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Nine years ago, Kerry Drake lost his job –and with it, health insurance —after 19 years with the Casper Star-Tribune. Both he and his wife suffered health problems, yet they couldn't afford to see a doctor as they once did; hence, Drake posted a Youtube video, "Speak out!" in which he hoped Wyoming legislators would expand Medicaid. Gloomily he added that legislators often think potential recipients "are lazy; they won't get a job."

I am a member of a Cheyenne church whose pastor, as well as many congregants, are passionate about social issues. We participate in MLK marches, lobby legislators on behalf of Medicaid and other issues, picket at the Capitol in rainy and icy weather. Nine years have passed; once again in 2023, our legislators have turned down a bill that would make Medicaid legal. One time a progressive member of our church was elected Representative. She didn't last long.

These days Drake writes opinion for the online WyoFile, a member-supported, public-interest news service that reports on Wyoming issues. Often his columns are reprinted in the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle and the Laramie Boomerang. Dustin Bleizeffer, who founded WyoFile (which incorporated in 2009), recently posted a column, "Don't do it: Utilities respond to latest coal mandate." Bleizeffer argues against Senate File 142, which seeks to impose carbon capture and sequestration on utilities (and, by extension, their customers). Drake continues to write persuasively for accepting Medicaid.

During the present legislative session another proponent, [heathinsurance.org](http://heathinsurance.org), chimed in. By not accepting federal Medicaid contributions, Wyoming leaves \$274 million "on the table," writes Louise Norris (Feb 13, 2023). That's the amount of federal money legislators turn down by their refusal to reconcile themselves to the Affordable Healthcare Act (AHC). The money would go a long way to finance Medicaid.

Drake's Feb 21, 2023, column covers yet another legislative boondoggle. His "In baffling move, pro-life lawmakers torpedo suicide hotline funds," is an exercise in controlled fury.

"I had high hopes" he writes of the legislative effort to set up a \$46 million trust fund intended to maintain in perpetuity Wyoming's suicide and crisis hotlines. Wyoming is a wealthy state, writes Drake; it could well afford the move. Besides, there are "millions of dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act that should be going to health-care-related programs."

As an aside Drake adds that "I'm still seething every time I think of the Legislature's 2015 decision to give the University of Wyoming \$8 million to improve its 'athletic competitiveness'." And this year's House Bill 69, he notes, "gives Gov. Mark Gordon \$1.2 million to sue states that have the audacity not to buy and burn Wyoming coal."

Drake notes that every House member who voted against HB 65 also voted for a bill that bans almost all abortions in Wyoming.

“How can anyone who claims to be ‘pro-life’ vehemently defend the government’s right to control a woman’s reproductive life — even mandating they must deliver a baby conceived by incest or rape — but not think government has a moral obligation to invest in ways to save the lives of people at risk of killing themselves?” Drake concludes his column.

Drake’s loss of work, and his inability to secure another full-time job, is no isolated instance. More and more Americans find themselves in similar situations. So do gig workers.

In the eighth year of my weekly column for the Wyoming Tribune-Eagle on culture and society that often veered into the personal, one day its executive editor (and my mentor), Reed Eckhardt, phoned me.

“You’ve heard, our paper has been acquired by a larger entity,” he said.

“I have.”

“I’ve been instructed to inform all our local columnists they will no longer be paid,” said Eckhardt.

“Oh. That’s bad.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Does this mean your own position is in danger?”

“Not at all. I’ll be keeping my job,” said Eckhardt.

I knew from somewhere, he’d run the paper’s newsroom for 24 years; before then, he spent ten years as editor at two lesser papers.

A week after our telephone conversation, Eckhardt was sacked. Like Drake, he had lost not only his health insurance but also the likelihood of another fulltime position.

I once met Drake at his Casper Star-Tribune office. His paper regularly reprinted my column as a freebee, and I was there to turn it into a paying gig. Drake shook his head sadly. He did not say so but he may have been aware of an ongoing cultural shift—a seismic shift, more like—in his newsroom.

What happens to people like Drake and Eckhardt—what’s happening to many Americans today in the aftermath of lay-offs—can be thought of as post-traumatic stress, with the loss representing the instigating event. I know of several writers of note who have spoken against physicians labeling post-traumatic stress a “disorder.”

Post-traumatic stress is a sensible reaction to a harrowing event, writes Edith Eger, a psychologist, bestselling author, and Holocaust survivor. Her “The Choice” was lauded by Oprah

as a book that “forever changed me.” Eger, whose deathcamp was liberated by American troops, when the Reich collapsed, holds a special place in her heart for the men and women who serve.

Another writer to whom I am indebted is Joy DeGruy, author of *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome*. DeGruy helps us understand the parallels between chattel slavery in the South and the Holocaust death spiral in my country, which was the Nazi Reich when I was born.

DeGruy is engaged in the helping professions as is Eger. Her book is essential reading for anyone who has experienced trauma and its consequence, a painful and sometimes debilitating anxiety that can morph into ill health, substance use, and other addictive behavior. More significantly, DeGruy lays bare the intergenerational nature of post-traumatic stress. It’s hard to grasp that as parents we may pass to our offspring things like stress and anxiety, but such are the findings of experts she cites. More on that in my next column.