

OPINION: New Bedford woman shares perspective on being given up for adoption

27-year old New Bedford resident, Lauren Johnson, was given up for adoption at a very young age. She shares her perspective on life, wondering who her birth parents were, and how it all has affected her growing up.

“It’s taken me a long time to find the right words – although I’m still not sure I’ve been able to do that.

I was born at St. Luke’s Hospital on August 27, 1990 in New Bedford, MA. My life hasn’t been perfect, but it sure has been wonderful. I’ve been so lucky to have had a life that has been filled with laughter and so much love. I can’t even begin to imagine my life any other way, except for the fact that I would have never had this life had my biological mother, Rebecca, not given me up for adoption on August 31, 1990, when I was only four days old.



I grew up in Cohasset MA, currently live in Quincy MA. I've spent a lot of time wondering where I came from. Imagining what you are like. Wondering how much a like could we be. I like to believe I've had to make a lot of hard choices in my life, but I've never had to give up my child. As I get older, more people ask me how I feel about being adopted. I think most people expect me to be angry or sad that my mother gave me up.

I'm not. I am nothing but grateful.

I know if she could have kept me, she would have. She couldn't, so she had to make the impossible choice to give up her daughter for a better chance at life. Not a day has gone by where I haven't thought about Rebecca, or my big brother,

Heath. I didn't grow up with them. I have never met either of them, but I am searching. I had contact with Rebecca via letters to the adoption agency for a year after I was born. The adoption agency went bankrupt in 1991 and we lost all contact.

There is nothing I want more in this world than to thank them. Thank them for allowing me the opportunity to have this life I've been living. Thank them for their selflessness. My search for them is never going to be over. Not until I can thank them for all they've done for me.

Rebecca and Heath – I cannot wait to tell you how much I love you. To tell you how much I've always loved you. I just hope I don't have to wait too much longer. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for loving me so much everyday and giving me this amazing life.

You have no idea what you've done for me, and I cannot wait to share my story with you in person. ♥☐”



Local woman shares all-too common experience with public leering and sexual harassment

Are you a woman who is fed up with cat calls, rude or explicit comments, or uncalled for behavior by simply walking to the store? Annoyed with being made uncomfortable with everyday activities being turned into a horrible experience? Many

people complain that a nice stroll with their kids becomes a lesson in how not to act. Sadly, these uninvited comments are considered acceptable even when very young children are about. Do you feel this is becoming more commonplace? When is it crossing the line? Will speaking up just aggravate the situation?

One resident shares her thoughts from a recent experience.

"Hi, I've been noticing a lot more leering/sexual harassment from guys lately around my local neighborhood when I walk my dog – especially by the coffee shop on Acushnet Ave near Tarkiln Hill Road.

I called the shop and complained, but they said there is nothing they can do and this problem has been going on for 20 years! It especially bothers me when my little ones are with me, I'm not sure who they are leering at! Anyway, was proposing that you cover a piece related to this in an effort to improve New Bedford's culture. I feel like I should be able to walk around my neighborhood comfortably without getting harassed and then people just waving it off because "That's New Bedford..." I want this city to get better." -Anonymous

Five recent events NFL players should be protesting instead of President Trump

On Sunday, 100's of NFL players took a knee during the national anthem, or locked arms, in protest of President Trump calling for the firing of players that take a knee during the national anthem. Locally, over a dozen New England Patriots

fans took a knee. The controversy started last year when back up quarterback Colin Kaepernick sat and then started to kneel during the national anthem in protest to what he feels is police brutality against African-Americans in America.

I find it ironic that NFL players are taking a knee for police brutality that is rare in America, but haven't protested or taken a knee when one of their own players brutally beat or attempt to kill a loved one. I'd be willing to bet that NFL players have a higher rate of violence on loved ones than the rate of police officer violence on African Americans. It's also ironic that the NFL who talks about the rights of their players to protest, **denied the Dallas Cowboys' request to wear a decal on their helmets during the season that would have paid tribute to the five police officers killed last month in an ambush.**

Here are 5 recent instance NFL players should have protested injustice, but decided not to.

1. Three people killed and 38 wounded in gun violence in Chicago this past weekend

Trump's words seem to be more hurtful than being shot to death. Dozens of people are shot in Chicago every weekend, but you don't see much protest anywhere in America, let alone in the NFL. In the same weekend NFL players decided to protest Trump's words, **three people were killed and 38 wounded in gun violence in Chicago.** None of the people shot and killed were by Chicago cops.

More than 3,000 people have been shot in Chicago this year and 3,550 were shot in 2016. Chicago recorded 762 homicides in 2016 – more than two homicides a day. Police shot 25 people in Chicago in 2016, killing 11 of them. Based on these numbers you are 142 times more likely to be shot by someone who is not a cop, than being shot by a cop. Out of the 25 shootings by cops, you can bet the vast majority, if not all of them, were

police officers dealing with dangerous criminals. Shootings in Chicago by residents harm far more innocent people. The idea that cops are the problem is ludicrous. Wouldn't a protest to end violence in Chicago be appropriate, especially with so many sports teams there?

2. Ray Rice KO's his fiancée, then drags her out of an elevator

After a heavy night of drinking, Ray Rice knocked out his then fiancée Janay Palmer (now married) in an elevator in Atlantic City. How was this injustice dealt with by the NFL? A 2-game suspension and he served no jail time. When the video of the violent incident was released Rice was finally kicked out of the NFL, but was given millions in a wrongful termination settlement. No protest to support battered women?

3. Greg Hardy nearly kills his girlfriend.

Greg Hardy reportedly "assaulted an ex-girlfriend by grabbing her, throwing her into furniture, strangling her, and threatening to kill her." He was found guilty by a judge, but then asked for a retrial. The ex-girlfriend couldn't be found, so prosecutors dropped the case. There are reports that Hardy paid off his ex-girlfriend and why she was a no-show.

The NFL suspended Hardy for 4 games and concluded that Hardy's actions were "a significant act of violence in violation of the Personal Conduct Policy." The Dallas Cowboys gladly signed him for a deal between \$11-\$13 million and he played most of the 2015 season. You can see pictures the abused woman **here**. Again, no protest to support battered women?

4. Adrian Peterson whips his son with a switch

Then Vikings running back Adrian Peterson "used a switch to discipline his child, resulting in bruises and lacerations on the boy's back, legs, arms and buttocks." The photos showing

the damage to his child's body is disturbing. The Vikings called it **"disciplining a child"** and let him play the following week. Peterson was allowed to stay in the NFL and was signed by the New Orleans Saints this year. He even played on the day all the NFL players took a knee. No protest to support abused children?

5. Rae Carruth tries to murder a woman pregnant with his child

In 2001, Rae Carruth was found guilty of trying to kill a woman that was 8 months pregnant with his child. While the action wasn't recent, **his expected release date is October 22, 2018**. One would think an evil man leaving prison would be something to protest. Nope, Trump tweets and soundbites are far more dangerous.

Clearly, President Trump should avoid making statements that would hurt businesses like the NFL. I stand by the NFL on that point. It's a distraction and helps no one. I also support NFL players taking a knee during national anthems. My issues with NFL players taking a knee are that it's not only hypocritical, the original protest is based on a lie. As pointed out in Chicago, you are 142 times more likely to be shot by someone who is not a cop, than being shot by a cop and there are far more important issues to protest.

New Bedford drug overdoses down 9% in 2017

Finally some good news on the overdose front: New Bedford drug overdoses are down 9% in the first eight months of 2017 compared to the same period of 2016.

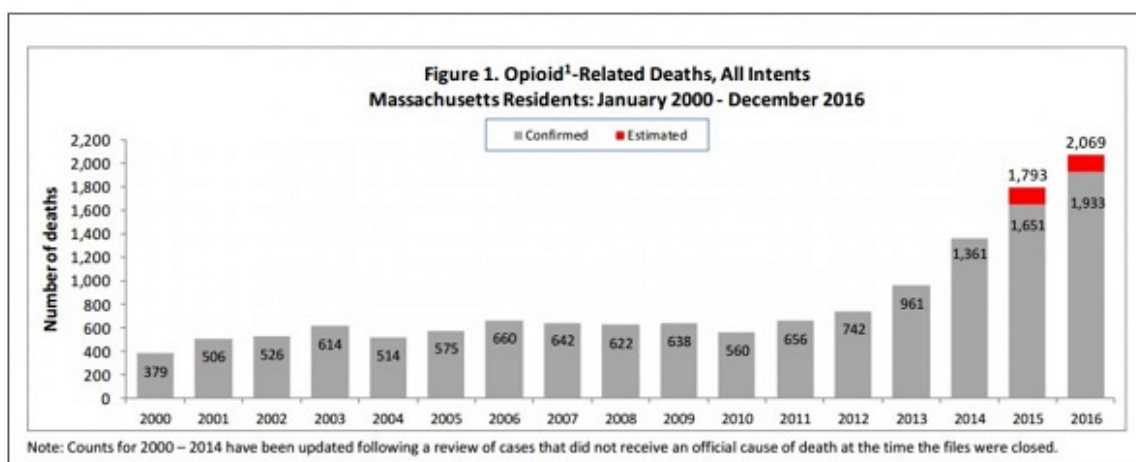
According to the New Bedford police statistics, there were 378 drug overdoses in New Bedford from 1 January to 30 September in 2016 compared to 416 total overdoses in the same period in 2017. That's a decrease of 38 or 9%.

Overdoses January 1st- August 31st

<u>2016</u>			<u>2017</u>	
Non Fatal	391		Non Fatal	352
Fatal	25		Fatal	26
Total	416		Total	378

This is a stark contrast to 2016 where New Bedford saw a 75% increase in overdoses compared to 2015. New Bedford had 679 drug overdoses (42 of them fatal) in 2016 compared to 389 overdoses (25 of them fatal) in 2015.

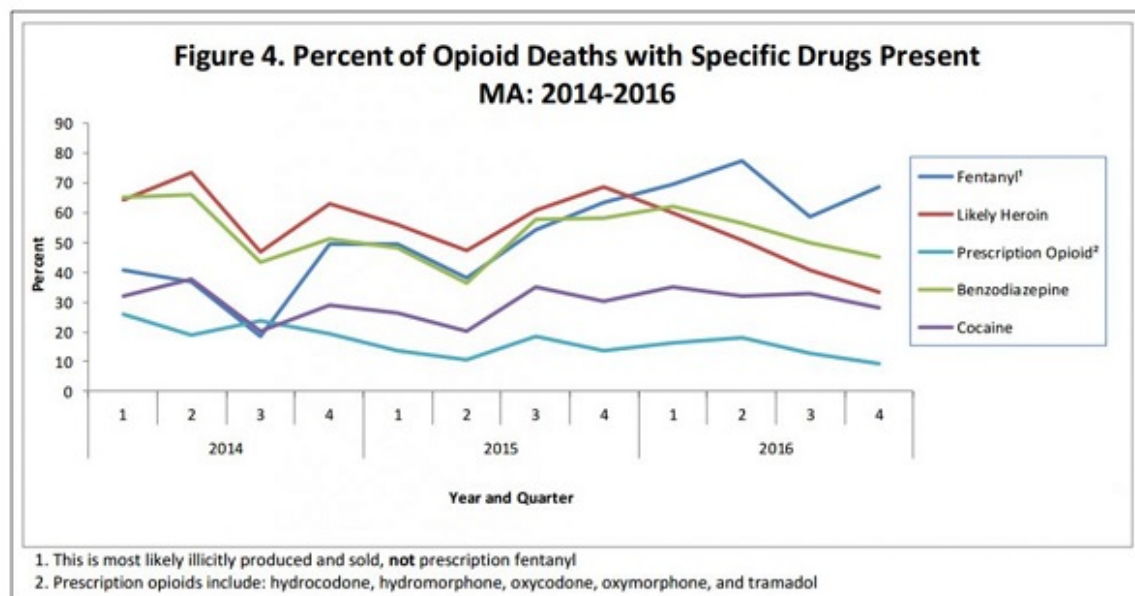
This will mark the first decline in drug overdoses in New Bedford in a long time. There hasn't been a decline fatal overdoses in Massachusetts since 2010.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

As far in 2017, New Bedford did see an increase of fatal overdoses from 25 to 26 likely due to potent synthetic

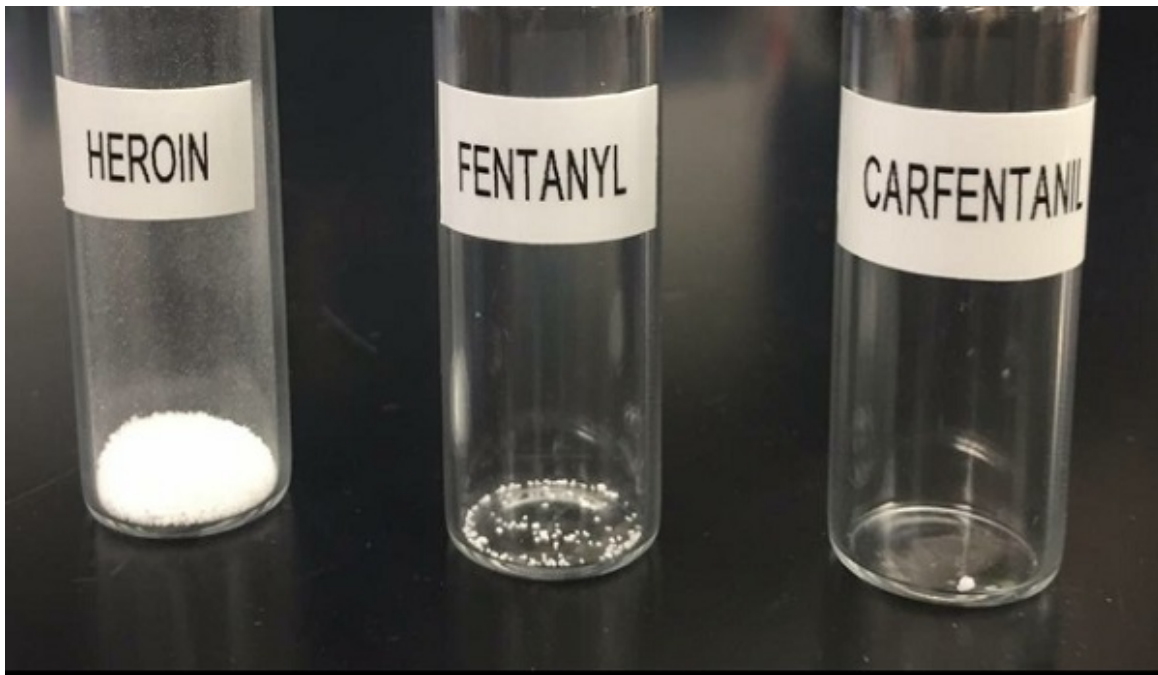
opioids. Fatalities in New Bedford nearly doubled from 2014 to 2015, jumping from 27 confirmed deaths to 48. Per the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Fentanyl is the reason behind most overdoses and likely the reason for the slight increase in New Bedford.



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Fentanyl was found in 75 percent of the 1,374 opioid deaths in Massachusetts in 2016 and **carfentanil, a drug 10,000 times more potent than morphine and used on elephants, has found its way into Massachusetts**. Carfentanil is approximately 100 times more potent than Fentanyl, which can be lethal in the 2-milligram range. These two drugs are likely to be the main cause of most drug overdoses going forward and even causing overdoses in first-responders.

Here's a look at a fatal amount of each drug:



This image shows the lethal (deadly) amount of each drug shown

Considering the significant increase in Narcan use over the past few years, one could assume the overdose numbers would be much lower and the overdose deaths much higher without the life-saving drug. How many times have you read about a person overdosing and being saved with Narcan multiple times? Here's an example of a 47-year old New Bedford woman overdosing on heroin twice in a 24-hour period. I've even written an article titled '**Narcan, stabilize, release and repeat – Massachusetts solution to the opioid epidemic**'. While saving lives, Narcan will boost the overdose numbers as addicts continue to use after being saved.

Reduced numbers of people overdosing in New Bedford for the first three quarters of 2017 is excellent news. We may have finally hit a wall and turned a corner. Let's hope this victory is used to motivate health officials to push for further successes. We've had a decade of steep increases in drug overdoses, let's hope this news is the beginning of a decade of major yearly decreases.

Politicians Spending Capital on Questionable Innovation/Empowerment Zones

By Bruce Ditata

Fiscally conservative Massachusetts Governor, Charlie Baker, finds himself on another shopping spree, spending his political capital, promoting the questionable Empowerment Zone model to the legislature.

His efforts at education “reform” are reminiscent of the ill-fated, charter school cap lift back in 2016.

Who could EVER forget Baker, unabashedly, shilling for the equally questionable charter school genre, going door to door, en route to its defeat by a 62-38% margin.

But Baker and his charter school cronies continue to be a resilient group, along with their legislative allies, in an attempt to resurrect via House Bill 304 an old canard-creating “innovation partnership zones,” an effort to bypass voter rejection of tired, charter school claims of being “inclusive, innovative and laboratories of achievement.”

The local riff on Gov. Baker’s legislative initiative is that New Bedford mayor, Jon Mitchell, is in favor and teachers union president, Lou St. John, is against it.

“It was extremely disturbing to hear Mayor Jon Mitchell portray teachers as roadblocks when it comes to making changes in our schools for the benefit of students. Far from obstructing change at the middle schools, teachers instead

were instrumental in devising plans now in place to address the needs of students attending those schools. And each school has a plan unique to its needs,” said St. John in a recent Facebook post.

St. John added a poignant, incisive question as well, that cuts through much of the fluffer nutter sandwich charter school trolls are attempting to serve.

“When it comes to designing education plans, who better to involve than educators?”

Like his gubernatorial cohort, Baker, the mayor of New Bedford, Mitchell, believes a better choice to run the city schools are private contractors like Chris Gabrieli in the city of Springfield, managing the so-called Empowerment Zones.



In a news article appearing in Southcoast Today on September 5 by Jennette Barnes, she wrote “Mayor Jon Mitchell blamed the city’s inability to create a so-called “innovation zone” at the middle schools squarely on the teachers’ union in testimony before the Joint Committee on Education.

“At a hearing in Boston, he spoke in favor of a bill that would make it easier for a school district to establish an innovation zone for Level 3 schools despite union objections.

Mitchell said the three middle schools urgently needed to improve, but because none had sunk to Level 4 status, the district could not force the issue last year when it was exploring a zone."

"In the absence of the statutory leverage that comes with the Level 4 designation, the teacher's union could simply say no," Mitchell said in prepared remarks. "And that's exactly what it did."

Had House bill No. 304 been law, "we wouldn't have had to accept no for an answer," he said.

What is known about the experiment in Empowerment/Innovation Zone in Springfield is that the projection of marked achievement gains in the district has not materialized in the eight under-performing schools there.

What is, also, known is that four of the eight EZ schools in Springfield- all middle schools- the John F. Kennedy (30.2%), John J. Duggan (25.7%), Van Sickle (31%), and Chestnut North (26.5%) have cracked the top ten of ALL schools in the Commonwealth, measuring the largest number of students suspended out of school.

Yet, Baker said in his State of the State message, "These zones allow educators to make changes necessary to provide a better learning environment."

In a Boston Herald article by Kathleen McKiernan on September 13, she wrote that " Billy Pitman, Baker's spokesperson said the Governor backs, "empowerment zones appropriate as an effective tool for schools, administrators and teachers to create the best learning environment for their students."

State Education Commissioner, James Peyser, added, " ... school districts need the same authority and autonomy that charter schools have to compete effectively... We're trying to build what works... empowering schools works."

St. John's reaction to the concept of what the governor, New Bedford's mayor, the education commissioner and members of the legislature, pushing empowerment zone takeovers?

"Welcome to the privatizing of our public schools. Even though voters overwhelmingly rejected an expansion of charter schools at the polls last year, those who want to restrict teachers' autonomy and allow private interests to operate public schools think they have found a new means of accomplishing that."

In this latest attempt to bypass the will of the electorate with a law authorizing Innovation Partnership Zones- just another wolf in charter school clothing- failure could further erode Baker's image as a candidate of the people.

Opinion: New Bedford teachers are not roadblocks as Mayor Mitchell suggests

"New Bedford's three middle schools have been remade. The students, parents and educators at those schools, along with the whole community, should feel proud and excited as they begin the new school year.

So it was extremely disturbing to hear Mayor Jon Mitchell portray teachers as roadblocks when it comes to making changes in our schools for the benefit of students. Far from obstructing change at the middle schools, teachers instead were instrumental in devising plans now in place to address the needs of students attending those schools. And each school has a plan unique to its needs.

Furthermore, because school administrators wisely recognized the value of using collective bargaining to implement changes, every single teacher working in the middle schools ultimately had the opportunity to review and vote on the plans affecting them.

With that kind of participation and buy-in, I am confident that students at the middle schools will have an excellent experience this year. The teachers and their principals had a hand in shaping the plan, and they know exactly what to expect.

When it comes to designing education plans, who better to involve than educators?

Apparently, Mayor Mitchell believes that the New Bedford Educators Association should have a limited – if any – role in planning to meet the needs of our students. The mayor put on quite a show on Beacon Hill last week, testifying in favor of a bill seeking to give school administrators the power to create so-called “innovation zones” that place schools into the hands of un-elected boards and outside the control of the elected School Committee.

Welcome to the privatizing of our public schools. Even though voters overwhelmingly rejected an expansion of charter schools at the polls last year, those who want to restrict teachers’ autonomy and allow private interests to operate public schools think they have found a new means of accomplishing that.

In his comments in Boston, Mayor Mitchell blamed “the union” for blocking his attempt to set up such a zone for New Bedford’s middle schools. What in fact happened is that it was the teachers who stepped up and said, “Let’s work on this together.”

Thankfully, that is what happened.

The plans that were collectively drawn up for our middle

schools have not even had a chance to take hold, and yet Mayor Mitchell was already insinuating that they are flawed. That notion is an insult to every single person who took the time to study the issues, examine programs in place in other districts and engage in dialogue to reach learned consensus.

Mayor Mitchell instead parrots the claims of privatizers who like to point to schools in Springfield that have been placed in “empowerment zones.” There is absolutely no data to show that any great improvements have taken place yet in those schools; even the operators of the schools in Springfield’s empowerment zone say they are waiting to see the impact of their plan on student achievement.

I urge Mayor Mitchell to support the work that is underway in all of our schools, and to trust our teachers to do their jobs.”

– Lou St. John of New Bedford is president of the New Bedford Educators Association.

Three drug raids in 6 weeks at 358 North Front Street – who owns the property?

Three weeks ago I wrote an article titled ‘**How do you fix the worst New Bedford streets? Start with the problem landlords**’ discussing how the landlords are at the root of the problem when it comes to problem properties and neighborhoods in New Bedford.

North Front Street is a perfect example of a problem street

where police seem to get called to often, especially for drug raids. Just search 'North Front' on NewBedfordGuide.com and you'll see the criminal activity on that street. Click **here** to see for yourself.

358 North Front Street, a large multi-apartment facility, was recently raided by police for drugs for the third time in six weeks. Let's look at each one.

Three weeks ago **New Bedford police officers descended onto 358 North Front Street apartment 1N and arrested 10 people**, to include a minor, on cocaine trafficking charges. Officers seized over 44 grams of cocaine, packaging materials, digital scales and \$962 in cash.

A week later, New Bedford narcotics units did a drug sweep across the city arresting another 10 and, of course, back to **358 North Front Street heroin dealer was one of those busted**. The addresses of those also busted in the raid? 540 North Front St. Apt. 1N and two other individuals that live in 358 North Front St. Apt. 1N.

Last week, yet another bust at 358 North Front St. Apt. 1N. New Bedford police executed two search warrants and raided 358 North Front St. Apt. 1N and apartment 1S raided. This is the third time in a month and a half that apartment 1 north has been raided. As result of the raid in apartment 1 north, detectives seized a little over 28 grams of cocaine, small amount of cash, packaging materials and scales.

What you'll notice after reading each of the police reports is not only are some of the same names coming up, but more concerning is that different names keep coming up as the address of record. Dozens of people flow in and out making some of the apartments at the location simply drug dens.

One name that stands out is "homeless" Mark Salazar who has at least 87 adult arraignments, 53 convictions and arrested yet again. Apparently, having a long rap sheet and **being arrested**

with a gun and cocaine wasn't enough to convince judges that he needs to be thrown in jail and the key thrown away. For a homeless guy, he sure seems to be arrested at the same home over and over.

How does a landlord allow the same apartments to be filled with drug dealers over and over? Let's look who owns this property. **A quick property search on the City of New Bedford's website** shows:

Avitable J. Robert
40 Fortune Lane
Duxbury, MA 02332

If you **search the address in Google**:

Landlord Connection LLC
40 Fortune Lane
Duxbury, MA 02332

The Landlord Connection has a mixed reputation in New Bedford and per their website "serves Southeastern Massachusetts including New Bedford, Fall River, Taunton, Brockton, Boston, and surrounding areas."

When it comes to properties like 358 North Front Street, it seems interesting that the person that owns the property is based out of one of the wealthiest part of Massachusetts and clearly hasn't done much to stop drugs being run out of the property.

Per City records, 358 North Front Street was purchased on 11 November, 2012 for \$260,000. Details:

"This Parcel contains 0.091 acres of land mainly classified for assessment purposes as Apt 4-8 with a(n) Six plus Family style building, built about 1910, having Vinyl exterior, Rolled Composition roof cover and 6000 Square Feet, with 6 unit(s), 30 total room(s), 18 total bedroom(s) 6 total

bath(s), 0 3/4 baths, and 0 total half bath(s)."

At \$260,000, a standard 30-year mortgage would be around \$1,200 per month. With six units you'd only need \$200 per unit to break even. Rent them for \$600 per month and a landlord would clear \$2,400 a month in profit on a \$1,200 mortgage. Buy the location with cash and you'd get all your money back in 6 years. Take this model, and you'll see why there are 3-4 landlords in New Bedford that seem to own most of the "problem properties." One landlord owns between 100-200 properties in New Bedford.

It's your freedom to own as many properties in a city you don't live in, but landlords have a responsibility to keep drug dealers out of their properties. It's acceptable to rent to one drug dealer by mistake, but three in six weeks? Unacceptable and something needs to be done.

To the "Fans" Burning Isaiah Thomas Jerseys

Your ignorance is not representative of the majority of New England sports fans. Your burning of Isaiah Thomas's #4 Celtics jerseys is nothing more than disrespectful. And if you paid your own hard earned money to then burn the jerseys to the ground, so be it. But know this; your hot blooded expression of "fandom" is tremendously misguided.

Nobody was as shocked to hear about the Kyrie Irving trade to Boston more than Isaiah Thomas himself. This is a man who had no intentions of leaving Boston. In fact, Thomas was poised to lead the Celtics through another season as the team's best player, while rehabbing an injury that knocked him out of the

playoff series against his new team. Isaiah was the focal point of team that won the Eastern Conference, in large part because of Thomas' record high stat lines throughout the season. And who could ever forget Isaiah Thomas' tremendous 50+ point playoff game just hours after the tragic news of his sister's death.

This trade, which included Celtics forward Jae Crowder, center Ante Zizic, and a 2018 Brooklyn Nets lottery pick, brought an NBA finals game winner in Kyrie Irving to our hometown team. While many will argue which team "won the trade", it is clear that both teams received valuable assets in return.

The Cavaliers received two starters (Thomas and Crowder) and two potential future stars (Zizic and the Brooklyn pick). They also unloaded Kyrie Irving, who had made it clear that his intentions of staying in Cleveland were nonexistent. Mainly because LeBron is rumored to leave for the west coast next season. And so, the Cavaliers can contend this season and still be poised for another rebuild in case LeBron leaves.

The Celtics, meanwhile, received an All Star-finals winning point guard in his physical prime. Irving is only 25, and is under contract for another two seasons. And Kyrie will now get to play with recently acquired all star Gordon Hayward on a Celtics team that surprisingly only has 4 players from last year's team on their current roster. Even with a new look roster, the Celtics should certainly be contending to make the NBA finals this season, as they have a talented group of role players such as Al Horford, Jaylen Brown, and roomie Jayson Tatum. And this time, they just might have to face Isaiah Thomas and the Cavaliers to do so.

Oddly enough, Kyrie Irving and Isaiah Thomas were the first and last respective picks in the same draft 6 years ago(#1 and #60). Irving has played in Cleveland his whole career, while Thomas has played for several teams since. It was Celtics GM Danny Ainge who a few years ago traded Marcus Thornton and a

Cleveland 1st round draft pick to the Phoenix Suns to acquire PG Isaiah Thomas. At the time, IT was only a 6th man coming off of the Suns' bench. Today, Isaiah Thomas is coming off his best season in the NBA; averaging about 29 points per game, leading the Celtics to the Eastern Conference finals, and being named to his first ever all NBA 2nd team.

This trade came as a genuine shock to all that follow the sport of basketball. The Cavaliers and Celtics are undoubtedly the two best teams in the Eastern Conference. And they just traded two of their best players to each other!

The point is this; both teams made the tough decision of completing this blockbuster trade to not only compete now, but to be better positioned for success in 2-5 years as well. At the end of this upcoming season, the result may as well be determined with a coin flip given how close these two teams skill levels are.

The NBA is a business first and an entertainment entity second. Decisions such as trading fan favorites like IT and Kyrie are not made easily, for various reasons. But these decisions are not avoided in fear of potential fan backlash. Celtics GM Danny Ainge did not fear fans burning jerseys before completing this trade. With ownership groups that are focused on winning championships, these trades are ultimately made because it is agreed within the organization that the trade is the best for sustained success. The goal should be to compete to win in the present and be poised to win down the road. It's a fine line to walk, but it is one that successful companies tow year in and year out.

And so-to see so many Celtics fan unleash their passion by trying to "erase" the history of IT in Boston by burning their #4 jerseys-is truly saddening. Because through these burnings, there is a deliberate avoidance of the team's goals and ignorance of the difficulty of the decision itself. The goal for the Celtics remains the same; even though the "how" has

changed drastically.

What true Celtics fan would want to forget the heroics of IT last season? Thomas was a sixth man in Phoenix, and came to Boston with nobody expecting anything more from him. Two seasons later he is scoring 54 points in a playoff game just hours after finding out his sister had passed away in a car accident. What true fan would want to forget about IT playing through several injuries throughout the playoffs, and ultimately leading the team in scoring throughout the whole season? What true Celtics fan would turn on a player that most fans loved wholeheartedly, just because they were traded against their own will? If it were up to Thomas, he would have stayed in Boston to strive to win banner #18.

I believe IT will undoubtedly carry a chip on his shoulder for as long as he plays in Cleveland. And when he comes to Boston on opening night, it will certainly be must TV. And while I will be cheering for my home town Boston Celtics, I will still be watching for #4 on Cleveland. Because no matter where he plays, Isaiah Thomas proved to me that his skill and pedigree for the game is ultimately what led him to Cleveland from Boston in the first place. It is what led him from being a "nobody" in Phoenix to an all star in Boston. And I can only hope every burnt jersey is used as fuel for Isaiah to continue to prove his worth on the court. As if he hasn't proved so much already.

Celtics fans gear up-it's going to be a feisty season. And here's to hoping we see IT in the Eastern Conference finals.

Again.

OPINION: In Defense of the First Amendment

In a letter to his army just prior to the end of the Revolutionary War, George Washington stated the importance of any person being able to voice their opinion, especially when the stakes are high. "... if Men are to be precluded from offering their sentiments on a matter...reason is of no use to us—the freedom of speech may be taken away—and, dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep, to the slaughter."

It's not an accident that the freedom of expression was enshrined in the very first amendment to the Constitution. The Founding Fathers were aware of the importance of such a protection, especially after being oppressed by the British, whose sedition laws could land a person in court or prison. For them, this guarantee was foundational. As Ben Franklin phrased it, there can be "no such thing as public liberty, without freedom of speech."

When the Bill of Rights was ratified in 1791, America was one of only a few countries to offer such a freedom. For centuries throughout the world, the legality of speech was what the nearest authority happened to think it was. Even today, there are over a dozen nations with various levels of censorship—including places where things like criticizing the government or blasphemy can get you killed.

The simple, unambiguous edict that congress shall make no law "abridging the freedom of speech" is one of the things that has made the U.S. a beacon of liberty and an example of what a just and free society might look like. Today, however, this most basic of human rights is at the epicenter of a political struggle. One extreme is using it as a cloak from under which they can spread disdainful and incendiary messages; the other is taking hammer blows to it in the name of justice. Radical

movements—the vile and the virtuous—will come and go, but there must be a concerted effort to understand the First Amendment, and resolve to defend it.

Freedom of Expression, while a glorious concept, is not absolute. Over the years, the Supreme Court has examined ways in which this *carte blanche* of public language can have ramifications. With a utilitarian spirit, these judges have imposed restrictions; all of which weighed the right to speak versus the rights and safety of others. Among the handful of caveats are “fighting words,” obscenity, threats, defamation, supporting terrorism, and words that could incite violence or endanger the public.

Unfortunately, there is a degree of ambiguity in these decisions (none perhaps more so than Potter Stewart’s obscenity standard—“I know it when I see it”). For example, hate speech—which is protected—seems similar to fighting words or words designed to incite. Recently, with the reemergence of Neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, there have been protests and gatherings where this nebulous distinction is back under the microscope. Should vast groups be able to congregate and spew racist garbage in public? What if they’re doing it while armed and marching with torches? Or at night near a predominately black Church? We can see how quickly the situation gets murky.

In instances like these, there needs to be a broad range of appropriate speech—which we must allow, and a line over which demonstrators cannot cross. People ought to be able to gather peacefully and say whatever they like. Whether anyone else agrees with or likes what they have to say is immaterial. As Noam Chomsky said, “If we don’t believe in freedom of expression for people we despise, we don’t believe in it at all.”

Words may be protected—even the most hateful ones—but actions, as they say, speak louder. The circumstances in some

instances, like Charlottesville, shift the situation onto different terrain. The crucible of a mob with flags, torches, slogans, weapons, combined with the time and place, make it reasonable to conclude that some speech and assembly are purposeful provocations.

Charlottesville was not about the free exchange of ideas, it was a demonstration—possibly even a warning. This manner of speech should be outlawed—or at the very least confined to private areas.

One point worth noting is that the First Amendment protects civilians from government interference with speech. But when the government shirks their responsibility or otherwise allows what many consider dangerous, some take matters into their own hands. Several activist groups have marshaled considerable crowds to oppose and drive back these dirty relics from the Jim Crow era.

The motivation is understandable: for decades America has been taking steps to exterminate racism, and much like other infestations, when vermin reappear so brazenly on the kitchen floor, it's only natural to want to destroy them before they lay eggs and spread. When these counter-protesters stand against the volatile, racist rantings of an angry mob, it is difficult to see their efforts as anything other than heroic. And it's all too easy to overlook their methods.

The problem, however, is the noble desire to shield people from hatred and to subdue what might be considered evil has repercussions. First, who decides what speech should be prohibited? How do we know exactly what is inappropriate? How much force is allowed when fighting a perceived enemy? There is a disconcerting level of subjectivity in play.

Sure, it's easy enough to denounce Nazis and White Supremacists—especially when they are behaving violently—but mob mentality circumvents reason; crowds respond viscerally,

lose control, and ride emotional waves to unseen shores (and the tide of public opinion can turn back the other way at any moment). In the process of fighting for the marginalized, these groups are slowly tightening the noose around the first amendment. They are, in other words, throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Not every instance of protest has been of the anti-nazi variety. There have been a slew of demonstrations on college campuses which have held events featuring conservative firebrands. Mobs destroyed property at UC Berkeley when Breitbart's Milo Yiannopoulos was slated to speak. Later, the school canceled Ann Coulter because they feared similar outbursts. These were seen as victories on the far left. They managed to silence the views of their enemy—the alt-right.

This type of behavior is egregious and embarrassing and should be repudiated by everyone, especially liberals. It is nothing more than the militant stifling of opposing views.

Peaceful demonstrations and shows of solidarity are one thing, burning down or even threatening to shut down campuses is another. People like Milo, Coulter, Limbaugh, Tomi Lahren, or Sean Hannity do espouse some political beliefs that we may find repugnant, but the answer is not to respond with Molotov cocktails, fists, and bottles of urine. Allow them to speak, let their views stand naked, and reasonable people everywhere will see them for what they are. Defeat them with rational argument. Considering the left generally prides themselves on being the more intellectual side, this should be both easy and enjoyable.

When we stop speech by force we galvanize the other side, allow them to play the victim, validate their message, and appear intellectually weak in the process. When the initial response to any opposition is to sling the most virulent words in the arsenal (bigot! racist!), we generalize, devalue the meaning of those words, find ourselves at a loss when we

encounter the real thing, and end the hope of any productive conversation.

If we resort to these tactics we are setting fire to more than campuses or cars, we are setting fire to the only sacred thing in our secular government: the Constitution.

When true evil presents itself, everyone should vehemently oppose it—often by any means necessary. But we can't assume all who aren't in line with our views are evil. Allow people to speak, understand their positions, and then dismantle them. But never restrict peaceful expression by force, for then Freedom of Speech is only available to whomever has the bigger mob.

We are in a war of ideas, and in this war free speech can be perilous, but as Thomas Jefferson once said, "I prefer dangerous freedom to peaceful slavery."

Is it time to take down the Whaleman Statue?

This week **ESPN removed Asian-American announcer Robert Lee** from covering University of Virginia's home opener football game "simply because of the coincidence of his name." Apparently, ESPN thinks he's a statue and needs to be taken down.

The past few weeks Confederate statues have been covered or taken down in the middle of the night by town/city officials, and the ones that aren't taken down are being vandalized. Vandals are even **burning Abe Lincoln Statues in Chicago**.

The oldest known **Christopher Columbus statue** was vandalized in **Baltimore** and **vandals** are even destroying peace statues by **mistake**.

With the urgent need to appease all those offended by history and scared by inanimate objects, is it time to erase New Bedford's whaling past? The popular Whaleman statue in New Bedford represents all the hard working whalers that helped build New Bedford, but doesn't it also represent tens of thousands of whales killed for oil? Why stop with the whaleman statue?

Just to the other side of the the downtown New Bedford library where the whaleman statue stands is a statue dedicated to Lewis Temple, the African-American man who revolutionized the whaling industry with his toggle iron. That would need to come down too.



Take a trip down William Street to the Whaling Museum and a hanging whale skeleton and museum beckons thousands of visitors each year to New Bedford. That would need to come down also.



To be clear, I'm against removing statues of any kind – especially ones dedicated to whaling. To me it will eventually lead to book burning and erasing America's past. Philosopher George Santayana once said, "Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it." By today's standards, the whalers would be considered barbarians and murderers, but during their time they were respected and helped build New Bedford and once lit the world with precious whale oil.

There is an argument that Confederates didn't contribute much to America, fought for enslaving millions of Americans and were responsible for a lot of American deaths during the Civil War. This is true, but then what about **the statue of Lenin that stands prominently in Seattle**? Lenin was the father of Communism which is responsible for over 100 million deaths when people like Mao and Stalin used it to liquidate populations. I despise who and what Lenin stands for, but I'm not about to take down his statue or burn books about him.

Don't we learn from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*? Can you show your kids a Confederate statue and explain to them that the good side won? We pour thousands of school age kids into the New Bedford Whaling Museum and teach them about New Bedford's history, while also explaining to them that whaling is no

longer acceptable. We use our past, no matter how terrible, to teach future generations. Let's not remove statues, or burn books. Let's use them as teaching tools so we don't repeat the mistakes of our past.