

The Invitational, Week 2: Nextra! Nextra!

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Read All About It. Predict the big news events of 2023.



Actually now that I have your attention, you slaving Invitational junkies, we're gonna do something else first. You'll find the new Invitational just a few inches down from here, including a list of some great old winners of this annual contest.

The regular live-chat festivities will begin at 1 p.m. EST. Submit your questions [here](#) and comment in the comments once the chat is live.

In the meantime:

Several months ago, I decided to start a syndicated national column called JournoCop, in which I would write one short column a week holding the media to task for lazy, formulaic writing and other desecrations of language and the art of truth-telling. I wrote a few, and loved them but abandoned the project when I started this here Gene Pool. And that is why you are getting the first JournoCop right below this orange button seeking your money:

A few months ago, McDonald's brought back the popular McRib sandwich. The Kansas City Star wanted to know why they did it, and for how long it would be available, so they tried to contact a company spokesperson to envelop her in a warm embrace, offering comfort and solace in a bath of positive energy and encouragement.

That's not how the Star described the effort. They said the paper "reached out" to McDonald's for comment. It amounts to the same thing.

Some 20 years ago, as though a signal switch had been flipped, young reporters on newspapers and TV suddenly began using the squishy phrase "reach out to" to mean the banal and straightforward "asked."

Older reporters collectively vomited a little. That's because, for nearly a century, "reached out to" was a term pretty much confined to 12-step programs and humanitarian organizations that would "reach out" to addicts or the homeless or victims of domestic violence. It was nice.

This new usage is odd. Dictionaries reluctantly succumb to ignorant public usage and thus help to legitimize it—"imply" and "infer," which are actually opposites, are now defined as synonyms because people kept confusing them. Yet even dictionaries, the enablers of idiocy, have not yet recognized "reached out to" as meaning "asked." Their definitions are still all about solace and inclusiveness. ("To offer help or support to," says Merriam-Webster.)

So why are news organizations addicted to this? The charitable answer is that they just aren't stopping to think about how it sounds, the way people say prostate gland instead of prostete gland and then move on as though nothing terrible has just happened.

There is also a less charitable explanation.

The phrase "reach out to" is particularly noisome and objectionable because it is subtly loaded. The one doing the reaching out is almost always the news organization itself, implying that their effort is aglow in good will and fairness, whereas it is often more like "Does the president have any comment about a porn star's allegation that his man part resembles a mushroom?"

The "reach out to" problem has reached out even to Europe, and is raising eyebrows. The Independent of London recently wrote a story about a contretemps in a Texas congressional race. The headline says it all: "Texas Democrat accused of using doctored photo of rival to make her eyebrows look scary."

The campaign did, clearly. The photoshopping is unmistakable. The man's female opponent looked like Vampira. The whole thing was ugly and scuzzy. To run it down,

the Independent tried to contact the offending slimeball, or as they put it in a three-word phrase, you know, envelop him in a warm embrace, offering comfort and solace in a bath of positive energy and encouragement.

Okay, end of JournoCop and on to the Invitational.

Share

We're already a full congressional embarrassment into 2023, but it's still not too late for The Invitational's annual **Year in Preview**, an idea the Empress "borrowed" years ago from [Culture Shlock](#), the humor column (now on Substack) by 93-time Loser Malcolm Fleschner, who in turn "was inspired by" the annual "[Year in Review](#)" of his hero Dave Barry.

This week: Tell us as many as 25 humorous events that "will happen" in 2023, and we'll build a timeline. Include the specific date only if it's relevant to the event (e.g., the date of the Oscars). See examples from previous Year in Preview contests below.



The winner gets mononucleosis. In the form of an adorable keychain-size plush purple parasite with cute eyes and even fetching lashes. Only 250,000 times actual size! Donated by 429-time Loser Dave Prevar, vector of so many of our prize diseases.

[CLICK HERE FOR THIS WEEK'S ENTRY FORM.](#)

Deadline is midnight Friday, Jan. 20. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Jan. 27.

No new contest results this week, since **Week 1, our contest to write funny poems about people who died in 2022**, is still running (deadline midnight Friday, Jan. 13 — [see the contest here](#), where there's a link to that entry form). But for your guidance 'n' inspiration for Week 2, here are selected future-timeline entries from past years:

From 2022 ([paywall-free text file of full results here](#); scroll down past that week's new contest)

January: Astronomers announce the discovery of an Earth-size planet orbiting the star Proxima Centauri. Texas officials immediately designate it as the voting location for all of the state's minority neighborhoods. (Duncan Stevens)

President Biden orders a chocolate cone at an ice cream parlor. Fox News denounces the "War on Vanilla." (Hannah Seidel)

Environmentalists suspect that climate change may be accelerating when longtime denier Sen. James Inhofe, in what many view as a surprising concession, melts. (Duncan Stevens)

Sen. Joe Manchin introduces a bill requiring Santa to deliver a bag of coal to every child, not just the naughty ones. (Lee Graham)

From 2020 ([full results here](#))

Following his annual physical, President Trump reports that he weighs 180, has a BMI of 23 and had a "perfect" Pap smear. (Jon Ketzner)

Focusing on players who will be seeing the most action, the Redskins draft punters in the first three rounds. (Mike Gips)

From 2019 ([full results here](#))

At the request of Make-a-Wish, Trump delivers candy to a hospitalized child, telling her, "I hope you appreciate this, because the docs just told me you have two, maybe three days left tops." (Jeff Contompasis)

The National Council of Teachers of English disbands after a violent battle over inserting a comma into MeToo. (Ira Allen)

The NRA announces, proactively, that there will be nothing that could have been done. (Art Grinath)

From 2018 ([full results here](#))

Punxsutawney Phil predicts an early end to winter. The White House immediately accuses him of "promoting a fake global-warming agenda" and cancels Groundhog Day. (John Hutchins)

Hackers break into the president's Twitter account, posting dozens of sensible tweets before the White House regains control. (Warren Tanabe)

In the seventh round, the Minnesota Vikings draft an end zone choreographer out of Juilliard. (Howard Walderman)

The Thanksgiving turkey pardons Donald Trump. (Mark Raffman)

And last, from **2011**, a prediction that could have run every year for the next 11 years, but not for **2023**: The Style Invitational once again avoids being a subject for its annual obit-poem contest. (Kevin Dopart)

*Which is a good reminder that you have till midnight (wherever you are) Friday, Jan. 13, to enter that very contest. **Check out Week 1 of The Invitational.***

Banter and share humor with the Losers and the Empress in the **Style Invitational Devotees** group on Facebook; join and the Devs will anagram your name every which way. And see more than 1,000 classic Invite entries in graphic form, also on FB, at **Style Invitational Ink of the Day.**