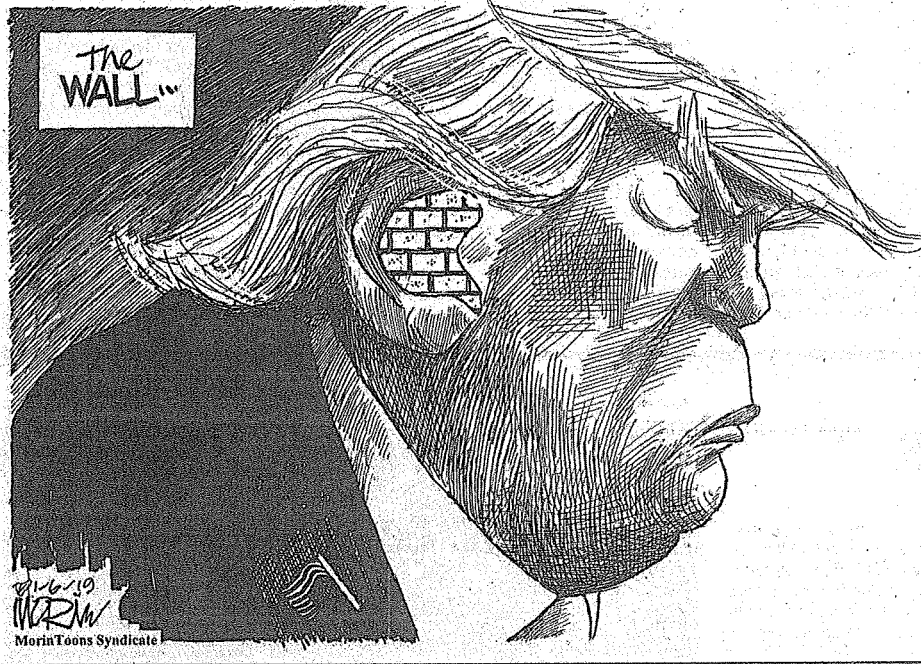
The ultimate reward for such risky behavior has been heavy volumes of hits for their internet postings, a mark of true popularity among the most avid of the cyberspace crowd.

As a blind person who gained her blindness skills through intensive training provided by Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, I find such behavior insensitive and ignorant. Sight is a sense that is too often taken for granted by those who have it.

Those of us who are visually impaired must develop other senses, use adaptive technologies and tools to compensate and develop skills to navigate the world around us, all of which is provided through Miami Lighthouse training. You can imagine how dangerous and foolish the Bird Box Challenge appears.

While we confront a predominantly sighted world every day and succeed based on our determination and ability to adapt, Bird Box Challengers are playing blind for their own amusement, while often placing themselves and others at peril.

—Virginia A. Jacko,
president and CEO,
Miami Lighthouse
for the Blind, Miami



GABLES' LIP SERVICE

The Dec. 26 article "Roof-top solar panel rules frustrate homeowner," is exactly what most of us in Coral Gables expect: A long, expensive, frustrating process to get any permit (which is why many residents do work without permits).

Coral Gables gives being "green" a lot of lip service, but it does not put our money where its mouth is. Overdevelopment, with massive high rises reaching to the edge of our main streets, is one example. The traffic already is unbearable. What will it be like when the 60-story behemoth on U.S. 1 is finished? The CO₂ emissions from all the cars will continue to increase.

In Gables by the Sea, we have been begging for shade trees for 25 years and have been largely ignored. The EPA says that urban "heat islands" contribute to climate change. On our two main streets, the temperature gets to 119 degrees on hot, sunny days because there is no shade. We pay enormous amounts of property taxes and have been unable to get desperately needed shade trees.

We are not fooled by the green talk. Coral Gables needs to raise hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes to pay the unfunded pension deficit. Enormous commercial buildings that contribute

to traffic and take away green space will hurt our environment, but will create tax revenue. A homeowner, trying to do the right thing and install solar energy, is irrelevant to the city.

—Katherine Newman,
Coral Gables

CONGRATS, MITT

Congratulations to Mitt Romney for his intelligent New York Times op-ed piece on President Trump. His criticism of the president and concern for our future were right on target.

Also: Vice President Mike Pence, with his dummy imitation at the Dec. 11 meeting with Trump, Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer, show that he is just following his idol's crazy agenda. He has never disagreed with anything Trump says — and never will.

—Roberta Leonard,
North Miami

Foul language

I was dismayed when newly elected Democratic U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, said: "We are going to impeach that motherf---."

I have never in my lifetime seen a president being so ridiculed and insulted. I am ashamed that the intolerant Democrats and liberals are ruthless, hating, cruel people who think that they have the right to be vulgar and crude.

Of course, the liberal

media not only do not condemn this behavior, they join in. I hope that people are sufficiently disgusted to vote these government officials out.

I came to this country attracted by its civility and, all of a sudden, we have this third representative in Congress using foul language. And there is no reaction from the media, as if this is normal behavior.

Unfortunately, we are on our way to become a "shithole" country.

—Renée Arazie,
—Aventura

VOTE ON THE WALL

I have a solution to the government stand-off about the border wall: Have a general election and let "we the people" decide whether to spend millions to build it.

This way, both parties can save face and not take blame or credit for the wall.

—Miriam B. Salazar,
Aventura

AMERICAN SPY

Relations between the United States and Russia are complicated.

What was Paul Whelan, the American arrested in Russia for espionage, doing in Russia? Attending a wedding?

Considering the political climate, is this not merely dangerous and irresponsib-

le. It also adds to the political problems between the countries.

Is Whelan a spy? We will find out. Is he stupid and destructive? No question.

—Jeff Haller,
Cutler Bay

HOLD THEIR PAY

Here is the best and easiest way to break this budget stalemate and get the government open again. In addition to the 800,000 government employees who are not being paid, we need to add others to that list.

Let's hold the pay for all senators, House lawmakers and their staff; all White House employees, Cabinet members and their staff; the president and his staff, as well.

I promise you that before the sun rises on the next day, the government will be open.

There should be a pox on the houses of all politicians in Washington for putting their political concerns ahead of those of citizens. Remember, they work for us!

—Howard Landers,
Miami

MAD DOG FIRED?

So, when Gen. James "Mad Dog" Mattis resigned, he suggested that the president is entitled to a secretary of defense who

“GLAD TO SEE WE'VE MOVED ON FROM 'WOMEN IN POLITICS SHOULDN'T DANCE' TO 'WOMEN IN POLITICS SHOULDN'T SWEAR.' LOOKING FORWARD TO 'WOMEN IN POLITICS SHOULDN'T WEAR HIGH HEMLINES.'”

Kevin M. Kruse

is more aligned with his own thinking.

Does that mean President Trump deserves those he has called an "idiot" (Gen. John Kelly), a "moron" (Rex Tillerson) or just a "liar" (Gen. Stanley McCrystal)?

—Norma A. Orovitz,
Bay Harbor Islands

FRINGE BENEFITS

Re the Jan. 4 letter "They'll be OK:" There is a problem with the writer's argument about the government shutdown and the comfortable position of federal workers receiving retirement benefits, etc. He misses the point in two regards.

First, this shutdown is a hostage situation orchestrated by President Trump, which is unconscionable in its ramifications. Second, the benefits received by federal workers should be the norm for all people when they retire from their jobs, not an exception.

After working many years for a corporation, people should receive compensation from their employer, who profited from their labors and who should share the earnings with them in their golden years. The private-sector employee should be equally compensated.

—Oksana Piaseckiy,
Sunny Isles Beach