

commentary

from other pens...

Step up to the plate and bite the bullet

Colby Free Press on tax increases:

It's a no brainer. You do what has to be done — they call it biting the bullet. Forget the politics; consider the mission. But this is an election year and for the most part you aren't going to find many politicians beating the drum for tax increases. Matter of fact it was hard to find any of them willing to raise taxes on alcohol and cigarettes — sin taxes, they call them — thus that suffered a knock out in ... the Kansas Legislature.

No matter how you look at it, the state is in a financial mess, and continues looking for ways to close the \$679 million gap.

Remember just a few short years ago when things were sailing smoothly and surpluses were a way of life? What happened? Did we forget to save for a rainy day as it is suggested time and again that everyone should?

The shape we are in is nothing short of an embarrassment. With all the so-called intelligence occupying space in the Capitol, you would think something would come out of this budget crisis.

If this thing continues to fester a lot of needs will find their necks whacked off by the budget ax.

Come on, guys and gals down there in Topeka, you know what you gotta do, so do it!

And don't worry about where the chips may fall. It's time for leadership. Not woe-be-me ship.

Step up to the plate. Here comes the pitch ...

The Manhattan Mercury on legislative stalling:

Members of the Kansas House of Representatives did a superb job last week of not raising taxes. They managed to thwart a number of proposals, even rejecting added taxes on cigarettes and alcohol. They also made clear they want nothing to do with higher sales, income, property or estate taxes.

In fact, they've gone to great lengths to avoid dealing responsibly with a budget shortfall that will require decisions none of them wants to make — and that too few were willing to make last week...

Most Kansans recognize the situation the state is in and are not counting on anything extra this session. ... Most also understand that there's a limit beyond which program and services cuts will cause people who count on some of those services to suffer needlessly.

As for education, one of the questions that must be answered is how much of what has been achieved ... this state wants to forfeit during this crisis only to have to make up in the years to come. ...

The 2002 session is past the halfway point, and it's past time lawmakers started digging out of the hole the state is in. ... It's time to stop stalling.

Kansans from every part of the state, every background and every income bracket are watching and waiting. They will judge this Legislature not just by how much taxes are raised or by how much programs are scaled back, but also by the individual and collective responsibility and wisdom lawmakers demonstrate in meeting this crisis.

where to write

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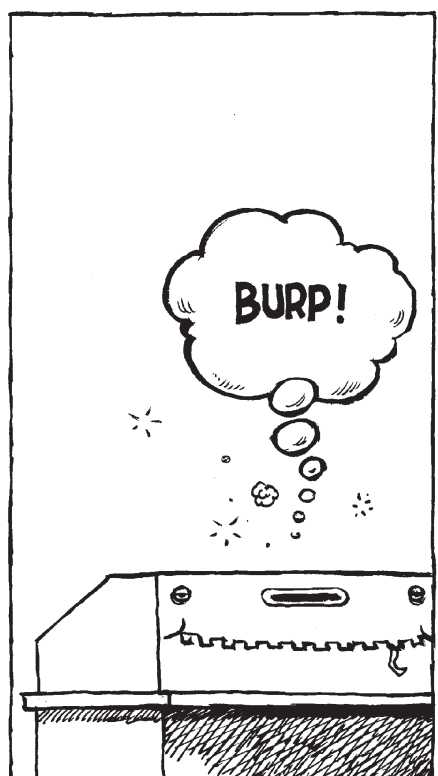
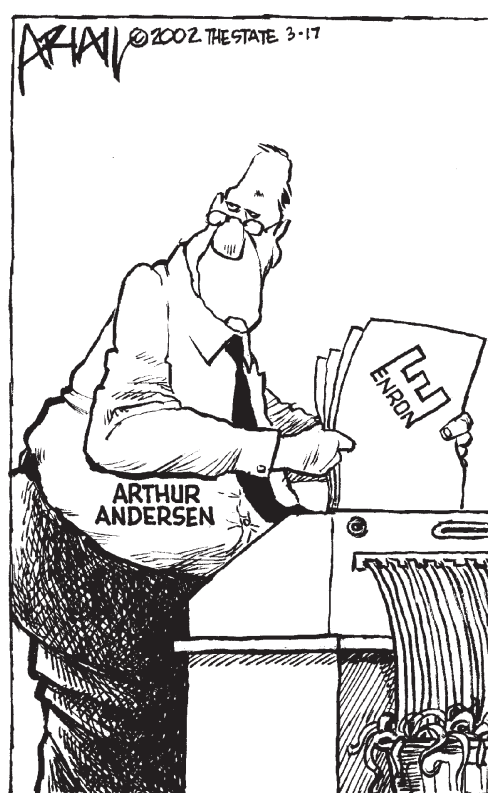
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Music has brought my brother and I closer

Rap has brought me and my older brother closer together.

Rap music, that is.

I never really knew Nate when we were growing up. I lived with our mom, he lived with our dad. He was three years older than me and I always thought he was way cooler than I could ever hope to be.

The only real contact I remember having with him in high school is when he spit on me while he was walking out the door one day. I don't remember him giving an explanation, he just spit and left.

I always thought he hated me. I think he always thought I was a trendy dork. We misunderstood each other.

That's all changed now.

Nate's rap career began about two years ago when he and a group of other young rappers started spending a lot of time in the studio. They had names like Beano, Hectic and Lyric. I must admit I thought it was a joke at first.

At family gatherings, Nate would pop his latest recording into the tape player. At first, we all politely listened and said it sounded good. We were lying, of course.

But the music kept sounding better and better and when Nate popped in the tape last Thanksgiving, even my dad's 60-year-old friends were tap-



rachel miscall

● unraveling

ping their feet to the beat.

Most of the rappers Nate started with have now gone their separate ways and now it's just Nate — his stage name is "BluCalla" — and Steve — otherwise known as "Phrantic." They call themselves "Dynamix," and their manager's name is James Field, or "Peace."

I saw Nate perform for the first time in October at a small coffee house in Denver. I wasn't expecting much. I mean he's a big, white guy and I don't like rap that much anyway.

I sure was surprised.

His music isn't as hard, lyrically or rhythmically, as some hip-hop music. It has a good beat and thoughtful lyrics. Nate and Steve have a great stage presence, too.

They call their style of music "positive hip-hop" because it's not all about sex and violence.

Now I'm hooked.

I try to see every show possible. Sometimes it's

just me and Joel, another of my three brothers, in the audience and sometimes there is a big crowd.

I not only go to Nate's shows because I want to support my brother, but I go because I enjoy seeing him on stage. I think he's really good. It's amazing!

I see Nate a lot more now, and we've gotten to know each other better.

I've discovered he's not as cool as I once thought. I hope he's discovered that I'm not as stuck-up as he once thought.

Of course, people in the audience only see Nate on the surface, and apparently they like what they see.

Dynamix was featured on Fox News last month and two camera men with Fox filmed the group's show this past weekend. They opened for "Digital Underground" at a club in Denver, and it was their biggest show yet.

At first I was able to stand close to the stage during the performance, but then a flock of young women shoved me out of the way. They were dancing and screaming. I think they were drunk.

When Nate walked off the stage they jumped on him, grabbing his face and kissing him on the cheek. He managed to get away.

After the show, Joel and I asked Nate who those girls were.

He smiled at us and said, "My No. 2 fans."

The big lie lives on



diana west

● commentary

When Mikhail Gorbachev told a Columbia University audience this week that the basis for communism was "pure propaganda," he said a mouthful. The statement may have not been original, or even provocative. But coming from a man who was of the Soviet system, by the Soviet system and for the Soviet system — at least until the Soviet system went kaput — it did pack a curious punch. As the former dictator put it, "We, including I, were saying, 'Capitalism is moving toward a catastrophe, whereas we are developing well.' Of course, that was pure propaganda. In fact, our country was lagging behind."

One point he failed to specify was when this light dawned on him — when he realized Five-Year Plans never added up; when he learned there was nothing remotely "democratic" about socialist-democratic republics; when, if ever, he actually faced up to the moral bankruptcy of a murderous creed he had spent so many years serving. Did it happen when, as a young apparatchik, he became privy to the dismal state of Soviet agriculture? Or was it during his days as a protégé of KGB-big and Soviet leader Yuri Andropov? Did Gorbachev and his comrades on the reviewing stand ever wink under their astrakhan hats while the guns rolled by, knowing full well there would never be any butter?

I've always wondered about the people who aid and abet the Big Lies of history — the little ones, too. For along with the kind of macro-propaganda Gorbachev referred to, of course, come all the small potatoes — for example, that line about Andropov having been one cool jazz aficionado. At what point, if any, do the people putting this stuff out become conscious of their duplicity? Do interior dialogues between good and evil take place, or is it all just a side-splitting struggle to keep from busting out laughing?

Similar questions arise upon reading what might be loosely called an article by one Dr. Umayma Ahmad Al-Jalahma of King Faisal University printed just a few days ago in the Saudi government newspaper Al-Riyadh (translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute at <http://www.memri.org>). The good doctor, whose work obviously had to pass muster with government censors, explains how it is that, for the Jewish holiday of Purim, "the Jewish people must obtain human blood so their clerics can prepare the holiday pastries."

He goes on to elaborate in ghoulishly cracked detail where the blood comes from (a non-Jewish "mature adolescent"), how it is painfully obtained (the victim is inserted into "a needle-studded barrel"), and how the resulting "torment ... affords the Jewish vampires great delight as they carefully monitor every detail of the blood-shedding with pleasure and love that are difficult to comprehend." Sure, these ravings offer Al-Riyadh readers a change of pace from newspaper coverage of the so-called Saudi Peace Plan, but talk about "difficult to comprehend."

In fact, such primitive lies boggle the mind. Does Al-Jalahma actually believe them? Certainly no small number of his readers do. Or want to, as a way of demonizing Jews. Funny, but such state-sanctioned propaganda doesn't seem like the best way to prepare the Saudi people for "accepting"

the state of Israel — now or ever. Indeed, it makes you wonder whether harboring much in the way of expectations for such a people constitutes, if not a Big Lie exactly, then at least a Big Delusion.

And what about when Palestinians tell The New York Times that Israel's recent incursion into the Palestinian territories to strike at terrorists is a plot "to provoke a wave of Palestinian violence just as General Zinni returns to Israel"? Do Palestinians really believe the Israelis are collecting hundreds of weapons, destroying 10 to 20 Palestinian bomb labs, seizing hundreds of pounds of explosives and 20 Kassam rockets, as the New York Daily News reported one day this week, in order to "provoke" more teen-age deaths in a disco?

It's hard to know. After all, these are the same inscrutables who celebrate when their kin self-detonate in proximity to baby strollers. It could be they're just trying to play us for fools. And maybe it's working.

After a brief window of moral clarity that allowed the United States not only to recognize the Palestinian attacks on Israel as terrorism, but also inspired us to declare solidarity with Israel's legitimate right to repel them, we seem once again to be lapsing into a blur of moral equivalence, failing to differentiate between the actions of the two sides. The Palestinians are condemned for acts of terrorism. The Israelis are condemned for fighting back. But "evenhandedness" like this can backfire.

"So long as the Israelis are condemned for defending themselves," the Jerusalem Post recently wrote, "the Palestinians have no diplomatic reason to end terrorism." Such is the hard truth behind a big delusion.

Diana West is a columnist and editorial writer for The Washington Times. She can be contacted via dwest@washingtontimes.com.

I disagree with the coach's comments

To the Editor:

This is in regard to an article printed Monday covering the Bigger-Faster-Stronger Clinic that was presented Friday and Saturday.

In that article Doug Stephens quoted Coach Roger Freeborn as saying "Where are your teammates tonight? A coach told me a lot of them were on a ski trip. There are other things going on during that ski trip, believe me."

I would like to address this comment. I am the sponsor of the Sherman County 4-H Jr. Leaders. We were the group on the ski trip.

I have taken great offense to this statement as I believe he was insinuating these youth may have been involved in illegal or immoral behavior while on this trip.

Many of the young people with us this past weekend are outstanding athletes and all of them



from our readers

● to the editor

are very high achievers in other areas. I feel Mr. Freeborn owes this group a major apology.

I am a firm believer that sports are an important part of a well-rounded youth, but I also believe there are other extracurricular activities that are beneficial. I also feel it is good to teach young people how to have fun in a healthy and responsible way, and that is why the 4-H Jr. Leaders are rewarded with a ski trip.

I challenge anyone in this community who is not directly involved with our youth to take the time to

get to know them. The majority of the kids in our community are wonderful, intelligent and inventive young people. To always assume, because they are young, they are involved in drugs and alcohol is a major misconception on your part.

To the 35 kids who were on the Jr. Leaders Ski Trip — I believe in you, I know you are outstanding kids and I am very proud of each and every one of you!

Judi Nemechek
Goodland

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