



# REASON



**Your Turn**  
Barbara B. Ketchum  
Guest columnist

## Future of downtown riverfront is exciting

It is heartening to see that Downtown Jacksonville is finally moving towards the potential that has been talked about for years but never achieved. This is due in no small part to the leadership of Lori Boyer, as head of the Downtown Investment Authority, and Mayor Curry, who has put forth a budget to realize the vision of a connected network of riverfront parks, marinas and the extension of our Riverwalk.

Having been involved in downtown advocacy for almost 10 years, I am now hopeful and excited about the future of our waterfront.

As we move into the design and construction phase of our downtown waterfront, I want to ensure that the plans currently being developed result in a unified design of the entire Northbank, forming a crescent-shaped linear park from the Riverside Arts Market to Metropolitan Park. A unified linear park design would have a much greater impact than piecemeal designs for each parcel.

I was born and raised in Havana and still marvel at the beauty and success of our Malecón, built in the early 20th century. It is a five-mile-long seawall and wide promenade in the heart of the city, on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico. The original design was marked by lamp-posts every 50 feet or so, which at night formed what became world-known as the “Diamond Necklace” of Havana.

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**Your Turn**  
Carla Crumley-Forest  
Guest columnist

## ‘Hidden gem’ symphony gets major recognition

The First Coast Wind Symphony has been chosen from a national field of applicants to be a featured performer at the national convention of the Association of Concert Bands, scheduled for May 2023 in Orlando. That’s a pretty prestigious honor for a concert band — the equivalent of being invited to play at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

The First Coast Wind Symphony has been serving Northeast Florida as a cultural resource for more than 30 years by providing outstanding performances of quality wind music.

Founded in 1990, the wind symphony, made up of woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, is an all-volunteer, audition-based group of 55 professional and non-professional musicians representing all types of careers. Although our home base is Jacksonville, we have also proudly represented our city internationally in concert tours of Austria, Germany and France in 2017 and 2022 (we do have a following in Europe).

Performances are always free and are funded through contributions from corporate and community sponsors, benefactors, partners and friends.

Making quality wind music accessible to all is just part of our mission. We provide the opportunity for our members to participate in a cultural service organization that promotes personal musical expression and growth. We also

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# DeSantis shames his own ancestors

Florida governor’s family tree is full of immigrants – a group of people he treats like dirt

**Frank Cerabino**  
Palm Beach Post  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**Luigia Colucci ... was DeSantis’ great-great grandmother from his mother’s side. DeSantis’ entire family tree is made up of down-and-out Italian immigrants who showed up unannounced at Ellis Island.**

There’s a lot of talk these days about the United States being “invaded” by the migration of poor, unskilled migrants seeking political or economic refuge here. • It’s really an old story. Here’s an example. • Her name was Luigia Colucci. She was an illiterate 40-year-old Italian migrant from a small town in the province of Avellino. She arrived in Ellis Island on Feb. 21, 1917 with her two teenage daughters and little to offer. • She didn’t have a Visa. She wasn’t a lucky winner of an immigration lottery. She just showed up, hoping to start a new life here. • Oh yeah, and she was eight months pregnant.

### Just another immigrant story

If Luigia Colucci would have arrived unannounced at a U.S. immigration checkpoint in 2017 instead of 1917, the impending child in her womb would have been derisively called “an anchor baby.”

And because she was following a string of other family members who were previously admitted to the United States, she would be called the product of “chain migration” and put through a judicial system designed to kick her out because she would fail short of having any “merit” for entry.

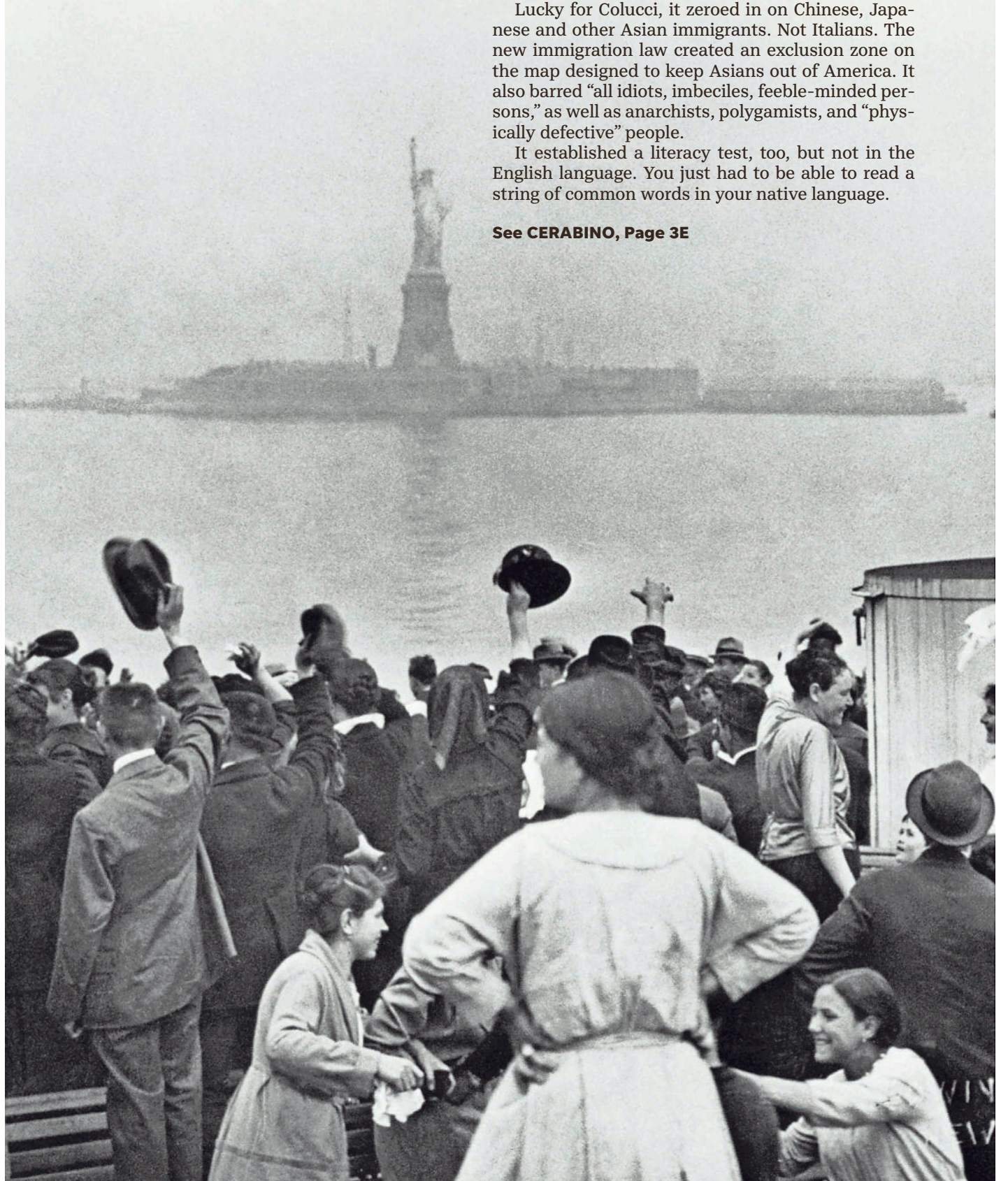
Fox News’ Tucker Carlson could probably do a solid half-hour of alarm-drenched commentary on the folly of allowing the Luigia Coluccis of the world into the United States. About half of the Italians who came here were illiterate not just in English, but in their own language.

Two weeks before Luigia Colucci arrived, the anti-immigration forces of that day passed a tough new immigration law. The Immigration Act of 1917 created classes of people that would be kept from being allowed to emigrate to the United States.

Lucky for Colucci, it zeroed in on Chinese, Japanese and other Asian immigrants. Not Italians. The new immigration law created an exclusion zone on the map designed to keep Asians out of America. It also barred “all idiots, imbeciles, feeble-minded persons,” as well as anarchists, polygamists, and “physically defective” people.

It established a literacy test, too, but not in the English language. You just had to be able to read a string of common words in your native language.

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GETTY IMAGES



# OPINION

## Getting to know your professors can pay off

### Your Turn

Clay Calvert  
Guest columnist

Fall semester in a college town is largely synonymous in the public's mind today with football. For many professors, however, fall also is the season of letters. Specifically, it is the season of writing letters of recommendation for undergraduate students aspiring to and applying for all varieties of graduate and professional programs.

There is, of course, no mandate — not yet, at least — that we pen these missives on behalf of students. We're not paid by the letter, as it were, and if we didn't write any at all, there'd likely be no negative repercussions in our annual reviews.

The time-honored aphorism “publish or perish,” after all, relates to scholarly productivity as measured mostly by articles and books, not by efforts to enhance an undergraduate's prospect of moving on to a master's program or law school. And crafting a great letter — one rich in details beyond a student's letter grade — can take significant time away from writ-

ing those scholarly articles.

Yet, writing letters can prove to be one of the most personally gratifying, albeit implicit and unspoken, parts of the job. That is especially true when they are done for students who stand out from the pack for any one of many reasons, stretching from stellar grades to hard work and determined diligence, and from overcoming hardships and obstacles to outstanding in-class participation.

The problem for many students that I have found over the years is that when it comes time to find professors to write on their behalf, they simply don't know any professors well enough to have them write truly strong letters. If all that a professor can attest to is that a student earned an “A” in her class, then that doesn't add much, if any, value to an application. The student's “A” grade already is reflected on a transcript and factored into the student's GPA.

My advice for incoming first-year students thus is to get to know at least three full-time professors reasonably well by the end of their junior year. They can do that in multiple ways.

For example, they might do it by volunteering to assist professors with their research and writing projects, by coming to office hours and asking informed questions that demonstrate having done the assigned readings and attended lectures, by actively participating during in-class discussions in an insightful manner and even by becoming undergraduate teaching assistants for a course they took during their first two or three years of college.

It is relatively easy for undergraduates to remain anonymous at a large university if they so choose. Furthermore, the possibility of attending graduate school certainly seems a long way off when viewed from the perspective of entering undergraduates during their first semesters of study. The pandemic, with in-person classes shifting to online and hybrid formats, has made it all that much easier for students to fly under the professorial radar.

The reward for professors in writing recommendation letters isn't reflected in paychecks. Rather, it arrives in the form of unsolicited, out-of-the-blue emails from former students who now are in graduate

school and who write to let you know about their accomplishments and career plans or to ask you for further advice.

Highlights of my fall semester thus far are such emails from two former students — both served as an undergraduate teaching assistants and research assistants for me — who are in top-tier law schools. Amidst the usual flood of emails, these stand out and are ones that I actually wanted to read.

Letters of recommendation, of course, typically don't play a huge part in admission decisions for most students. For students applying to law school, for example, cumulative undergraduate grade-point averages and LSAT scores often, but not always, do the initial heavy lifting on an application. But recommendation letters do play a role and particularly so in close admission cases.

It's never too early for undergraduates to start planning ahead and lining up prospective letter writers.

*Clay Calvert is the Joseph L. Brechner Eminent Scholar in Mass Communication and a professor of law at the University of Florida.*

## Ketchum

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To this day, this promenade continues to be, 100 years later, a beautiful gathering place for all in the heart of the city. I, and many of us in Jacksonville, hope the same will be said about our Northbank Riverwalk in the years to come.

I envision tourists who have heard

about our fabulous (unified) Riverwalk Park pulling off of I-95 to have lunch, stretch and let the kids play in one of our wonderful parks on the river. I also see the whole city coming downtown to exercise, dine, reflect and gather to enjoy the beauty of a green, tree-lined, shaded riverfront and its amenities.

Jaxsons could walk from the Southbank or Brooklyn to the stadium or branch off to the Emerald Trail along the way. This is the moment in our history when

we can make it happen, thanks also in large part to the mayor's recent financial commitment to these projects.

I understand there are existing Riverwalk design standards but I am concerned that the current standards do not adequately address the critical need for the design of a unified Riverwalk linear park. I believe the public would embrace the design and implementation of a proposal that envisions our Riverwalk as a beautiful promenade.

We are so fortunate to already have several outstanding design firms involved with the riverfront projects. Perhaps one of these firms, or all of them working together, could be engaged to produce a beautiful and unified vision worthy of our majestic St. Johns River.

*Barbara B. Ketchum, Jacksonville*

*This guest column is the opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Times-Union. We welcome a diversity of opinions.*

## Cerabino

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### No ‘anchor baby’ concerns last century

The Immigration Act of 1917, which had been previously vetoed by three presidents as a xenophobic constriction of immigration that violated our national character, didn't actually go into effect until months after Colucci arrived. And it didn't keep the pregnant Luigia Colucci and her teenage daughters from being welcomed into the United States.

Also, the governor of New York at the time, Charles Seymour Whitman, the chairman of the Republican National Convention, wasn't flogging immigration as a campaign issue for his re-election that year.

He didn't step in to claim that all these impoverished Italians were ruining his state. And he didn't concoct a stunt to tell them a bunch of lies in order to round them up and put them on a train to Massachusetts.

Whitman was more focused on reorganizing the state's finances and reviewing the salaries of civil service employees.

So, Colucci got to stay in the United States and give birth to an American child a month after her arrival.

Colucci died at the age of 80 in Pennsylvania in 1956. The reason I know about her life is because of professional genealogist Megan Smolenyak, of St. Petersburg.

### Colucci not just any immigrant

Smolenyak wrote several books on genealogy and has worked as a consultant on the family history show on NBC-TV called “Who Do You Think You Are?”

She frequently researches the family background of notable public figures. She found out about Colucci while researching the family tree of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

Luigia Colucci, she found, was DeSantis' great-great grandmother from his mother's side. DeSantis' entire family tree is made up of down-and-out Italian immigrants who showed up unannounced at Ellis Island, Smolenyak found.

“Those who are less than welcoming of immigrants often proudly state that their ancestors came here legally, while failing to appreciate (or perhaps deliberately ignoring) how meaningless this claim is,” Smolenyak wrote.

“Until a century ago, unless you were Chinese or Japanese (nationalities targeted by earlier legislation), this amounted to showing up at a U.S. port of entry.

“This is exactly what Luigia did and what today's asylum applicants are doing,” Smolenyak wrote. “The difference is that this process wasn't criminalized until 2018.”

Last week, DeSantis used Florida taxpayer money to charter flights from Texas

to the island of Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts for 50 immigrants seeking asylum status in the United States.

Immigration lawyers said that the asylum seekers were induced to get on the planes after being told lies about jobs and housing that awaited them in Massachusetts. Apparently, the taxpayers of Florida also paid for a videographer to capture it all for DeSantis future political use.

### Using Venezuelan asylum seekers as political pawns

The asylum seekers mostly came from Venezuela, a country that is frequently cited by DeSantis for its repressive Marxist government.

When Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro claimed victory in a disputed election in 2019, DeSantis went out of his way to vocally oppose what he called Maduro's “repressive regime.”

“Today, in my capacity as Governor, I am signing a proclamation that affirms Florida's deep affection for Venezuela and decries the individual liberty that has been stripped away by a despot.”

And yet, when Venezuelans showed up in Texas to claim they were seeking political asylum from that despot, DeSantis didn't show them “deep affection.” He went out of his way to round them up and made their already perilous journey worse by sabotaging their lawful asylum process.

Who's the “despot” again?

It's all the more egregious, considering that DeSantis championed a new law that requires all public school students in Florida to observe “Victims of Communism Day” on Nov. 7 of each year.

The law that DeSantis signed in May, also requires that all Florida students enrolled in a U.S. government class receive 45 minutes of course instruction on the evils of Communism.

Under the law, the instruction requires, in part, that Florida students learn about the abuses of “Nicolas Maduro and the Chavismo movement” in Venezuela, even though Venezuela isn't one of the five Communist countries in the world. (China, Cuba, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos).

Sounds more like legislative propaganda, not real learning. But maybe we can fix it.

If we're going to teach kids the whole story, it ought to include making the next day, Nov. 8, a required observance of the “Victims of Ron DeSantis Day” in Florida's public schools.

And we can start by teaching kids how far we've fallen from the days we took in his great-great grandmother, Luigia Colucci.

*Frank Cerabino is a columnist at the Palm Beach Post, part of the USA TODAY Florida Network. You can reach him at fcerabino@gannett.com.*

## Symphony

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support the concert band tradition as an important part of America's rich musical heritage, with purposeful outreach to families, students, veterans and seniors.

Now in its 33rd year, the First Coast Wind Symphony has a sensational season planned, opening our concert season with the works of Lewis Buckley, conductor emeritus of the United States Coast Guard Band, with Lewis Buckley himself conducting on Oct. 15, 2023 at Jacksonville University's Terry Concert Hall.

Our annual state-wide Concerto Competition in the spring, championed and juried by the First Coast Wind Symphony, is open to Florida high school and college students and culminates with competition winners receiving scholarships and performing their pieces with our wind symphony.

I wish I had a dollar every time a patron stopped me in the lobby after a concert to share their appreciation of the performance. We've been called a “hidden gem” countless times. Now we're heading to Orlando to perform at a national convention where our music will be streamed across the country and heard live by thousands.

We are thankful to every one of our volunteers and supporters, whose contributions of talent, time and treasure



**The First Coast Wind Symphony is shown in performance.** PHOTO COURTESY FIRST COAST WIND SYMPHONY

have allowed us to shine on the First Coast and beyond.

There are a number of ways to give us a listen: Go to our website, follow us on Facebook or check out our YouTube channel. Better yet, come to a concert to hear us live.

For more information about our concert season, how you can become involved or register to attend a free concert, go to FCWinds.org or contact us at fcwindsdev@gmail.com.

You can also participate today with a tax-deductible donation. The First Coast Wind Symphony is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

*Carla Crumley-Forest, board chair, First Coast Wind Symphony*

*This guest column is the opinion of the author and does not necessarily represent the views of the Times-Union. We welcome a diversity of opinions.*



### Headwinds Vs. Home Repair

The economic headwinds are gaining speed. While inflation started picking up a year ago, there have now been three significant Fed interest rate increases in 2022. The stock market is getting hammered, and financial anxiety is up. It is also an election year and from now until election day all we will hear about is doom and gloom about how terrible things are, and how each party or candidate has a solution.

Talk of an economic “soft landing” have now been replaced with a discussion of how much pain may be required to bring inflation down, which is the end game here. As all this plays out, housing inventory is starting to grow as consumers pull back on spending.

That pullback is actually the goal here, too cool the economy. Having weathered the great recession, multiple government funding shutdowns, and a few market corrections, I would like to offer cautionary guidance on how to cut back on spending on your home in a productive way.

Discretionary projects can certainly be delayed. An interior paint color, for example, may be out of style or faded from the color it used to be. While it may be disappointing to delay this project, that delay will not cause any further damage to your home. You can keep that expense on ice until you are comfortable that the economic storm has passed.

A plumbing leak or leaking roof, however, is a different situation. By allowing leaks to continue, the damage will get worse. Moisture leads to mold, and your issues compound. Along with the plumbing repair you might now need a new cabinet, sub-floor repair, drywall repair, and painting. Some issues require immediate attention, regardless of the economic situation.

Taking immediate action is the responsible thing to do for your personal economics. You might invest in a roof repair and put the re-roof off until the economic situation stabilizes but doing nothing in the name of controlling spending on your home actually has the opposite effect.

The goal is to slow the economy, not stop the economy. Projects will continue. As you consider what to delay and what to move forward with, ponder one last consideration. The fundamentals of the housing market are sound, unlike 2008 when bad loans were a root issue. Still, home prices may come down as inventory builds. How does the possibility of lost value effect your desire to proceed with the project you are considering? Maybe this causes a pause, maybe not, but remember to consider this.

Do not allow economic headwinds to scare you into making bad decisions that compound your home repair costs.

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