

CENTRE  
DAILY TIMES

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SINCE 1898

Winner, 2002 Keystone Press Award for editorial writing from the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association.

## Our View

Vote yourselves  
a measure of freedom

**T**here is one choice voters in four Centre County school districts can make that could hardly be more simple. No matter what you think of the quality and efficiency of your district's schools, the occupational assessment tax is no way to fund them. In fact, it's no way to fund anything.

On Nov. 6, voters in the Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley and State College school districts should strike the first blow for tax sanity by ridding themselves of the OAT. By doing so, voters will have finally put to rest an inequitable monstrosity that has plagued districts in much of central Pennsylvania since 1965.

**The OAT has at least two fundamental flaws.** First, it is based on a person's job title, not on what that person earns. The person flipping burgers at a fast-food joint for a hair above minimum wage pays the same tax as the person preparing filet mignon for twice the salary. A tax can't get more regressive than that.

Second, the job titles themselves are amorphous, do not reflect the reality of today's workplaces, particularly in the technology sector, and lend themselves to laughable outcomes. (A legendary story out of Harrisburg has former state Secretary of Education Eugene Hickok reporting his new position to his tax assessor, with the result being that he paid a lower OAT than almost anyone on his staff — because he was listed as a "secretary.")

## PENNSYLVANIANS



by UNFAIR LOCAL TAXES

The OAT has survived in spite of its fundamental unfairness and clumsiness because the state legislature was unwilling before last year to allow school districts the right to put in place reasonable alternatives. But, the persistence of Centre County's local

legislative team — Sen. Jake Corman, R-Bellefonte, and Reps. Lynn Herman, R-Philipsburg, Kerry Benninghoff, R-Bellefonte, and Mike Hanna, D-Lock Haven — and Centre County's commissioners and school board leaders kept the issue on the front burner until an indifferent legislature finally relented and sent the bill, now Act 24, to Gov. Tom Ridge for his signature.

Voting "yes" on the Optional Occupational Tax Elimination Act referendum will replace the OAT with an increase on earned income and net profits taxes to equal the revenue the school district raised on the OAT.

**Let's be clear: There are two things** that you will not be voting for when you vote to eliminate the OAT.

For one thing, you will not be voting for lower taxes. Some people, in fact, will be voting themselves somewhat higher taxes. The overwhelming majority will be people who have gotten something of a low-cost, if not free, ride from the vagaries and inconsistencies of the current system. Others, however, will see lower taxes. The bottom line is that this is a tax shift, and no one should be under any illusions about that.

Second, you will not be voting for broad-based tax reform, only a small sliver of it. There are at least three agenda items that the elimination of the OAT does not address: taxation of unearned income, the continuing dependence of school systems on property taxes and whether business properties contribute their fair share. Real tax reform, for example, would not allow people with large wads of cash from stock investments and capital gains to escape paying into the school system. Nor would it allow people with rapidly appreciating property to escape paying tax based on that increased value because the county so infrequently assesses property. (The last assessment was in 1995; a measure to assess property every four years was rescinded in 1999.)

Critics warn that over time an earned income tax might give school districts an unintended windfall — between 1997 and 2000 earned income tax revenues rose 14.2 percent while occupational assessment tax revenue grew 4 percent — with few checks on what happens to those dollars and almost no way to turn down the spigot.

We understand the worry, but it doesn't override our fundamental conviction: Taxes should be fair, equitable and sensible, and the OAT is none of those. You have the chance to free yourself. Take it.

# Adult learning at Penn State has a long way to go

I'll never forget the moment that I let it slip that I wasn't just any college student; I was a collegiate Rip Van Winkle.

In the early days of a class on media economics, students were asked to name financial and economics terms with which they were at least somewhat familiar. They offered such words and phrases as gross national product, amortization, depreciation and recession. When my turn came, for some inexplicable reason I uttered "stagflation."

You could feel the "what-is-this-guy-talking-about" vibe cover the classroom. The surprised professor knew "stagflation" was the term given to the combination of high inflation and a stagnant economy that helped derail Jimmy Carter's presidency in the late 1970s, just a few years after the last day I set foot in a regular university classroom — and a few years before many of my classmates had been born.

There were to be plenty of other such moments before I finished my last exam

last week and prepared to accept my bachelor's degree in journalism, a mere 27 years behind schedule.

Of course, I and the nearly 1,800 other University Park undergraduate students older than 24 weren't exactly on a Rip Van Winkle-length nap. Some jumped into the job market early; others paused to raise a newborn; still others, like myself, just dropped out for personal reasons, then got too busy with life to drop back in.

But while anecdotes suggest a tightening job market is forcing many adults to bolster their academic credentials and their skills, the numbers tell a different story. The number of over-24 undergraduates at University Park actually dropped from 2,716 in 1997 to 1,796 in 2002, according to Penn State's Center for Adult Learner Services. Nationally, the percentage of over-25 students has fallen from 43 percent



Isaiah Poole  
*No Cover*

in the mid-1990s to just under 40 percent.

In the Penn State system, only 23 percent of graduates and undergraduates are over 24.

"Although we have a lot of adult learners, they are somewhat invisible to decision-makers," says Charlene Harrison, Penn State's adult learner services director. "You know, we have a very traditional, youth-oriented campus."

No kidding. Try, for example, to get into meaningful evening classes that adults could attend after work. Penn State's continuing education and World Campus offerings are extensive, but not extensive enough for many degree-seekers. They are also under-promoted. Adult students can gain academic credit through work or life experience, but when I first approached the College of Communications about the process, department heads were unfamiliar with it.

Advocates for adult learners are fighting to make things better. On Monday, they were meeting at The Penn Stater for the annual Hendrick Best Practices for Adult Learners Conference. On the list of topics was, "Adult Learners at Penn State: What Have We Done For You Lately?"

The short answer is that Penn State has given me a great education. But in a world that is demanding adults like me to be more nimble, creative and efficient, Penn State should be a leader in offering an adult learner program that embodies those same qualities.

Adult learners and their supporters, though, are a passionate and hardy bunch. The perseverance that enables them to juggle work, family and an essay due the next day can make Penn State an ideal school for adults.

*Isaiah J. Poole is opinion page editor at the Centre Daily Times and will graduate with a bachelor's degree in journalism from Penn State on Saturday.*

## MyView

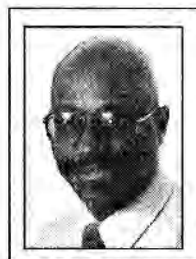
# Trent Lott: It's a matter of trust

**F**orgiveness and trust are two different things.

Forgiveness can be granted freely to the person who makes a mistake, recognizes it, and seriously wants to make amends. People who have been wronged sometimes try to make the person who does wrong earn forgiveness, but that misses the point. To forgive someone is to say, "I'm not going to let the past stand in the way of your building a different future."

Trust, though, is a wholly different matter. It has to be earned, action by action. There are no sets of words that can magically rebuild trust once destroyed, or build trust where there never was.

Mississippi Sen. Trent Lott wants forgiveness for saying that the nation should have embraced the segregationist platform of his colleague, Sen. Strom Thurmond, in 1948. Can I forgive him? Yes. Can I trust him? No.



Isaiah J.  
Poole

I can forgive him because he, just as everyone else who has been steeped in our nation's sordid history of racism and has absorbed its values, should have a chance to relearn, to understand the pain caused by their beliefs and actions and to live the rest of their lives by a different set of values.

I can forgive him even though it's still not apparent to me that Lott "gets it." It's only apparent to me that he realizes he's made a mess and is now fumbling for a way out of the firestorm he started by saying, in a tribute to Thurmond on his 100th birthday, that if America had followed his home state's lead and voted Thurmond into office, "we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years."

Lott says he was thinking about Thurmond's stand against communism and his positions favoring limiting the size of the federal government. But everyone with a good knowledge of American history — the kind of knowledge Lott should have — knows that the pivotal issue that led Thurmond and his supporters to walk off the floor of the 1948 Democratic National Convention had nothing to do with the party's foreign policy's positions or how big the federal budget should be. The walkout came as the late Hubert H. Humphrey was urging the Democratic Party to embrace a civil rights plank supported by President Harry Truman.



AP photo

**Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., asks for forgiveness and a chance to prove himself in an interview with journalist Ed Gordon on Monday on Black Entertainment Television.**

"To those who say ... that we are rushing this issue of civil rights, I say to them we are 172 years late!" Humphrey said. "To those who say ... this civil-rights program is an infringement on states' rights, I say this: the time has arrived in America for the Democratic party to get out of the shadow of state's rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights!"

Thurmond's response: "Ladies and gentlemen ... there's not enough troops in the Army to force the Southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes and into our churches."

What makes it easy to believe that Lott was indeed embracing this hideous aspect of Thurmond's past — a past that Thurmond has himself renounced — is Lott's long-time association with the movement to continue the Dixiecrat agenda, which the Republican Party embraced beginning in the late 1960s in only slightly diluted form. From his attempt to keep black students out of the Sigma Nu fraternity at the University of Mississippi in the early 1960s to his speeches and writings in the 1990s for the Council of Conservative Citizens — an organization that to this day promotes segregation — Lott has worked against the cause of civil rights and racial reconciliation.

Now, Lott wants us to believe that he is a changed — or more accurately, changing — man. Yet even he recognizes that what he said can't be simply erased. In his interview Monday night with journalist Ed Gordon on Black Entertainment Television, Lott said, "The important thing is to recognize the hurt that I caused and ask for forgiveness and find a way to turn this into a positive thing, and try to make amends for what I've said and for what others have said and done over the years. I'm looking for this to be not only an opportunity for redemption, but to do something about it."

If Lott is seeking a chance to start again, by all means he should have that chance. A chastened Lott just might be what the nation needs to rejuvenate the effort to repair the damage done by America's legacy of slavery and racism. But it will take years of hard work for him to earn the trust of many Americans of all races, and that is why a Republican Party that wants to earn the trust of blacks should choose another Senate leader who does not have the baggage Lott must now unload.

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OPINION

## Our View

# Say it ain't so, Joe

What is Joe Paterno trying to say? We know what he's not saying. And that speaks volumes.

In the case of Anwar Phillips, we know that Paterno has refused to answer questions about why he would allow Phillips to play for the Nittany Lions in the Jan. 1 Capital One Bowl, three weeks after his expulsion from the university following sexual assault charges.

In fact, according to Penn State spokesman Tysen Kendig, Phillips "accepted responsibility" for the charges in a proceeding before the Office of Judicial Affairs. That body ruled that Phillips would serve a two-semester expulsion that, because Dec. 12 was almost at the end of the fall semester, would take effect at the beginning of the current semester.

We also know, based on the words of Jeff Nelson, assistant athletic director for communications, that athletic department officials were notified prior to the bowl game that judicial action had been taken against Phillips.

That directly contradicts what Nelson told the CDT three weeks after the bowl game, when it was announced that Phillips would not be in school for the spring semester because he "had some things to take care of with his family." Nelson also pointedly said at the time that he was "not led to believe this involved any sort of disciplinary action" by the university.

Keep in mind that Phillips is charged with a sexual assault and that those charges are based on a victim account that Phillips did not dispute the essential details of in a statement to Penn State police. According to a court affidavit, Phillips went to the home of a female acquaintance, pushed the woman down on her bed and, after she said, "No, I don't want to do this," proceeded to engage in intercourse with her.

Take away the legal technicalities, and an incident in which one person forces another person to engage in sex against their will would be called rape, pure and simple.

In any event, Phillips is free on \$10,000 bail awaiting his trial beginning June 9.

Assuming that what Nelson told the CDT in that Jan. 23 story on Phillips was correct, it follows that apparently none of the people in the athletic department thought that a football player being expelled on sexual assault charges was of enough consequence to inform its assistant athletic director of communications.

Worse, Paterno refused to talk about it at his news conference Wednesday, except to say at one point, "What happened, happened. I have very little control over it."

Huh?

Penn State until today was justly proud of a football program that operated on high standards of character and academics as well as athletic performance.

Paterno's disingenuous statements, the refusal to answer simple questions and, above all, the dismissive attitude toward a football player charged with a serious felony — and who admitted to conduct that was gravely immoral — tosses all of that hard-earned pride out the window.

Given that Paterno has benched players for violating curfews or for not keeping their grades up, letting Phillips remain on the team at all after being expelled says that at least some incidents of sexual assault are not such a big deal.

Paterno had an opportunity to say otherwise. He could have explained what administrative lapses, or lapses in judgment, could have allowed Phillips to play. He could have explained exactly what it was that he had "little control over," and thousands of people, from embarrassed Penn State alumni to advocates of sexual assault victims, would have worked hard to make sure that he had the control he wanted the next time an incident such as this one came up.

He said he'd rather talk about graduation rates among black football players, or some other subject on which he can primp and preen before the cameras. Sorry, but this is no time to change the subject, not until we get answers about what went wrong and assurances that such a desecration of Penn State's athletic program will not be repeated.



February 11, 2001

OUR VIEW

# Sex and the high school newspaper

What students working on a controversial project learned, and what school administrators should have

**A**spirant journalists at State College Area High School have gotten quite a lesson in recent days about the limits of press freedom.

Writers and editors for the school's *Lion's Digest* had two articles in a package of stories on teen sexuality killed by the school's principal, Craig Butler. One article dealt with the pros and cons of condom distribution in schools; the second examined the advantages and disadvantages of various forms of birth control. Portions of other articles were rewritten at the behest of administrators.

Instead of the two spiked articles, the students were allowed to publish, under the headline "HERE'S WHAT YOU'RE NOT READING TODAY," an article explaining the omissions and why the students felt the administration's action was "a fundamental breach of human rights."

"As our ability to present information was restricted, we were forced to lose objectivity, accuracy and purpose as a newspaper. We lost our voice," the article said.

The paper also published a response from Butler, who took the actions after consulting with State College Area School District administrators. He cited the custom of the

administration to "censor any material which might be deemed controversial" and noted that the articles that were cut "contained information on sexuality that typically is included in the district's ninth- and 11th-grade health curriculum, the delivery of which is routinely preceded by parental permission."

**The U.S. Supreme Court** has ruled that school administrators have significant authority to excise from school newspapers material based on rationale "reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns," such as the integrity of the school curriculum. The Pennsylvania Administrative Code seems somewhat stronger in its protection of student freedoms, saying that school officials can edit out materials that are obscene or libelous or would cause substantial disruption or interference with school activities.

Neither the court ruling nor Pennsylvania law support the idea of high school newspapers published with school funds and equipment as no-holds-barred forums. Since the State College Area High School is the "owner" of the *Lion's Digest*, the students have learned that at a high school newspaper, just as in the adult world, the owner gets

to call the shots.

**But there is a lesson here** about smart ownership.

"I think we need to be cautious about sensitive material" and about superceding parental permission to distribute such materials to students, Butler said in a brief interview Friday when asked about his decision.

True. But these same students live in a world in which they are bombarded with sex.

For example, Wednesday's CDT reported that a Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation study found sexual content in 68 percent of the programs it surveyed on 10 broadcast and cable networks. Ten percent of the programs depicted characters having sex. Only 10 percent of the programs included any discussion of the risks and responsibilities of sex. The popular culture has already done an end run around those parents who have declared they don't want their children receiving sex information from their schools.

Further, some statistics recently released from the Centers for Disease Control suggest the need for more, not less, open dialogue with teen-agers about sex. Between 1997 and 1999 in Pennsylvania, the number

of cases of chlamydia, the most prevalent sexually transmitted disease, increased 36 percent; the number of cases of gonorrhea, the second-most prevalent STD, increased 33 percent in that period. Both rates of increase surpassed the national average; in the case of gonorrhea, the rate of increase is three times the national average.

When asked if a student newspaper sometimes has an obligation to go beyond the limits of the classroom in tackling issues such as these, Butler said, "I don't see that as the role of the student newspaper."

In fact, responsibly and honestly exploring controversies affecting students is what a high school newspaper at its best does, and is what these students should be prepared to do in the future as journalists. And if publishing the articles sparked conversations between parents and their children about sex, so much the better. Finally, unlike what takes place in a classroom, students are not required to even read what's in the newspaper.

In the end, Butler and the leadership of the State College Area School District should have commended the students for their effort rather than muzzling them.

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## Our View

# Fight for alternatives to the privilege tax

State College's business privilege tax is not the most serious impediment to downtown business growth, but eliminating it can benefit every municipality in Pennsylvania. How? By reopening the issue of empowering local governments to make their own taxing decisions.

The business privilege tax is a tax assessed on the gross receipts of State College businesses. It is 1.5 mills, or \$1.50 for every \$1,000 a business grosses. The borough pulls in about \$600,000 from the tax annually. State College is the only municipality in the Centre Region that assesses the tax.

It's been around since 1987, when the state instituted a change in its revenue sharing formula with local governments that cost State College \$750,000 in lost revenue.

The tax may be little more than a nuisance for businesses with high grosses and high profits, but for entrepreneurs operating on tight margins or coping with losses, it's no fun.

And if all other things are equal, these businesses would find themselves better off operating outside the borough.

Members of the Borough Council know this — the pros and cons were outlined most recently in a 2000 study commissioned by the

council — but have been loathe to get rid of the tax because they don't see a viable alternative. The borough could raise real estate taxes, but that would affect homeowners as well as commercial property owners.

One objective the business privilege tax accomplishes is that it captures revenues from State College visitors who buy things downtown. But going after gross receipts is a clumsy way to do it.

A better way, especially since a group of business and civic leaders have drafted a plan to promote arts-and-entertainment-focused development downtown, would be for the Borough Council to put a local tax on, say, alcohol sales. But the borough can't do that; Pennsylvania law strait-jackets the ability of local municipalities to impose those types of taxes.

The General Assembly blew its chance to fix this problem back in 1988, when it actually outlawed the business privilege tax for municipalities that had not already enacted it. What municipalities wanted was more flexibility. The Legislature gave them less, telling communities like State College that they could keep the tax they already had, but it couldn't change it. And if State College opted to abolish it later, it could not replace it with another narrowly targeted tax.

Two years later, Borough Councilman Jim Meyer suggested that the council ask Sen. Jake Corman, R-Bellefonte, to consider introducing legislation that would allow State College to impose an alcohol tax or to explore other tax options. "I just don't want this to fade away as a lot of things have in the past," he was quoted as saying at the time. But it did.

It's time to make this issue a priority again. The alcohol tax is attractive because of the large number of bars and restaurants already in the borough; because it will be paid, a few cents at a time, largely by visitors to the borough and Penn State students, and it can be logically be tied to offsetting such costs as police protection and street maintenance.

Fortunately, there are a number of proposals in Harrisburg to give local governments more taxing options. The House Finance Committee began hearings last week on some of the legislative proposals, including a bill by Rep. Kerry Benninghoff, R-Bellefonte, that would allow municipalities and school districts to levy a full range of taxes. That bill is cosponsored by Centre County Reps. Mike Hanna, D-Lock Haven, and Lynn Herman, R-Philipsburg. Finance Committee Chairman Rep. Karl Boyes, R-Erie County, plans to continue the hearings through the summer.

An alcohol tax is but one of several alternatives to the business privilege tax that the borough should be free to consider. The point is that the borough ought to have options, and with a concerted effort now under way to revive the downtown area, the borough should be fighting for them.

## CHALLENGES TO DOWNTOWN REVIVAL

# Our response to AIDS still shrouded in shame, fear and denial

**S**omeday, she hopes she will be able to share with the world her private struggle with AIDS. Part of her, in fact, is anxious to. For one thing, said the Centre County woman in her mid-40s in a phone interview, "it's getting a little tedious" to manage the frank information that goes to her small circle of close friends who know she's living with AIDS and the rest of her colleagues and neighbors who know her simply as a vivacious, articulate and easy-going woman who commutes from a rural community to her job at Penn State University.

But for now, she said, she has declined the CDT's request for an on-the-record interview, as she has declined previous requests to speak at public AIDS programs. Her fear of how some members of the community will respond is just too great, she said.

"I can't do it. I'm too afraid," she said. "And I'm not a person who is afraid."

She said she could imagine some of her neighbors "burning a cross on my front lawn or poisoning my dog" once they learn she has been infected with the virus that causes AIDS. "The fear I feel is not in my rational mind; my mind says, 'Come on, suck up, they can't hurt you.' But at the same time I have these fears," she said.

But the fears are prompted by the real indifference, and sometimes the hostility, that still surfaces when AIDS is discussed in Centre County and similar communities around the country. The woman says it comes up in her office when a co-worker "who often affectionately referred to me as her friend" would occasionally say dis-

paraging things about people with AIDS and assert that they didn't deserve the effort that science was putting into their care. It even came up when she accompanied her mother to a church and said to her and a priest that AIDS was a form of punishment from God.

It's the reason why, when the CDT asked The AIDS Project in State College for first-person accounts of women living with HIV to publish in connection with the annual AIDS Walk taking place in State College on Sunday, we were told that no one is willing to be interviewed by name.

We have been witnesses to this epidemic for more than 20 years, being educated about how AIDS is transmitted, seeing that AIDS is not a disease that discriminates between "good" people and "bad," and knowing that people with AIDS are not lepers to be shunned. It is tragic, then, that

nonetheless those who have AIDS still believe they cannot come out from anonymity to tell their stories, reach out for support and perhaps help prevent another person from becoming a victim of this still incurable, still potentially fatal disease.

This means that the disease's spread is actually helped by a cloak of shame and denial.

The impact of AIDS on women has been particularly neglected. Yet, according to statistics from the Pennsylvania Department of Health, in the north central Pennsylvania region that includes Bradford, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour and Northumberland counties, 25 percent of the people diagnosed with AIDS since 1996 have been women. That's up from 19 percent between 1980 and

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1995.

The woman we interviewed said she has been HIV-positive for 12 years. She was infected by a man she had been dating off and on for years. "I knew he was a bisexual man living in San Francisco" who had multiple sex partners, she said. "I ignored that because I loved him — he was funny, smart, attractive and we had been through a lot together."

What she did not know was that the man knew he was HIV positive but had not taken precautions to lessen her risk of contracting the disease. She said that she can pinpoint the moment that she was infected — "I actually felt a flush. And then I panicked." — and compares her emotional state at the time to a person simultaneously living in two worlds. "I find this with women who live in abusive situations," she said. "Often, the women are very savvy and very knowledgeable. But we live in a parallel universe. There is your personal life, which can be screwed up, and your professional life."

One lesson she wants to share with young women is that it is important for people to be self-assured and assertive enough not to allow another person to put them at risk. "If you still don't have the ability to maintain your sense of self, no condom is going to make any difference," she said.

She also wants to warn women about the wrenching choices they will be forced to make if they become infected. "Forget about having kids," she said, because of the chance that HIV might be passed to the unborn child. Plus, she said, "your ovaries are going to be so damaged by the drugs" required to

keep HIV at bay. For that reason, she said, her menopause took place years earlier than normal.

In the end, she said, "kids think they are above the rules of the universe," but they have to learn to think beyond the moment "if you want a life for the rest of your life."

The AIDS Project of Centre County has attempted to get this message across through a variety of outreach programs. One such program on the Penn State campus last month brought together about 20 female students who talked frankly about abstinence and about how to resist pressure to have unprotected sex.

Each year's AIDS Walk is more than a fund-raiser. Each step taken in the parade that is scheduled to snake through downtown State College and the Penn State campus helps stamp out the ignorance, denial, fear and powerlessness that hampers our ability to keep this disease from spreading and embrace those who already have it.

This woman's story is just one indication of how far we have yet to walk.

## AIDS: A statistical snapshot

	Centre County	Statewide
Number diagnosed with AIDS since 1980	90	26,256
Number alive at the end of 2001	47	12,718

### AIDS in the north central region since 1996

(Includes Bradford, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour and Northumberland counties)

Number of people diagnosed	204	Men	75 percent
		Women	25 percent

#### How they contracted the disease

Injection drug use	48 percent	Pediatric	0.5 percent
Male-male sex	26 percent	Blood transfusion	0.5 percent
Heterosexual sex	10 percent	Other/undetermined	3 percent
Male-male sex and injection drugs	11 percent		

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Health

## GET INVOLVED

### Red Ribbon AIDS Walk

Sponsored by The AIDS Project of Centre County

**When:** Registration noon Sunday, Central Parklet; step-off at 1 p.m.

**Information:** 234-7087

### Local information on the Internet:

- ◆ The AIDS Project  
<http://www.hometown.aol.com/aidsproj>
- ◆ Pennsylvania Prevention Project  
<http://www.stophiv.com>



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**>KNIGHT RIDDER<**

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# On race, a year of accomplishments and unfinished business

**I**n the history of race relations, it seems as if April is the cruellest month.

Martin Luther King's assassination and the wave of civil unrest in cities across the country that followed were in April 1968.

It was an April day 10 years ago in Los Angeles when the acquittal of four white police officers in the beating of black motorist Rodney King touched off a lethal wave of rioting in that city and exposed unhealed racial wounds nationwide.

Last April, a police incident in Cincinnati led to rioting there and heightened national debate over racial profiling by police.

And, here in Happy Valley, it was in April last year that a death threat against black student leaders at Penn State provoked a sit-in at the HUB-Robeson Center. That nonviolent but highly emotional protest, which became known as "the Village," tested the ability of the university, stu-

dent leaders and the community at large to bridge the racial chasm in their midst. It, too, captured national attention.

Another April has come and gone, and with it came another incident that threatened to inflame racial tensions at Penn State. Racist and homophobic e-mails were sent to several students on campus, and a racist Web site blasted the university's promotion of diversity and tolerance. However, this year, no students felt compelled to stage sit-ins, and there was no atmosphere of confrontation.

The storms of April can prepare the ground for the seeds of progress to grow.

There are strong differences on whether the racial climate at Penn State has improved significantly in the past year. But a lot has changed for the better on both sides of College Avenue.

When word began spreading on campus last weekend of the hate e-mails, university officials appeared more

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adept this year at getting in front of the effort to condemn the letters and hunt down the sender.

Within days, police traced the hate messages to an America Online account in New Jersey.

But perhaps more significant is the sense that the university is moving forward on diversity efforts that, until last year, seemed to be on the back burner. Most notable is the opening of the Africana Research Center on campus. The center's most important role will be in guiding and promoting the work of students and faculty members seeking to understand and find solutions to America's continuing racial and ethnic problems.

But comments from some black students on campus are a reminder that the university should not let its guard down but continue to follow up on pledges to improve diversity in the faculty, to ensure that multicultural-

ism is appropriately infused into the curriculum and to make Penn State a campus where students will never see race as an impediment to their success and well-being. University administrators need to stay vigilant and proactive.

Meanwhile, a number of residents — some of whom were inspired by the show of multiracial solidarity they saw at the Village — have become involved in discussions about race and have learned how to break down barriers between themselves and others who are different from them. One example is the joint services and Bible studies done by the Albright-Bethune United Methodist Church, a predominantly black congregation in State College, and the University Mennonite Church, a predominantly white one. These services have allowed people to get to know each other face to face, to get beyond stereotypes to true understanding.

At a Public Issues Forum on race relations last month, some 60 partici-

pants talked about how well America and Centre County were doing in healing a legacy of racism, misunderstanding and mistrust that has now spanned five centuries. Amid the differing points of view, a common thread ran through all of the discussions: Race continues to be an issue we need to talk about, in spite of our apprehensions.

Frankly, the media's propensity to address race only in the context of conflict and crisis, and only through the loudest and most strident voices on either side of the divide, doesn't provide a good template for discussion.

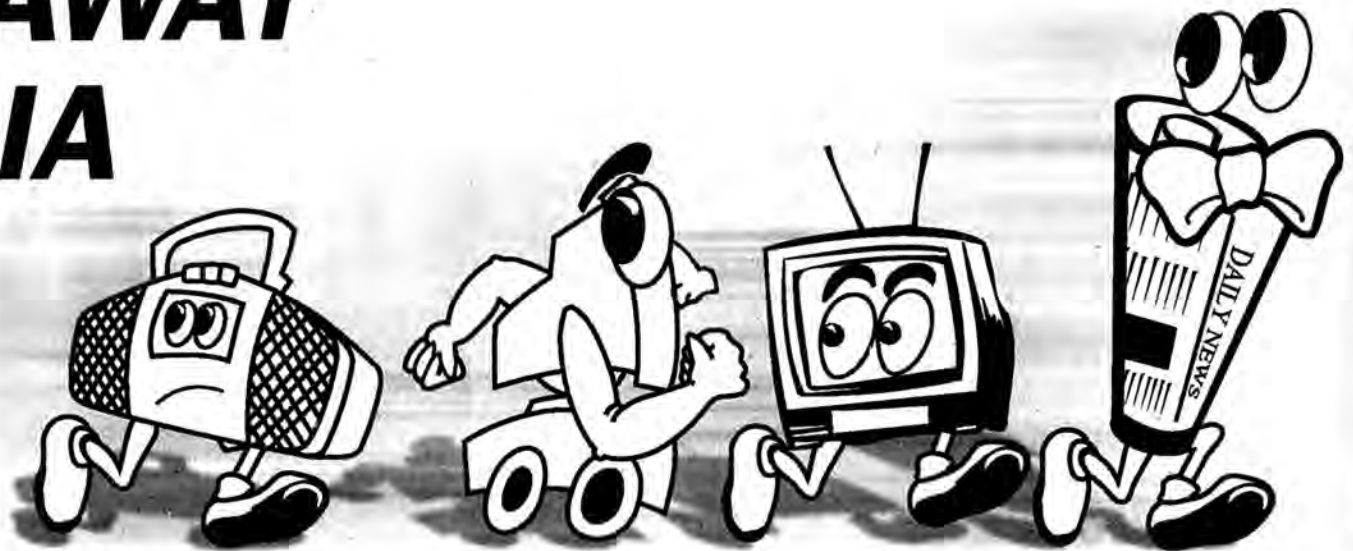
Better models exist in some of the unheralded discussions taking place in church basements, university and school classrooms, and, truth be told, in the discussions that took place away from the microphones and the reporters among students involved in the Village sit-in.

Because of those models, much healing has taken place, but the work is not done.



## PUBLIC ISSUES FORUM

## RUNAWAY MEDIA



CDT graphic/Brett Colton

## How does the public catch a media seemingly run amok?

Perhaps it's just a case of the grass being greener on the other side, but when I attended a conference of South Pacific journalism educators in Australia in December, speaker after speaker rose to praise the American principle of a free press and free speech. No doubt they would not disagree with critics of the U.S. news media, but at the same time they would point out that no one enjoys a free press the way the United States does — and for that we should be grateful, not critical.

One of the very things that makes us the envy of the world is the First Amendment. When I taught in China in 1994, my Australian counterpart kept reminding me that only the United States has the First Amendment. Australian journalists face a variety of restraints too numerous to list here, but let me stipulate that truth is not always a good defense in a defamation case. Truth! And in China, the Communist Party, in

effect, controls the news media, although it is losing its grip because of the Internet. Still, a dissident editor is rare.

But we live here, not in Australia or China or anywhere else where press freedom is not the same. Here, we are to some extent unhappy with the news media. Polls continue to show journalists ranking lower than used car salesmen and the news media not being taken seriously. There's a credibility gap between the news conveyor and the news consumer.

"A probe of the public's mind," the American Society of Newspaper Editors said in 1999, "reveals a troubling image of journalism. The public's fundamental concerns about journalism center on accuracy, the newspaper's relationship with its community, and perceptions that newspapers too often are biased and tend to over-cover sensational stories."

But how do we get a grip on the issue and how do we get the news

media we think we deserve? With that in mind, the public is invited to attend a community issues forum titled "Runaway News Media: How to Catch Them." The forum is sponsored by the State College Area School District in conjunction with the National Issues Forum and will be held on Feb. 9 from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Mount Nittany Middle School.

The co-conveners are Isaiah J. Poole, the editorial page editor of the Centre Daily Times; John Curley, a distinguished professional in residence in the College of Communications at Penn State and former president, chairman and chief executive officer of Gannett Co., Inc., and R. Thomas Berner, a professor of journalism and American studies at Penn State.

To whet your appetite and help stimulate discussion, we have three essays: "Listen up journalists or else," "Open up the marketplace" and "People, take responsibility."

— R. Thomas Berner

## IF YOU GO

◆ **What:** "Runaway News Media: How to Catch Them"  
◆ **When:** 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Feb. 9.  
◆ **Where:** Mount Nittany Middle School, Brandywine Drive, College Township  
◆ **Information:** Call 231-1061 or e-mail [cjk12@scacd.k12.pa.us](mailto:cjk12@scacd.k12.pa.us) to sign up for the forum. The forum is free and open to the public.  
◆ **On the Internet:** [home.adelphia.net/~coalcrack/runawayhome.htm](http://home.adelphia.net/~coalcrack/runawayhome.htm)

## WHAT YOU THINK?

What bugs you about local or national media, or, for that matter, the people who always complain about the media? Send us your thoughts via e-mail, fax, or letter and we will publish them this weekend in our Saturday Forum.

## LISTEN UP JOURNALISTS, OR ELSE

## Superficial coverage a continuing concern

By R. Thomas Berner

Twenty years ago a member of State College Borough Council complained that too much of the news coverage of council focused on the personalities of the members of council, not the policies. Generally, that is a complaint heard at all levels, from city hall to the White House.

And it's not hard to find recent criticism of the news media, with one of the most recent examples being a book titled "Leaving Readers Behind," edited by no other than Gene Roberts, the legendary former editor of The Philadelphia Inquirer. Roberts is hardly journalism's only critic. But the fact that he's a highly regarded editor (he was also at different times the national editor and the managing editor of The New York Times) makes his leadership on this issue all the more pronounced.

The press has always played an important role in the United States. From the get-go, the press was seen as serving democracy. "Were it left to me to decide," Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1787, "whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." Jefferson valued the opinion of citizens and felt that unrestrained newspapers would reflect a variety of opinions that would help the government govern well.

But one can also find later quotations in which Jefferson, having been savaged in the press and having been the subject of rumors, does not wax as poetic. "Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper," he said in 1807. "Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle."

Today, some might suggest it's not what is published, but what is not published that is the problem. Some might say that the press, known now as the "news media" to reflect radio and television, does not provide readers and listeners with what they need to function as citizens.

Journalists should be cheerleaders for democracy. Too often, though, journalists engage in a superficial approach to covering government, relying on the easy story

Journalists should be cheerleaders for democracy. Too often, though, journalists ... (go) after the story that ridicules politicians but doesn't improve politics.

rather than the depth story, going after the story that ridicules politicians but doesn't improve politics. Stories focus on anecdotes rather than substance. Personalities win out over policies.

What's a citizen to do? Citizens get the news media they deserve. If they show a greater interest in a politician's sex life than in policies, the news media will report the sex and skip the Socratic dialogue. Who cares about national health care or the conditions of local schools? If the citizens won't take the time to wonder, why should the news media?

So any discussion about improving the news media must involve the role of citizens. Citizens must become better consumers of news and must let editors and producers know when they are unhappy with news that doesn't help them function as better citizens.

As Jefferson said it: "Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights." But they can only set things right when they let the news barons know how useful the news media can be in a democracy.

R. Thomas Berner is a professor of journalism and American studies at Penn State and a former city editor of the Centre Daily Times.

## PEOPLE, TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

## Readers, viewers can influence journalism

By Gene Foreman

I've spent most of my life surrounded by journalists. Despite the drumbeat of complaints about the media, I know that the overwhelming majority of these professionals are decent people who work diligently — often courageously — to make sure the public is informed.

And they are people who pay attention to constructive criticism.

Responsible journalists owe accountability to their audience; they are obligated by professional standards to engage in a dialogue with their critics in the community. So if you have a complaint over the way the news is covered, call, write or send an e-mail message to the newspaper editor or the broadcast news director.

Getting in touch should not be difficult. "Interactive journalism" is quite in vogue these days. Newspapers are required to publish their mailing addresses. They also typically publish the phone numbers and e-mail addresses of editors and reporters. Their Web site's address probably will be prominently displayed in the paper. Once you're on the Web site, click on "contact us" for hyperlinks to specific staff members or news departments.

Here are some suggestions for critiquing your friends in the media:

◆ State your complaint clearly. Refer to the issue date and page number if you're dealing with a newspaper, the broadcast date and time if you're dealing with a radio or television station. If you think a story is wrong, identify each questionable statement and succinctly offer your version of the facts. If you think a story is slanted, specify how.

◆ Go easy on the acrimony. I can state from painful experience that the biggest chore in monitoring public criticism of a news organization is separating the facts of the complaint from the vitriol that usually accompanies them. News organizations deal with plenty of crank callers. It's sometimes hard to distinguish between the crank and the intelligent citizen whose anger obscures the clarity of a legitimate complaint. You help your cause if you come across as reasonable. You should expect courtesy in

return.

◆ If you think coverage of an issue or an organization has consistently been inaccurate or distorted, ask for a meeting with the reporter and his or her supervisor. Again, I think the news organization will oblige. It might be appropriate to bring several representatives of your organization or point of view. At the meeting, you should make a well-documented presentation and be prepared to discuss the matter civilly and dispassionately.

◆ Although you are entitled to be taken seriously and politely, realize that you may not get complete satisfaction. The news business is not one in which the customer is always right. Complaints about news are not resolved simply by accepting a complainant's version of events. You are right to demand that the news organization recheck its facts and correct any misstatement. But if the reinvestigation turns out to affirm the original report, you're not going to get a correction.

◆ So if the journalists ultimately stand by their story, what recourse do you have? For one thing, you can ask to talk with the top editor or the broadcast news director to be sure that the top executive is aware of your complaint and how it has been handled. For another, in the case of a newspaper at least, you can write a letter for publication to let the public know about your complaint and its details.

All of these suggestions assume that you are dealing with responsible journalists. However, the First Amendment's freedom of the news media comes at a price — sometimes charlatans call themselves journalists. If you wind up being rebuffed by one of those, exercise your own freedom. Buy another newspaper or switch to a different channel. Push your grievance in any communications venue you can: by word of mouth, Web site, newsletter or public forum. "Journalists" who aren't accountable deserve what they get.

Gene Foreman is Larry and Ellen Foster Professor of Communications at Penn State and a former editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer.

## OPEN UP THE MARKETPLACE

## Freedom of the press isn't just for the rich

By Isaiah J. Poole

Look at the news business today and you see an apparent contradiction. There are more sources of news and information than ever. And yet many people feel they have fewer real choices, that an increasingly small circle of people is serving up what many people consider cookie-cutter sameness.

There's truth in both perspectives. Before 1980, there was no such thing as 24-hour cable news delivered by three fiercely competing companies. Before the mid-1990s, it wasn't possible, through any home computer, to read the Centre Daily Times, The New York Times or The Times of London with equal ease.

But behind the façade of plenty, follow the money: AOL Time Warner owns 64 magazines, CNN and its cable siblings, and the nation's most popular Internet service. Viacom owns the CBS and UPN networks, several cable channels, 34 television stations and more than 180 radio stations. More than half of the weekday newspaper circulation in the United States is controlled by just 10 companies. And that's just a small portion of the media consolidation picture.

How should we respond? Not surprisingly, there's no consensus among either the experts or among average people.

Mark Crispin, a media studies professor at New York University, said in the American Journalism Review that "we live in a time of unprecedented media concentration. As long as a limited number of transnational entities control these culture industries, the effect on journalism and society is going to be profoundly negative."

People who accept this view argue that these corporations are less beholden to consumers and their communities than they are to demanding stockholders whose singular focus is on whether the company is keeping profit margins and stock prices high.

Washington Post columnist Paul Farhi, in another American Journalism Review article, declared that critics of corporate consolidation "have yet to assemble a compelling case that bigness is inherently bad." In fact, he argues, large corporate owners are better

As technology pushes toward a more open marketplace, public policy is allowing the big to get even bigger.

equipped to uphold the traditional standards of journalism — both ethically and financially — and to meet the demands of an increasingly fickle, fragmented public.

Plus, technology is taking the sting out of A.J. Liebling's famous dictum, "freedom of the press is limited to those who own one." Here's one example: When a group of frustrated Centre County residents in the early 1990s decided that the viewpoints they were interested in reading were not appearing in the CDT or elsewhere, they launched Voices of Central Pennsylvania. Technology lowers the cost of production enough that a group of volunteers, with money from a few local advertisers, can publish outside-the-mainstream views for their readers each month.

But as technology pushes toward a more open marketplace, public policy allowing the big to get even bigger. A microcosm of the trend can be seen in local radio: The Federal Communications Commission made it possible for eight radio stations in the State College market to be controlled by two companies, Forever Broadcasting and Dame Broadcasting. If a rule that has kept newspapers from owning television and radio stations in the same market is abolished, as many think it will, theoretically Knight Ridder could own one or two of the local TV stations and several radio stations as well as the CDT.

Whether you believe that's good or bad, consumers should elbow their way into that policy debate as well as take advantage of the ways technology opens the marketplace.

Isaiah J. Poole is opinion page editor of the CDT.



# VIEWPOINTS

## Moving backward toward racial division

We have been told by some that this community is racist and that Penn State is a racist institution. Neither of those statements is true.

Are there incidents of racism in town or on campus? You bet there are. But I am not going to permit this community to be painted with the broad brush of accusation just because of the behavior of a handful of Cro-Magnon idiots who are so lacking in either education or self-esteem that they have to lash out at minorities just to make themselves feel superior.

However, I do find myself to be troubled by the character and direction of race relations in town and gown today. My overall sense is that we are moving away from the ideals of unity and integration and toward the



**Joseph B. Filko**

direction of race consciousness and voluntary segregation. It seems to me that "diversity" is becoming division.

I recently rented "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" and brought it home to watch with one of my children. In the movie, a young black man, played by Sidney Poitier, confronts his father, who is opposed to his son's pending marriage to a white woman. Poitier, exasperated, finally says, "The difference between us is that you see yourself as a black man, and I see myself as a man."

Along the same lines, a 1970's episode of "All in the Family" had Michael talking with his black friend, Lionel Jefferson. Mike, as usual when talking with Lionel, brought up a topic that related to racial issues. Lionel stopped Michael dead in his tracks and said, "Why do you always bring up 'black' issues? Can't we just talk about the weather? Black people have weather too, you know."

Clearly, the direction race relations was taking back in the 1960s and 1970s was a slow but steady progression toward a colorblind society, the kind of society to which Dr. King so eloquently referred, where his children would be judged, not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

I do not sense that same direction today. I am beginning to sense its precise opposite. What I am seeing, and fear greatly, are more and more people who seem to be defining themselves by the color of their skin and aligning themselves with race and ethnic-based political ideologies, including massive attempts at bloc voting.

I guess the message that I want to send to such people is this: I would like to see you, and respond to you, as a unique individual. But I have a hard time

doing that while you insist on wearing your skin color like a badge of honor, or a claim of grievance, on your sleeve, or when you continually interpret events around you through a racial lens. And I find it particularly difficult to respond to you as an individual when you define yourself as a member of a group.

I was stunned recently by a phrase I'd never heard before. I was speaking about race relations with a small group of recent high school graduates, all of whom were white. I learned that many of them had been hurt and confused by the emotional loss that occurred when they were rejected by some of their former black friends from high school, people whom they had once been dating or just used to hang out with. They said that, once some of those former friends got up to Penn State, they "went black" and wanted little or nothing to do with their former white friends anymore. That was the expression they used to describe the transition. If true, exactly how is that supposed to help race relations?

It is a perfectly natural thing for people who perceive themselves to be a minority in a given community to band together, want to spend time together, and even take collective action together. But as happens with all legitimate causes, there will always be those that take things to excess or who seek to exploit unfortunate incidents to further personal agendas or vendettas. It is those latter folks who may ultimately undo many of the gains that have been made in recent decades in bridging the racial divide.

Last year, I wrote a column in this paper in support of affirmative action. I still believe in it. But I am very concerned that a backlash is coming. The cause of that backlash, I suspect, is what some have called the "race grievance industry" in the United States. Those are the individuals and groups that seek to amass power, influence, and organizational cash flow by continually fanning the flames of racial grievance.

Only a fool would deny that racism, as well as the lingering effects of slavery, are still realities in the everyday lives of many of our fellow citizens. But we need to stop this destructive business of segregating ourselves into aggrieved pockets of hyphenated Americans. It's the wrong direction. My father came through Ellis Island from Hungary in 1917, but I am an American, not a Hungarian-American. And if I were to list all of my defining characteristics, my race would not even be on the list, not even at the very bottom, because it doesn't matter to me, and I don't want it to matter to you.

*Joseph B. Filko maintains a financial services business in State College and is a community columnist.*



## Walking the color line

## Colorblind? Wear a new pair of glasses

Last spring, I was quoted in Penn State's student newspaper, The Daily Collegian, as saying, "Most whites were not good at discussion or understanding race and racism."

Many members of the university and the local community have taken issue with my assessment. While I am now more aware of the dangers of communication by sound bites, the quoted phrase was essentially correct. However, it was incomplete. The message that I was attempting to get across



**W. Terrell Jones**

was that most whites have been socialized in such a way that they become unable to discuss these issues. Most of us learn early in life that we are not supposed to see or discuss racial differences. Long, long before most of us heard terminology such as "multiculturalism," "pluralism" and "diversity," there was another American myth that exemplified how differences were addressed: Our country was the great "melting pot." In America, where you come from is not important; here we are all the same. Don't believe me; read the back of a one-dollar bill. There it is, "E Pluribus Unum," which loosely translates to "from many to one."

The other day, I was involved in a discussion with some well-intended community members about some of the racist events of last school year and what proactive steps we as a community should take to improve the climate. Some of the discussion participants expressed their opinions on the best ways for us a community to deal with racial tensions.

Many of their suggestions sounded like the old, well-worn phrases that I have heard many times before: "Some of my best friends are . . .," "I try to treat everybody the same" and, of course, the classic, "I'm colorblind."

While I am sure that everyone would like to do something foster more positive race relations and a better community climate, "we-are-community" slogans, new organizations to fight racism, posters and even unity parades are morning-after solutions. There rarely have a lasting impact on race relations.

Catchy sayings like "I'm colorblind" are lacking in historical perspective and are a form of denial that prevents us from developing the necessary sociological and economic founda-

Sayings like "I'm colorblind" are lacking in historical perspective.

tions we need to understand the hows and whys of the present state of community and national race relations. Movement toward improved race relations in America is a journey that we must make. However, to make any progress on the journey, we have to know where we came from to get to where we need to go. We cannot afford to approach discussions about race with a Hanzel-and-Gretel breadcrumb level of sophistication, in which our solutions are so simplistic as to ignore the complexity of the problem.

Understanding how we as a society got in this racial quagmire is hard work and intricately interwoven into the history of America. Someone once wrote, "We have to learn how to deal with our country's unfortunate history of oppression." I would speculate that this person was not Native American, African American, Asian American or Latino. What may be more unfortunate is the cultural encapsulation that perpetuates colorblindness.

As Cornel West asserts in his book, "Race Matters," "To engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must begin, not with the problems of black people, but with the flaws of American society — flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes."

OK, I am willing to concede that race is not a critical variable in every interracial communication; sometimes it is just not that important. However, there are times when being able to perceive and understand the racial elements of a situation is imperative to fairness and an eventual solution. Some of us have never had the luxury to be colorblind. We have long, sometimes intergenerational histories that have been shaped by racism and oppression. Maybe it is time for all of us to put on the same pair of glasses and deal collectively with our shared unfortunate history.

I am sure you all heard the saying, "If you don't know where you're going, then any road will get you there." I believe progress in race relations begins with a look back at our shared past to understand the choices we will have to make for a common future.

*W. Terrell Jones is vice provost for educational equity at Penn State.*

## Reparations: Both sides of the debate have some listening to do

By Isaiah J. Poole

Every so often, when the subject of race comes up, someone will invariably say something along the lines of, "Why don't we just forget about skin color and see ourselves as human beings?"

All fine and good, a part of me wants to say, but as the title of an old pop song says, there's always something there to remind me.

The latest was an article about a neighborhood not too far from my hometown of Washington that appeared in the Sept. 2 Washington Post. A well-to-do black family went to a real estate agent to inquire about homes in a new development in Anne Arundel County. The family waited in the agent's office for about an hour before one of the agents, a female, directed her attention to them. According to one of the family members quoted by The Post, "She looked up at us from her desk and said, 'Are you sure you can afford a house in this community?'"

I suspect most black people who have tried to buy a house outside low-income black neighborhoods — or, for that matter, tried to buy something pricey in a department store — have either experienced something like this themselves or know first-hand someone who has.

These experiences are but a small sliver of the experiences that form the backdrop of the current national debate over "reparations," the idea that America should somehow pay compensation for the suffering black people have experienced and continue to experience as a result of slavery and racial discrimination. A bill currently in the House of Representatives, backed by several high-profile civil rights leaders, calls for a study of what that might

entail. It was also a hot topic in South Africa at last week's United Nations conference on racism.

Perhaps "debate" is too generous a word. The very utterance of the word "reparations" invokes sharp polarization and visceral reaction. One side says that white America has profited illicitly from its legacy of racism while that legacy has deprived black Americans of tangible wealth. Those ill-gotten gains are owed the black community for centuries of stolen labor and denied opportunity. Another side says that white people of today do not owe anything to black people of today; instead of trying to fix the past, we should just, in a word, move on.

What we really ought to do is take some time to listen to each other.

Recently, I read two excellent essays in Newsweek magazine by prominent black intellectuals on both sides of the issue.

Manning Marable, director of African-American studies at Columbia University, argues that while Reconstruction followed the abolition of slavery and the "second Reconstruction" of the 1950s and 1960s saw the official outlawing of segregation and discrimination, neither period addressed "the tremendous human costs of historically accumulated disadvantage that remains central to black Americans' lives." Reparations, Marable said, is the process of educating ourselves about and addressing "the contemporary reality of 'racial deficits' of all kinds, the unequal conditions that impact blacks regardless of class."

Shelby Steele, a noted author on racial issues, argues that "the greatest single problem black America has had for the past 30 years has been precisely a faith in reparational uplift — the idea that all the injustice we endured would

Supporters and opponents are feeling different parts of the same elephant.

somehow translate into the means of uplift." That idea, Steele wrote, has led black Americans down a road of welfare dependency, over-reliance on affirmative action and, in general, "a sense of aggrieved entitlement that sees black success as an impossibility without the intervention of white compassion." The solution, Steele says, is for black Americans to reclaim the values and strengths their predecessors used to nurture excellence in academia, business, culture, politics, religion and every other facet of human life, in spite of racism.

I think Marable and Steele are, as are many of us, feeling different parts of the same elephant.

We wouldn't even be having this discussion of reparations if it were not for the effects of racism that still exist all around us, whether it is the wealthy black homebuyer who is treated differently from his or her white counterpart or the disproportionate number of black families that are mired in poverty and the disadvantages that poverty alone can bring.

Nor would we be having this discussion if America did not have to be dragged kicking and screaming into every attempt to put its founding principles of equality into practice, from the Civil War through the bloody clashes of

the civil rights movement and into such battles today as the alternate bouts of police brutality and "de-policing" in black neighborhoods. It is no wonder that so many black Americans still feel as if they are strangers in a strange land, even with Colin Powell in the State Department, Michael Jordan in the Washington Wizards' executive office and Oprah Winfrey ruling the airwaves and magazine racks. Even with enough money to buy a \$500,000 home.

We are not responsible for a past that we had no part in shaping, but we are responsible for how we respond to how the past has shaped our present. In their own ways, that is what both Marable and Steele are saying. It means that white America cannot turn its back on continuing racism and racial disparities, if for no other reason than raw self-interest: No one's prosperity is secure in a nation that accepts racial and economic apartheid and maintains barriers that keep people trapped in inequality.

It also means that those of us in the black community must not be so wrapped in the psychological bonds of victimhood that we fail to appreciate and develop the gifts and talents that can make us victors over victimization.

Ask yourself this question: What would happen if the \$16,679 difference in the median income of black households and non-Hispanic white households were erased? Based on 1999 figures, if black median income were equal to that of whites, that would mean an additional \$210.7 billion circulating through the national economy each year. By allowing the conditions that lead to black household median income being 39 percent less than that of whites, we all lose the jobs, lower taxes and other economic benefits of that additional wealth — not to mention the

fruits of people living to their full potential. That is a powerful argument for doing what it takes, in terms of both dollars and sweat equity, to create true equal opportunity.

We could allow national debates on such topics as reparations, or local discussions on such issues as diversity at Penn State, to continue to degenerate into racial slugfests, or we can seize the opportunity to do real racial healing. One place to start is a simple resolve to be one nation. It sounds simple, but it is a resolve that has eluded us in practice, even as we have given the theory eloquent lip service. That resolve, though, would prompt us to listen, to understand, to reach out, to build trust, to do the hard work of repairing the wreckage of racism.

It would prompt us, most importantly, to go to the place of sorrow, repentance and forgiveness where real reconciliation begins. If both black and white Americans are too resentful and bitter to go to that soul-cleansing place together, there will never be racial peace and we will never be able to focus on the challenges of the present.

Forget about skin color? Not yet. There has been remarkable progress on racial issues during the past four decades. But four decades of racial progress is a mere sapling against the dense thicket of weeds created by centuries of slavery and institutional racism. Its survival is too fragile to take for granted. And if you're wringing your hands now over America's continuing preoccupation with race, you don't want to see the America that will emerge if we allow that sapling to be choked and killed.

*Isaiah J. Poole is opinion page editor at the Centre Daily Times.*



# SILVER SPRING Gazette

Wednesday, August 6, 1997 • 25¢

## Emotional good-bye to Naval center

by Isaiah J. Poole

Staff Writer

At sunset Thursday — 8:19 p.m. — 18 of the remaining holdouts at the Naval Surface Warfare Center gathered around the flagpole.

As "What I Did for Love" played faintly from a boombox in the distance, the workers took turns pulling down the American flag that flew over the White Oak facility. It was gingerly unhooked from the rigging that held it to the pole and four people reverently folded it.

It was then pressed to the chest of Ronald Mask, a Takoma Park resident who had been a security guard at the facility for 24 years. He somberly held the flag close to him as he walked the darkening walkway toward Lt. Jeffrey Quinton, who saluted and then took possession of the flag.

At the end, there was applause and smiles, but there was not happiness.

The official closing Thursday of the center — a one-time hotbed of military research during the Cold War — was unanimously described as a bittersweet occasion by the workers and former employees who came to say good-bye and to reminisce about what they called a very special place. About 100 people came for the ceremony.

"It's sad to see it go, but things evolve," said a stoic Bob Ridgway of Calverton, a 40-year veteran of the facility. He was one of the first people hired to an underwater assessment and evaluation team at the center. His last job there was as an environmental officer responsible for the cleanup of the facility. His retirement day ironically coincided with the closing of the center.

"The way I ended this career, working in the environment, cleaning it up for the next tenant, it kind of puts a nice closure to my career," he said.

The next planned major tenant is the Food and Drug Administration, which wants to move a significant portion of its 5,900 employees to a 130-acre portion of the 660-acre site. The property is now in the hands of the civilian General Services Administration, which handles federal property and procurement.

The whole campus is expected to be renamed the Federal Research Center.

Last week the GSA announced that it had



Brian T. Schoeni/GAZETTE

Above, the remaining employees at the Naval Surface Warfare Center lower the flag for the last time. At right, Navy Capt. Jack Overton, right, salutes Lt. Jeffrey Quinton, who oversaw the closing of the center, before receiving the flag. The center officially went into the hands of the civilian General Services Administration at midnight Aug. 1.



See **Naval**, page A-9



# NAVAL

Continued from page A-1

selected a development team, LaSalle Partners Limited of Chicago and Moore & Associates of Silver Spring, to develop plans for the site. Since Congress has vowed not to pay for the FDA move, the team is charged with figuring out a way to make that happen with private funds.

"We're looking at whether the developer can create value with the property" that will make the FDA move profitable, said Jag Bhargava, a GSA official working on the White Oak project. That plan, which should be complete by next spring, will also have to pass muster with local officials and concerned residents, he stressed.

"I told the developer to come up with the most creative plan you have ever come up with and get it approved," he said.

The General Services Administration will help organize a kind-of open house for the White Oak area Oct. 18, in conjunction with the Oktoberfest that has been held on the grounds in recent years. As of now the agenda includes a golf tournament and an "opening ceremony" during which community members are expected to see detailed plans for FDA's use of the campus.

Quinton was sent to the research center by the Navy two years ago to oversee the closing, ordered as part of a Congressional budget-cutting move. For him, it has not been a task he has relished.

"In two short years I can see why these people were upset and disappointed," he said of the workers.

"It was a family atmosphere, a tightly knit research and development community. Everybody was really close," he said.

On the center's last day, there were 20 people on the payroll. But at its peak, the center had as many as 4,000 employees, according to some

of the veterans there. Ken Caudle of Silver Spring had been one of them for 34 years, working as a research physicist working on nuclear and ballistics projects. He said there was a creative synergy at the center that worked according to what he called "the coffee-pot theory."

"A lot of technology exchange, a lot of new ideas happened in little informal gatherings, often around the coffee pot or the water fountain," he said. "You see people going to lunch at similar times each day to bounce ideas off each other. And they weren't afraid to challenge each other."

That same atmosphere forged some strong after-work friendships, said several people at the ceremony.

Caudle also had a key role as base transition coordinator in dismantling the place he had grown to love, working with local officials and coordinating the transfer of furnishings on the grounds to local groups. He said he is proud that he and his colleagues managed to complete the transition of the facility from military to civilian hands in less than two years — much faster than many other bases that Congress ordered closed — but angry that he had to do so in the first place.

"It is ironic to talk about [there being] an excess of what this laboratory was. This was a bastion of ideas, of development... and to say that there is an excess of that is sort of an insult," he said.

Though private research contractors will take up some of the projects done at the center, Caudle added, "the private sector can't recreate the environment here."

In the end, the remaining employees passed around glasses of champagne, conducted a toast and shared memories. A few, like Mask, the retired security guard, were holding back tears. "Very emotional," he said of his walk with the flag. And one man, calling out to a colleague, walked away from the flagpole saying, "Well, it's all over."

# Home COMPUTING

## AND TECHNOLOGY

# Countdown to Windowsday

By ISAIAH J. POOLE  
PRESS HOME COMPUTING EDITOR

**A**nytime a software program makes it to the cover of one of the big three weekly news magazines, you're either seeing a wave you'd better ride before you get drowned — or the hype machine is setting you up to get soaked. The early indications are that Wednesday's release of Windows 95 — which has snared the attention of everyone from Wall Street mavens to Justice Department lawyers to the editors of U.S. News and World Report (who featured Windows 95 on the cover of their Aug. 7 issue) — offers in many respects a little of both.

The hype machine has certainly been in overdrive in preparation for Windows 95. Ads on television and in newspapers have been encouraging potential buyers to "reserve" copies of the program to beat an anticipated rush. And some Egghead Software outlets in the area are opening at midnight Wednesday to give computer diehards a head start.

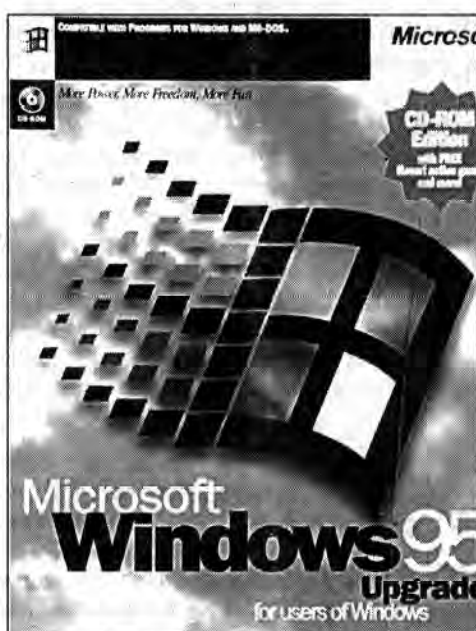
Few would dispute that Windows 95 will be to the future of home computing what DOS was to its past, the standard that software manufacturers and users will have to live with to be in the mainstream of computing. DOS, the operating system that has powered nearly all IBM-compatible machines for a decade-and-a-half, and Windows 95 are creations of the corporate giant Microsoft, which means that for better or for worse Microsoft chairman Bill Gates will be with us for some time to come.

At the same time, do you need to rush out and reserve a copy or plan to camp out at the local computer store? For most users, the answer is no. But chances are, a lot of us will throw judgment to the wind and do it anyway. What's the lure? Tens of millions of home computer users have been running Windows 3.1 (or its younger brother, Windows for Workgroups 3.11) and living with its clunkiness. It is hampered by an outdated memory structure, some user-unfriendly procedures for adding peripheral hardware and a generally temperamental nature.

(Here's an example some Windows users will appreciate: When I replaced one of two hard drives in my Cyrix-486DX-powered machine recently, running many of the programs transferred to that drive suddenly caused Windows to flash a "general protection fault" message. When I click the "OK" button, Dashboard, the program I use to select programs instead of Windows' Program Manager, shuts down, leaving me without a way to activate another program. To continue working, I would have to reboot the computer and reinstall the program that caused the message.)

A cottage industry has sprung up over the years of programs designed to make up for many of Windows' shortcomings. (One of my favorites is a shareware program called Roger's Rapid Restart, which compensates for one of Windows 3.1's more glaring omissions: a way to restart Windows without exiting to DOS and then reentering WIN at the DOS prompt. It comes in handy when confronted with those "general protection faults.")

Windows 95 promises, among other things, more efficient use of your computer's memory, fewer and less-fatal computer crashes, easier installation of peripherals, improved handling of multiple tasks (it will let you, for example, crunch numbers on a spreadsheet for a report while downloading an illustration from an Internet site for that same report) and a



clean, uncluttered look. Nonetheless, there are millions of average users who use a few well-written, bug-free programs for word processing, balancing a checkbook or playing a game and have been perfectly, or almost-perfectly, happy. If you're among them, you might well want to wait until the dust settles on the new product. Here's why:

■ The \$99 or less you spend on Windows 95 is only the beginning of the money you'll be spending. Unlike the old Windows-DOS combination, Windows 95 is a hybrid 32-bit operat-

33MHz and 4 megabytes of RAM) you should buy new hardware to run Windows 95. Most reviewers who have tested prerelease copies of Windows 95 agree that the minimum you need to run Windows 95 satisfactorily is a 486-class computer running at 66Mhz with at least 8, and preferably 16, megabytes of RAM. (An extra 4 megabytes of RAM costs about \$200. Some stores sell a special chip that will upgrade a 386 to a 486 for about \$200.) You'll also need at least 60 megabytes of free space on your hard drive; you might find it worth it to buy a larger hard drive. (The next wave of Windows 95 applications promise to be drive-space hungry; an 850-megabyte drive for \$250 or less might prove to be a good investment.)

■ While there are plenty of fans among the more than quarter-million people who bought prerelease versions of Windows 95 — in essence paying for the privilege of encountering bugs in the program and reporting them to Microsoft — some tests reveal potential sore spots. In a PC Computing magazine usability survey of the old and new Windows and IBM's OS/2 Warp, some inexperienced users had a slight preference for Windows for Workgroups' Program Manager and File Manager to the alternatives in OS/2 Warp and Windows 95. Meanwhile, Microsoft officials admit that they've had problems running in Windows 95 at least five percent of the 2,500 programs written for Windows 3.1 that they have tested. The programs range from popular shareware titles to major programs like Adobe Illustrator. There are also reports that the Windows 95

## Hot line for Windows 95

**I**f you're planning to make the dive into Windows 95, experts say keep a telephone line handy.

You could use it to call Microsoft's Windows 95 support line, (206) 635-7000, or to get help from these on-line sources: America Online has a Windows Forum (Keyword: Windows) that offers access to information from Microsoft, a downloadable Windows 95 demonstration and access to select Windows 95 sites on the Internet. Questions are answered by Windows experts as well as veteran users.

AOL also offers Windows Online Magazine. The magazine's on-line message board has already been overtaken with discussion about Windows 95 with the magazine's editors. There is also some shareware available through the magazine for Windows 95.

CompuServe users can type GO WIN-

DOWS for WinSupport, a central area for all Windows-based support services. CompuServe claims more than 500 services related to Windows computing.

For the latest news and help with Windows 95, connect to the Microsoft Windows News Forum (GO WINNEWS), sponsored by WUGNET, the Windows Users Group Network. The Windows News Forum is expanding to take care of the expected rush when Windows 95 hits the street this week. Library 12 contains archives of message threads about Windows 95 and Library 16 is already beginning to fill with 32-bit shareware for Windows 95. Prodigy's offerings as of last week consisted of a single Microsoft Windows 95 forum with press releases dating back to the days when Windows 95 was code-named "Chicago."

— Isaiah J. Poole and Tribune Media

ing system ("hybrid" because it retains some of the 16-bit code of its predecessors so it can run Windows 3.1 programs). That will enable programs to run faster and more efficiently. And Windows 95 includes features that smash such limits as the character length of file names. (You can call that file "summer '95 sales report" instead of "sum95sal.doc.") But only programs written for Windows 95 can take advantage of those new features; your old software won't learn new tricks and won't perform noticeably faster.

■ Speaking of money, if you have an older PC (say, a 386-class computer with a speed of

product that will go on sale Wednesday has known glitches that could not be rooted out in time to meet the release date; Microsoft plans to make available a "tune-up kit" with bug fixes and refinements in late fall.

The bottom line: Windows 95 promises a lot, and the early reports are it delivers on a good deal of what it promises. But when Microsoft asks "Where would you like to go today?" be prepared for a bumpy, costly ride.

□ Next week: a firsthand report on Windows 95. If you have tips for Windows 95 users or have any comments about Windows 95, please send e-mail to [eyejay@aol.com](mailto:eyejay@aol.com).