

# OPINION

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## The LEADER

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### OTHER VIEW | GINA BARRECA

# Unlearning kindergarten

Like almost every other woman I know, many of the lessons I've had to unlearn in life I first learned in kindergarten.

For example, I've had to break the habit of having cookies and a nap at 3 in the afternoon.

That's because as an adult I developed this fetish about wanting to hold a steady job and not take up so much physical space I need to be hauled around by a winch.

Lying down every day after a heavy sugar and carb intake can undermine a girl's ambitions as well as her ability to enter a room without turning sideways and breathing in.

After a certain age, I also had to learn to stop automatically holding the hand of the person walking next to me.

I discovered in my mid-to late 20s (I'm a slow learner) that the unoccupied hand belonging my "buddy" (or boyfriend, or first husband) was often furtively engaged in holding a miniature bottle of cinnamon schnapps, the keys to a vehicle he didn't own or the hand of another wide-eyed girl. (Sometimes all three. Remember: slow learner.)

One of the biggest revelations came when I realized that I did not have to share everything. That was fascinating. To believe I could be a good girl and yet insist that some stuff belonged only to me? It was hard to convince myself that somebody else wanting a piece of what I've got (a piece of pie, a piece of the action, a piece of my heart, whatever) was not a reason to fork it over. I was in my 40s when I learned that even if somebody asks nicely, it is OK to say no.

Over the years, I've also had to learn that life is not a game of tag (nowhere is "safe") and that in most workplaces, timeouts are not the penalty for behaving badly.

I also discovered, along with the rest of America, that although in politics, professional sports and Hollywood there are no penalties for behaving badly, if you're working retail or for a corporation, you'll be fired before you can say, "I'm sorry."

Lately, though, I've realized that I've clung to the schematics behind the game of "Duck, Duck, Goose" as a guiding force for far too long.

In women's lives especially (and since I'm talking about the pre-K

demographic I'll call us "girls" without fear of appearing patronizing), all sorts of lessons have encouraged us to sit politely and wait to be chosen. Remember the game "Duck, Duck, Goose," where you sat in a circle facing the center and waited to be recognized as the "goose," whereupon you were tapped and permitted to run around making choices yourself?

And how many fairy tales taught us essentially the same lesson? "Duck, Duck, Cinderella!" "Duck, Duck, Snow White!" Or classic books? "Duck, Duck, Jane Eyre!" "Duck, Duck, Anna Karenina!" Or popular movies? "Duck, Duck, Julia Roberts playing a hooker in 'Pretty Woman'!"

(Only in the case of the Julia Roberts' film, of course, could the words "duck" and "goose" also be used as verbs. I'm just saying.)

Great lesson, right? Not about the verbs: about a game where ritual passivity is preparation for random selection. Where the goal is to be distinguished as exceptional, not presumably because you possess any duck-like attributes (God forbid), but because you're not paying attention and might be a slow runner.

Boys are rewarded for playing games where they line up by height and then run into walls. Perhaps I'm making that up - or perhaps you should do a computer search for "Guy Runs into Wall for Fun."

If you do, you'll notice that the recent number of visits to that site is about 3.5 million. The official YouTube site for the London Olympics, in contrast? Fewer than a million views. And the YouTube site for the National Women's History Museum's video titled "Three Generations Fighting for the Vote"? 56 views, total.

Men and women alike have to examine the lessons we teach - even for fun - and rewrite the rules of the games we play.

Nobody wants to go through life as the guy who slams into walls. And nobody wants to spend her life as a sitting duck.

*Gina Barreca is an English professor at the University of Connecticut, a feminist scholar who has written eight books, and a columnist for the Hartford Courant.*

### COMMENTARY | SEN. TOM O'MARA

# We need newfound teamwork

In recently announcing a long-term call to arms to right the fiscal ship in Chemung County - which, like so many counties locally and statewide, faces deep-rooted challenges - County Executive Tom Santulli said, "We're really in a full-blown crisis situation. We're in the perfect storm right now. We've got declining sales tax. We've got declining room tax. Unemployment is an unacceptable number. We have to, as a community, come together and take this problem head-on. It's not going to go away. It's not going to get better with us just holding our breath. It's going to take a redesign of local government."

And, he might well have added, it's going to take something better from state government too.

I'm not going to recount the details of what's facing Chemung -- or Steuben, Schuyler, Tompkins or Yates counties across my own legislative district for that matter. Troubles are not going to go away without, from the state perspective, a redoubling and refocusing of efforts to:

■ Create and protect upstate jobs. A comprehensive Senate plan I co-sponsor, "Blueprint for Jobs," focuses on actions we



TOM O'MARA

could take to rebuild the upstate economy and re-energize the manufacturing sector.

This overall effort must now include, I believe, a central consideration by the Cuomo administration, as it looks to consolidate state programs and services, of the impact of its decisions on local economies. Recently announced plans to eliminate inpatient services at the Elmira Psychiatric Center and shut down the Monterey Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility pose significant consequences for our regional economy and they deserve to be a top consideration in any decisions like these coming out of Albany.

If the moves go forward, what's the plan to offset the economic hit we're going to take, one that we can ill afford?

■ Mandate relief. We simply have to get local governments out from under the weight of unfunded state mandates.

Gov. Cuomo's promise in 2011, when the state first enacted its 2 percent property tax cap, was that it would be followed by significant relief for local governments from unfunded state mandates. That hasn't happened. It has to.

I'll also keep sponsoring or co-sponsoring measures targeting Medicaid costs, the single-largest mandated burden on counties and local property taxpayers. It's a sad commentary to keep reading story after story that Medicaid fraud still costs taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars. We continue to have a mismanaged Medicaid system.

Other reports throughout the past year continued to show that despite years of legislative efforts to root out abuse, fraud and waste in New York's Medicaid system - efforts that included the creation of the Office of Medicaid Inspector General itself seven years ago - not enough is being done.

I'll continue to co-sponsor legislation to initiate a full state takeover of Medicaid. Imagine what that would mean to the long-term plans in Chemung County and counties statewide? It would make a world of difference for local governments and

property taxpayers. It's the single move that would remake the state-local partnership, to say nothing of the message it would send that New York State is truly serious about long-term, meaningful economic and fiscal reform and responsibility, and common sense and security.

So mandate relief's an issue - and a promise - that can't be ignored.

Government at every level, including local government, is forced to recognize that overburdened taxpayers demand efficiency and cost effectiveness. At the same time in New York State, there's an undeniable case to be made that the ability of local governments and school districts to undertake restructuring initiatives have run into a currently immovable roadblock of state mandates

County Executive Santulli's right: It's going to take newfound teamwork - state, local and federal teamwork - to find our way out of this struggle.

*State Sen. Tom O'Mara, R-Big Flats, represents New York's 58th Senate District, which includes Steuben, Chemung, Schuyler and Yates counties, and part of Tompkins County.*

### ANOTHER VIEW



### OTHER VIEW | LOS ANGELES TIMES

# The future of young immigrants

Nine young men and women whose parents brought them to the United States as children without proper documentation were arrested last month after staging a bold protest. By traveling to Mexico and then trying to legally re-enter the United States, they hoped to highlight the plight of an estimated 1.7 million young immigrants who also came to the U.S. as children - and to press for passage of the Dream Act, which would offer them a conditional pathway to citizenship.

The nine protesters took a huge risk. They might not have been allowed back into the

United States; as it was, they were held for the better part of a week in an Arizona detention center while the government figured out what to do with them.

But Tuesday, federal officials agreed to allow their cases to go before an immigration judge, who will decide whether they should be granted asylum.

Surely, deporting them will serve no purpose. They, like other so-called Dreamers, merely want to make a life in the only country they have known as home. The Congressional Budget Office has estimated that if all 1.7 million were permitted to participate in the U.S. economy, it would result

in revenue of more than \$2 billion annually, mainly from income and corporate taxes paid by the newly legalized workers.

Whether or not the nine win their bid for asylum, it won't resolve the predicament of the rest, who remain in limbo because the Republican-led House has repeatedly blocked the Dream Act, which holds out the hope of citizenship for young immigrants who graduate from high school and go on to college or the military.

The House recently upped the stakes by threatening to de-fund the Obama administration's order that grants young immigrants a temporary reprieve from

deportation.

Now the House is once again stalling, claiming that a piecemeal approach to immigration reform is the best way to fix the nation's dysfunctional immigration system while at the same time cynically refusing to allow any legislation to come to a vote on the floor.

Preventing these young people from gaining legal status won't help deter illegal immigration. All it will do is punish them for the deeds of their parents.

There are plenty of moral and economic reasons for Republicans to support the Dream Act, if they could briefly put partisanship and ideology aside.



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