

OPINION

THE LEDGER INDEPENDENT

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Letter to the Editor

Board Of Trustees
Shannon Cemetery

Dear Editor,
The Board Of Trustees of The Shannon Cemetery in Mason Co. would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who visited the cemetery during this Memorial Day weekend and through out the year and for their financial support for the maintenance of these beautiful grounds. Once again the grounds were mowed and trimmed in immaculate condition this Memorial Day Weekend and are well maintained throughout the year.
The Shannon United Methodist Church and cemetery were founded in 1801. The current church was built in 1821. The cemetery is a separate organization and is not a part of the church. Thousands of our family members and loved ones are resting there.

It requires thousands of dollars every year to maintain the grounds and equipment and that effort is 100% funded by your donations to The Shannon Cemetery. The board has also recently installed a permanent sign at the cemetery listing all of the "Rules & Regulations" of the cemetery. If you have visited the cemetery recently, we are sure that you noticed the new stone "Shannon Cemetery" sign and landscaping that was installed this past year by the cemetery board.

You can also make donations at any time by mailing them to Trustee Chairman Mr. Dick Clary at 4065 Ky. 596 Mayslick KY 41055.

Once again, thanks for your support and may God bless you and your families.

Board Of Trustees, Shannon Cemetery

Beware distracted drivers this summer

As millions of Americans hit the roadways this summer, it's time to be especially aware of distracted drivers.

According to Distraction.gov, distracted driving involves "any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving" — everything from eating and drinking to using a navigation system to checking digital devices.

When I lived in Washington, D.C. — land of the most distracted drivers on Earth — I saw people do nutty things on the Beltway: applying makeup, reading books and newspapers, working on computers and participating in online conferences and, of course, texting.

Texting continues to be the most dangerous distraction.

According to the latest CTIA data, Americans exchanged nearly 2.2 trillion texts in 2024 — and surveys show that millions of them were sent and read while behind the wheel.

The latest National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) shows that whereas fewer people are talking on their phones, many more are visibly manipulating their digital devices — a number that has more than doubled since 2015.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that young drivers, ages 16 to 24, are distracted by digital devices at much higher rates than older drivers.

All told, digital-device distractions cause approximately 1.6 million crashes and hundreds of thousands of injuries each year — including 3,208 deaths in 2024 alone.

Which means we drivers need to knock it off.

How many studies do we have to do to finally realize how dangerous it is to let digital devices distract us as we drive?

Carnegie Mellon University found that using a digital device while driving — even just listening to a hands-free conversation — reduces activ-

ity in the brain's parietal lobe by 37 percent.

Since the parietal lobe handles spatial awareness, processes what drivers see around them and helps them judge where their car is in relation to everything else on the road, distracted drivers are at greater risk of missing hazards, drifting out of their lanes, misjudging distances and reacting more slowly to sudden changes in traffic.

In other words, distracted driving is equivalent to driving at night with one eye closed and the dashboard lights turned off.

Here's another troubling finding: According to the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, texting while driving diverts your eyes from the road for an average of five seconds. At 55 mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.

You'd think it would be simple common sense — that people would know better than to try to text and drive or take cellphone calls while they're roaring down a highway at a high rate of speed — but that isn't the case.

You'd think there would be no need for new laws and penalties to punish and prevent distracted driving, but unfortunately, there is.

Every day, newspaper headlines feature tragedies that involve distracted drivers — and the subsequent manslaughter lawsuits that many of these drivers face. It's all heartbreaking and totally unnecessary.

That is why many people — people like me who are otherwise wary of our government — agree that state and local governments need to crack down on this matter until a thickheaded public finally grasps the seriousness of using digital devices while driving.

So be careful when you hit the roadways this summer — careful to avoid a growing number of drivers oblivious to the dangers of distracted driving.



Right-wingers are coming for the movies

Conservatives are losing their already culturally challenged and tortured minds over Lupita Nyong'o being cast in the upcoming epic fantasy film *The Odyssey*.

Nyong'o has also appeared in 12 Years a Slave, *Black Panther*, and *Wakanda Forever*. The Academy Award-winner will inhabit two major characters in director Christopher Nolan's adaptation of Homer's ancient Greek epic. She portrays Helen of Troy, the most beautiful woman in the world, whose abduction ignites the Trojan War; and Clytemnestra, Helen's sister and Agamemnon's mysterious spouse.

Helen of Troy is a significant individual in Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. She is primarily associated with *The Iliad* due to her role starting the fictitious Trojan War, but she emerges in *The Odyssey* in a scene with the character Telemachus, played by Tom Holland.

The eagerly anticipated film features a regal A-list cast including Matt Damon as Odysseus, Anne Hathaway as Penelope, and Zendaya as Athena. Several right-wing commentators have accused Nolan of producing a historically inaccurate depiction of the mythological poem. Additionally,

for this rabidly Eurocentric mentally and morally regressive cast of right wingers, the casting of Nyong'o is a sinisterly engineered leftwing plot to undermine western society. Yes, you read that correctly.

Mind you, we are talking about a fictional poem. Right-wing conspiracy theories continue to abound, no matter how retrograde or insane.

Understandably, several racially progressive individuals scorned the irascible Elon Musk, right-wing commentator Matt Walsh, and other MAGA members for arrogantly questioning Nyong'o's casting as Helen of Troy while taking aim at her physical appearance.

Elon Musk took to X (formerly Twitter) to declare in unison with fellow bigoted commentators Nyong'o was not an appropriate selection to play the "most beautiful woman in the world," complaining the casting was an affront to Homer's original text, which described the fabled character as fair-skinned and blonde. The frequently maniacal Musk further claimed Nolan had "lost his integrity," foolishly charging the director chose the

actor to satisfy Hollywood's diversity rules to "win awards."

White supremacist and conservative political pundit Matt Walsh complained if a major studio cast a Sydney Sweeney or another white woman as the most beautiful woman in Africa, folks in Hollywood "would literally riot in the street." I guess he has not heard of the film *Cleopatra* starring Claudette Colbert and Elizabeth Taylor, or of Sir Lawrence Olivier playing the African moor in *Othello*.

The conservative backlash directed at *The Odyssey* has not only been about racism following Nyong'o's casting as Helen of Troy. Elliot Page, formerly known as Ellen Page, who earned an Oscar nomination for her performance in *Juno*, will play the tragic male hero, Achilles. Thus, for many on the social and cultural right, having a transgender performer portray a supposed heroic character, no matter how fictitious, is tantamount to blasphemy.

There are cases where nonfiction must prioritize truth and accuracy. Should Denzel Washington and Benicio del Toro represent Nazi soldiers in a movie about the

Holocaust? Should Julianne Moore or Kathy Bates be given first priority to portray Harriett Tubman or Ida B. Wells on the silver screen? In all probability, no. Nonetheless, when it comes to fiction, the rules of rigidity are suspended. Fiction, by definition, has no obligation to be accurate. The reality is that opportunities for Black actors and actors of color in general are not as abundant as they are for white performers. Despite progress, it has been recent and minimal at best.

Racism impacts Black people in many areas, including the entertainment industry. The racist response to Nolan's casting of Nyong'o is not about a concern for fealty to Homer's intent or to the "supposed veracity" of Greek classics. There is nothing new in altering and redefining the Greek classics. Instead, right-wing outrage is about the grand refusal to view Helen as anything other than an Aryan woman to pacify their own psychosexual obsession with whiteness as supreme.

It is indeed a sad, disquieting, and disturbing statement about our present-day society, one that must continue to be ruthlessly challenged.



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