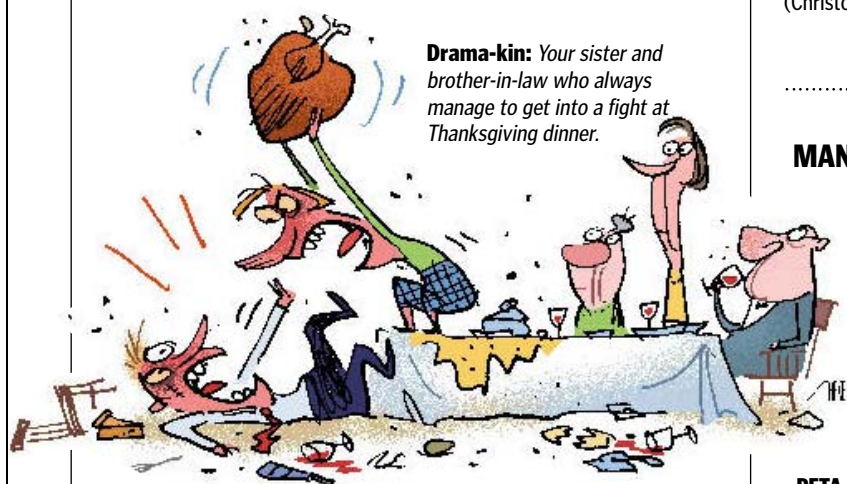


# The Style Invitational

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

### Week 775: Ad-dition



**Drama-kin:** Your sister and brother-in-law who always manage to get into a fight at Thanksgiving dinner.

BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Here's one of our perennial neologism contests — the one we called Hyphen the Terrible in the pre-Web era. But with a slight twist this week, in honor of The Post's primary means of support: **This week: Combine the beginning and end of any two words appearing in any single advertisement in The Post or on washingtonpost.com, from today through Aug. 4, and then define the new word.** Each part should consist of at least two letters, and your entry can't be an existing English word. You can either hyphenate it or not. You may use the new word in a wildly humorous sentence, if you are so inspired. And because this has been just a miserable summer for newsroom staffs across the nation: **For Losers residing in The Post's delivery area, at least one of your entries must be from the print paper.** Please include the page number of the ad. For entries from the Web site, cite what ad you're using; even better, copy the pertinent text onto your e-mail. The example above is from a skin cream ad (combining "dramatic" and "skin") in tomorrow's Washington Post Magazine.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a handsome, large wall calendar depicting a year's worth of photographs of outhouses. That year is 2002. Loser Pie Snelson of Silver Spring finally worked up the courage to part with it. It will be perfectly usable again in 2013.

**Other runners-up** win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt, classic or current version. Honorable Mentions get one of the listed-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 4. Put "Week 775" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Aug. 23. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results is by Beverley Sharp. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Brendan Beary.

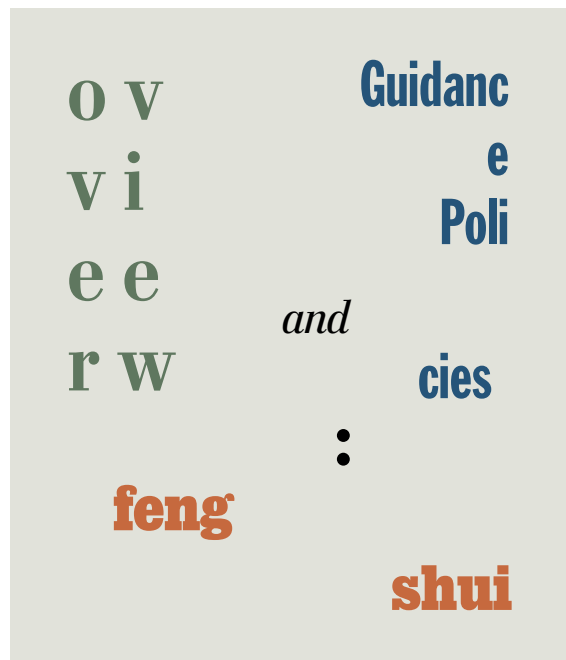
## REPORT FROM WEEK 771

in which we asked for names for employee handbooks, etc., for particular professions or workplaces. Many Losers extrapolated that into titles of how-to books, which the Empress agreeably decided to allow. Some people decided to send in slogans for companies, which the Empress agreeably tossed into the trash.

- 4** Shriners parade handbook: "Put On a Happy Fez" (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)
- 3** American Bar Association banquet planning guide: "101 Jokes About Other Professions" (Russ Taylor, Vienna)
- 2** the winner of the Zulu mcedo "modesty cap": A manual for mohels: "Eight Days, a Whack" (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

## MANUAL TRANSGRESSIONS: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- "Our Bodies, Our Sales: The NOW Guide to Streetwalking" (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Frying: Opening a Fat-Free Restaurant" (Jon Shaner, Grand Rapids, Mich.)
- A manual for prostitutes: "Tricks of the Trade of the Tricks" (Tom Witte)
- PETA** guidebook: "Making Meats End" (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- "The Geek Shall Inherit: The Hacker's Guide to Social Security Databases" (Beverley Sharp)
- Dental hygienists' manual: "Spit and Polish" (Lee Dobbins, Arlington)
- Amalgamated Meat Cutters contract: "The Offal Truth" (Marc Boysworth, Burke)
- United Airlines preventive maintenance manual: "Divided We Fall" (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)
- A guide to crash testing: "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Dummies" (Robert M. Doherty, Daleville, Va.)
- Gravediggers' manual: "From Bier to Eternity" (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- Weyerhaeuser manual for filing reports: "Clear-Cut Logging" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- Bureau of Indian Affairs census: "Who's Sioux in America" (Chris Doyle)
- "Poisson Control: The Perfectly Cooked Fish" (John O'Byrne, Dublin)
- Teamsters recruiting manual: "Inducing Labor" (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)
- Investigative journalists' manual: "It Takes a Vigil" (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)
- Tyson Foods organizational chart: "The Pecking Order" (Brad Alexander, Wanneroo, Australia)
- "The OPEC Guide to Cartels: It's as Easy as 123 ... 128 ... 136 ... 143 ..." (Christopher Lamora)
- "A Book Created to Describe, Though Not, Unless Otherwise Limited by Law, Restricted to, the Operation and Function of a Certain Pair of Elected Bodies, Hereafter Known Collectively as the United States Congress" (Russell Beland)
- "First Come, First Severed: A Practical Guide to Amputation" (Chris Lusto, Oceanside, Calif., a First Offender)
- "Eek! Surviving Your First Few Months at Disney World" (G. Smith, New York)
- Helicopter flying manual: "The Way We Whirr" (Tom Witte)
- Escort service: "For Whom the Belle Toils" (Rick Lempert, Arlington; Paul Kocak, Syracuse)
- The Chinese government's directive to police about protests by Buddhist monks: "Motorcycle Cops and the Art of Zen Maintenance" (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)
- National Enquirer reporters' handbook: "When You Dish Upon a Star" (George Vary, Bethesda)



(Brendan Beary)

## AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

"The Paean Is Mightier Than the S-Word: The Congressional Guide to Speaking Near a Microphone" (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

- Airline flight scheduling manual: "Bumping and Grounding" (Beverley Sharp)
- Rulebook for a male nudist colony: "The Compleat Dangler" (Tom Witte)
- For new interrogators: "The Torturer's Apprentice" (Rick Bell, Tikrit, Iraq)
- A guide to being the president of Afghanistan: "Duck!" (Tom Witte)
- Just My Size employee orientation manual: "Put Your Big-Girl Panties On" (Drew Bennett)
- Barnum & Bailey organizational chart: "Tiers of a Clown" (Marc Boysworth)
- Peppo security manual: "The Family Joules" (Stephen Dudzik)
- USDA guide for produce inspection: "How Do You Like Them Apples?" (Brendan Beary)
- The Chiropractor's CD Reference Manual: A 23-disk set. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- "Do Undo Others: The Bible of the Campaign Dirty-Tricks Squad" (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- "Cross Examination: The Department of Justice Bible Study Guide" (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
- NAMBLA training manual: "The Scout-Boy Handbook" (Larry Yungk, Arlington)
- USDA inspector's handbook: "There's More to This Than Eyes the Meat" (Chris Doyle)
- Cryonics lab manual: "Icy Dead People" (Chris Doyle)
- Drag show chorus line rulebook: "Cher and Cher Alike" (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)
- NSA staff directory: "KSMEH ZBLK SMEMP OGAJX" (Stephen Dudzik)
- Tax stimulus payment mailers' guide: "Government Buy the People" (Rick Haynes, Potomac)
- Psychics R Us staff handbook: "Okay, What Title Are We Thinking Of?" (Larry Yungk)

**Next Week: Make It Simple, Stupid or It's a Long, Long Way to Literary**

# For Cedric Jennings, an Unfinished Journey

JENNINGS, From C1

Jennings's every move, as the boy clawed out of a Southeast Washington ghetto and over the Ivy gates.

In the decade since, Jennings has spoken on college campuses and talk shows as a literal poster boy for affirmative action, his blown-up face plastered across even his own college bookstore. In June, 5,000 copies of the book were distributed to libraries and high schools as part of the One Maryland One Book reading project. Entire universities, such as Texas Tech last year, read "A Hope in the Unseen" as a mandatory project each summer.

He is called the Boy Who Survived. Escaped. Succeeded.

Then readers find out from the updated edition where he is: back in the area, torn between helping himself and helping others. He turns 31 this month.

"I used to say that there was no pressure," he says, "but I feel it more so now, especially when I'm at a crossroads. People are asking what you do now, and you say, 'Social work — I'm a case manager.' People are like, 'That's it?' I'm like, 'It's so much more than what you think.'"

"I've had colleagues recently tell me, 'Cedric, it's admirable that you're doing what you're doing, but you should be doing something else. You should be doing greater things.' I feel that way. But I feel what I'm doing now is great in its own way."

Jennings lives in Alexandria but travels into the District's impoverished neighborhoods regularly for his job with D.C. Child and Family Services. This year marks his second in government social work (he was previously with a private firm) and the longest continuous time he has been back in the area since graduation from Brown.

He still looks almost exactly as he did on the original book cover. A round, nearly circular face and high smooth cheeks that bulge when he breaks into a big grin and chuckles. He does that a lot, just as he did in the book, only now it seems easier, calmer, without a dark hint of sublimated anger. But something still lingers, rooted, inevitably, in the chronicle of his adolescence.

It was a scene noted in every review, pairing the rising black student with the only black Supreme Court justice. Clarence Thomas had read the Journal articles about Jennings and met with him in his office, under the paintings of Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass.

"When you get on that plane, or train, at the end of the summer and leave home, you won't ever really be able to go back," Thomas said, waving an unlit cigar. "But you may find you're never really fully accepted ahead, either, that you've landed between worlds. That's the way I feel sometimes, even now, and it can make you angry."

And Jennings, then a firecracker, replied: "I guess I'm just hoping I won't have a reason to become an angry person. That I'll be accepted ahead for who I am."



BY MICHAEL WILLIAMSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Since graduating from Brown in 1999 with a 3.3 GPA, Jennings has hopped between worlds. He migrated from what might be fairly called public welfare work to self-advancing jobs and back again. In his current job, he was making \$58,628 by the end of 2007 — good money, but not nearly what he could be making at, say, Goldman Sachs, where he turned down a job offer after leaving Brown.

Suskind has split royalties from the book with Jennings and his mother (he didn't tell them he would until just before the book was published). Jennings's hopscootch career path includes stints at the Salvation Army, an Internet start-up, a data-mining company, an education think tank and a foster care firm. Along the way he was inspired by his former chemistry teacher at Ballou, Clarence Taylor, to get a master's from Harvard in education and another from Michigan in social work.

"Cedric has an earned ability and earned confidence and earned capability to cross borders between the worlds," says Suskind, who has stayed in close contact with his subject throughout the years, inviting him to dinners and his son's bar mitzvah. "I think that the thing that is hopeful about Cedric's journey is that he does have a passport, he does have a way of essentially navigating."

But the ability to cover all that ground has not come without a tension — as with a tent staked in corners too far apart. "I guess I

shouldn't say it's a curse when you have different things you're good at and you're not sure what you want to do," Jennings says, taking time to choose his words. "It can be frustrating."

Jennings's social work goes to the very heart of his own journey. At first, he was responsible for evaluating caregivers, which occasionally meant pulling children from their parents (his own father spent Jennings's childhood incarcerated on drug charges). He currently compiles reports for foster children about their biological families, so if they choose, they can visit the court at 18 to learn whence they come. In this sense, Cedric Jennings has become a biographer like Ron Suskind.

But the nagging question, put to him by friends, family and himself, is whether the anointed ghetto miracle couldn't be doing more with his unique background, his elevation from urban poverty to the educated middle class. It's as much a question of who he is as a question of who he has become in readers' minds.

"I was actually supposed to be living in New York or working on Wall Street," he says. "Either I was gonna be on Wall Street or in the music industry doing A&R. But there was always this aspect of me that wanted to help people."

Barbara Jennings keeps urging her son to leave the area, just as she did in the book,

when they believed in an improbable escape with all the fervor of their Pentecostal faith. She has made him promise he'll get his PhD (in either social work or education) in her lifetime. And to her, this area will always be dominated by one Washington, the bad Washington, which worked against her son's interests for years, glorifying violence and sex and sports. Never education or advancement.

"When he was in Harvard and Brown, the atmosphere up there was so nice," she says. "And he fit in so good."

Barbara still works in a low-level position at the Agriculture Department, still lives in Southeast Washington, though in a nicer apartment than the one in which she raised Cedric. You revisit that original building at 16th and V SE one afternoon, crossing the gleaming Anacostia as motorboats cut it like razor blades. Suskind called High View Apartments "blond brick," but now it looks like a nicotine tooth. Behind it a circle of guys in their 20s huddle in white T-shirts; one of them looks dazed, rocking into an apparently drugged groove.

They don't live in this building, they say, and haven't heard of Cedric, but when they find out he accomplished something, that he was once the pride of this neighborhood, the boy who pushed and pushed until he was no longer trapped inside, one tough asks the inevitable question:



BY TIM SLOAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Cedric Jennings today, left, and 10 years ago with Ron Suskind, whose book about the young man from Southeast D.C. inspired hope — and expectations — for his future.

"What'd he do? Play ball or something?"

In his ideal future, Jennings won't have to answer this question, because the youth of the future won't ask it. He pines now for a job that will allow him both to control an organization from the top down and help others from the bottom up. Maybe director of student counseling services or even principal, though he doesn't know whether he'd be happy with either.

He does not have plans for having kids of his own, referring to his cases as "my family." As for his friends, there's a girl from Brown who lives in Maryland — "she and I are like brother and sister" — and he talks to a few people from Ballou. Otherwise he seems to be pretty much a loner.

He so fears not living up to his potential — a potential advertised to the world in a best-selling book — that he sometimes works to the point of sickness. His blood pressure recently skyrocketed, and the nurse at work told him to go home, he says. But he wouldn't.

Afterward, he regretted it. "I'm not Superman," he said. "I can't be everywhere at the same time. . . . I need to take care of myself aside from my desire to help other people."

In a way, it all returns to the book, as any life so documented would, preserved in dog-eared pages for posterity. It's about Jennings's encounter with the other Clarence, not Thomas but Taylor, the chem teacher, in the parking lot of Brown during his freshman year. "I always imagined the unseen as a place," Jennings said then, "a place I couldn't yet see, up ahead, where I'd be welcomed and accepted."

"The unseen," Mr. Taylor said, "may be a place in your heart."

And so, 10 years after sharing his vision, Cedric Jennings continues to look.