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Local Opinion: We're missing a key ingredient: Context

I see something important that we are missing in our society. Context.

An antiquities poacher who picks up a fossil or pottery shard, who then cleans it up and shows it off has destroyed a major part of the find. The placement, the position and the surrounding items are important to understanding the history lost to the finder's greed. Understanding our history is paramount to a proper progression of society. Thus, the poacher valuing the item has destroyed part of our history. Context is our history.

Consider this thought experiment. What would our current debate leading up to our national election be like if the news organizations we depend upon had reported the past rise of inflation in context with the rest of the world. Not as another story lost in the 24-hour news cycle, but as a consistent feature of good reporting.

For the most part, the worldwide inflation issue has been reported as a US problem. Aside from the egotism of assuming that we can control the entire planet, our information has been skewed toward negativity and self-loathing. Consider these two statements:

- 1: The inflation rate over the past three months has been 7.7 percent.
- 2: The inflation rate over the past three months has been 7.7 percent, while western Europe's inflation rate has been at 11.5 percent.

These numbers from October of 2022 reflect two things. First, the American experience with the inflation issue is not a solo problem. Secondly, the US economy has been doing better than our best comparisons. It only took ten additional words to reflect all of that.

This leads to two more points. First, the President of the United States has a smaller roll in our overall economy than generally assumed. The US economy has been compared to a full cargo ship. To turn or stop such a large and heavy vessel, decisions need to be made far in advance. It is also the Federal Reserve Board that does most of the long-term decision making. Secondly, any ideas of how we could have avoided an inflation surge after a pandemic, two major wars and the direct effect of these on the worldwide economy are certainly lacking in our national understanding. Perhaps that is due to a simple lack of context.

Let's investigate that cargo ship analogy. Let's assume that, in general, a president's effect on the economy takes, say, two years to be seen in full. If all this is true, then Trump inherited an Obama economy, Biden inherited a Trump economy and Trump seeks to inherit a Biden economy. President Trump's past economic decisions based upon tax cutting that largely benefitted the more wealthy may have built a lack of

resiliency in our economy that left us more vulnerable to COVID. Add that Ukraine was invaded within the first two years of Biden's presidency, the spike in inflation may have been unavoidable. The Biden Administration and the FED promised us a soft landing, but it would take time and here we are with our soft landing. This analysis fits our history, but that's not how our news organizations are reporting it. Our nations reporting continues to lack context though.

To be fair, newspapers do a much better job of taking the time to analyze and add context. If you are reading this, then you probably understand that newspapers nationwide are in trouble. We Americans read less.

So, I'll add another old saw from my world. America has been in a not-so-subtle conflict with public education. First "they" came for art, then "they" came for science and now "they're" coming for our history and literature. There is a correlation between this political conflict that began to take a serious tone during the 1980's and the decline of newspapers. I would add that this correlation includes a decline in a national context, critical thinking and understood history. Add that rural school districts depend more on public schools, and we have our current rural/urban divide.

We seem to be inundated by poachers.