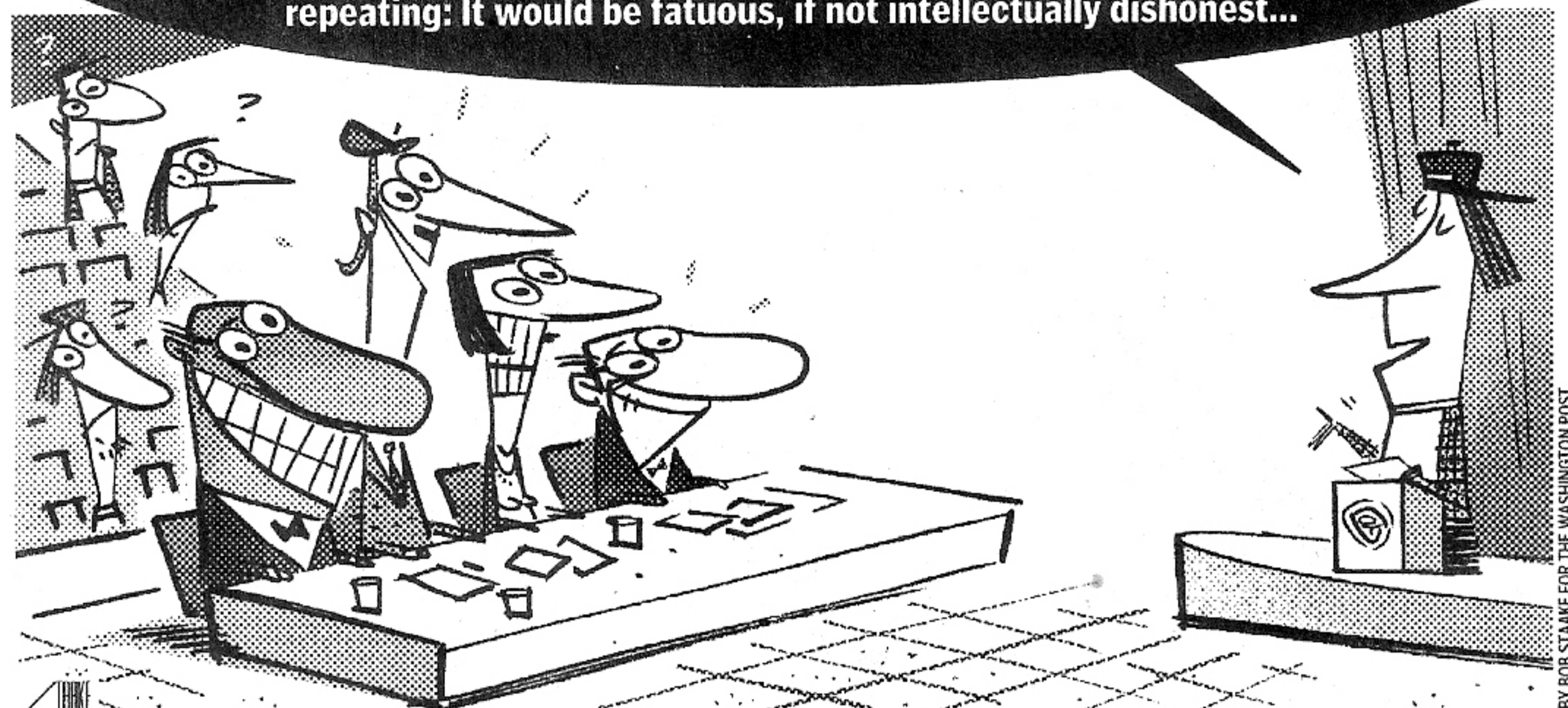


The Style Invitational

WEEK 309: A STINKING PILE OF THESES

It would be fatuous, if not intellectually dishonest, to allude to moral relativism, either real or perceived, in deconstructing the paradigm at hand; yet this shallow observation in no way suggests that my thesis, however labored and drowned in verbosity, is merely a vehicle to fill space at the expense of true scholarship. This, indeed, is worthy of repeating: It would be fatuous, if not intellectually dishonest...



This week's contest was proposed by Evan Golub of Beltsville, who wins a lobster-claw harmonica. Evan is a PhD candidate at the University of Maryland. He will be defending his dissertation in April. It is on "empirical studies of constructive and non-constructive sorting algorithms." Evan wanted us to

suggest a cartoon for his title page, but we had a better idea: Write an all-purpose first line or paragraph for *any* doctoral dissertation, designed to impress the heck out of academics. First-prize winner receives a genuine hot pink Princess rotary telephone, circa 1967. This has a value of \$75.

First runner-up gets the tacky but estimable Style Invitational nipple ring. Other runners-up receive the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to the Style Invitational, Week 309, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071; fax them to 202-334-4312; or submit them via Internet to this address: losers@washpost.com. Internet users: Please indicate the week number in the "subject" field. Also, please do not append "attachments," which tend not to be read. Entries must be received on or before Monday, Feb 22. Important: Please include your postal address and phone number. Winners will be announced three weeks from today. Editors reserve the right to alter entries for taste, humor or appropriateness. No purchase necessary. Today's Prize No One Prizes was written by Andy Wexler of Washington. Employees of The Washington Post and members of their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK 306,

in which we asked you to come up with ways to make various Washington institutions more youth-friendly. There were 3,000 entries, and many were excellent. We had plenty of splendid choices, but found ourselves bound, as always, by our pledge to reward the best humor, and only the best humor, without regard to gender, demographics or any artificial requirement for "diversity." The Style Invitational is, and shall forever remain, the last pure meritocracy on Earth. And so:

- ◆ Fourth Runner-Up — **The Roosevelt Memorial: Stop focusing on all the downers, like the Depression and wheelchairs, and emphasize all the cool stuff he did, like charging up San Juan Hill and going on safaris.** (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)
- ◆ Third Runner-Up — **Old: Cherry Blossom Festival. New: Cherry Bomb Festival.** (Russ Beland, Springfield; Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up — **The National Zoo: Make it more exciting by placing predators and prey in the same enclosures.** (Russ Beland, Springfield; Meg Sullivan, Potomac)
- ◆ First Runner-Up — **Presidential inaugurations: Replace the boring old oath with a simple declaration from the Chief Justice: "You da man."** (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)
- ◆ *And the winner of the plastic Latrell Sprewell NBA dashboard doll: The Lincoln Memorial: Lose the spooky old dude in the chair.* (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

- Civil War reenactments: Live ammo.** (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)
- The C&O Canal: The C&O Log Flume Ride.** (Russ Beland, Springfield)
- Tomb of the Unknowns: Guards wear their hats backward.** (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)
- U.S. Senate: Get Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to change his name to Rapmaster J.J. Booty (R-N.C.).** (David Genser, Arlington)
- The Metro: We should rename the most dangerous escalators to make them more fun, e.g. The Teeth of Death and The Emasculator.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- The House of Representatives: With each ticket, five free water balloons.** (Bob Dalton, Beaumont, Tex.)
- Metro buses: Equip the fenders with handles for the convenience of Rollerbladers.** (Bill Strider, Gaithersburg; Kevin Cuddihy, Fairfax)
- The Mall: Add a Gap and Old Navy. Make it a real mall.** (Janet Arrowsmith-Love, Ruidoso, N.M.)
- TV News: Have Gordon Peterson update his language. Instead of reporting that a person was murdered, for example, he could say, "Someone put a cap in his butt."** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- The Supreme Court: Change the ancient, creaky, outdated call to order, "Oyez, oyez," to "Sup, yo."** (John Holder, Rock Hill, S.C.)
- National Symphony Orchestra: Mosh pit. At the end of each performance, Leonard Slatkin body-surfs into the crowd.** (David Genser, Arlington)
- The Defense Department: Renamed the Department of Mortal Kombat.** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
- Appoint Dr. Dre as surgeon general.** (Robin D. Grove, Arlington)
- Equip the Supreme Court gallery with audience-response yes-no toggle switches. The chief justice announces each ruling with the phrase "Survey says ... !"** (Bill Strider, Gaithersburg; Robert Oerter, Riverdale)

- Congress: For committee chairmanships and such, institute a "juniority" system.** (Ginger Howard, Washington)
- Natural History Museum: Stand up beer cans for the pendulum to knock over.** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)
- State of the Union Address: Have it delivered by the Dancing Baby.** (Sue Lin Chong, Washington)
- Better promotion for The National Archives: "The National Archives—Where the X-Files Are Hidden."** (Michael G. Aceto, Herndon)
- State dinners: Instead of domestic wines, the official beverage will be Sex on the Beach.** (Sue Lin Chong, Washington)
- Chess in Lafayette Square: When a player advances a pawn all the way across the board, he gets an extra life.** (Greg Arnold, Herndon)
- Rename the Old Ebbitt Grill the Young Ebbitt Grill.** (Nancy McWhorter, Columbia, S.C.)
- Change the name of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to the John F. Kennedy Jr. Center for the Performing Arts.** (Scott and Anne McKenzie, Mechanicsville)
- Change the name of the National Symphony Orchestra to "2 Daddy² With the P Street Posse."** (Earl Gilbert, La Plata)
- The Eternal Flame: a cigar bar.** (Edgar Mendez Chacon, Alexandria)
- Bill of Rights rewritten in Letterman Top 10 format.** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
- Metro cars: Eliminate floors. Riders must dangle from the ceiling rails, turning every commute into Xtreme Flirtation With Death.** (Niels Hoven, Silver Spring)
- The Supreme Court: Decisions will now be rendered as "cool" or "lame."** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
- ◆ And last:
Oval office: No changes. It is youth-friendly already. (Kevin Cuddihy, Fairfax)

Next Week: If You Boycott This Task / You Won't Win the Flask