

The Style Invitational »

REPORT FROM WEEK 818

in which we asked for slogans not only for real holidays but also for those commemorative days, weeks and months ginned up by various interest groups:



- 2 the winner of the pack of screechy right-wing John Kerry \$3 bills: Positive Attitude Month (October): Right, like it's going to do any good. (Jim Lubell, Mechanicsville, Md.)
- 3 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (Oct. 17): Tomorrow, we'll take care of racism. (Charles Koelbel, Houston)
- 4 National Accordion Awareness Month (June): Brought to you by the Society Opposed to Being Told to Shut the Hell Up. (Dan Steinberg, Silver Spring)

A CALENDAR PACKED WITH PLAY DATES: HONORABLE MENTIONS

National Fruitcake Toss Day (Jan. 3): You are not required to eat it first. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Women's Self-Empowerment Week (Jan. 5-11): I'm going to let my wife participate. You should, too. (Russell Beland, Fairfax; Charles Koelbel)

Cut Your Energy Costs Day (Jan. 10): Turn your Pepco bill into a snowflake. (Ben Aronin, Washington)

Senior Women's Travel Month (January): It's time for old bags to pack new bags. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

Better Business Communication Day (Jan. 22): Actualize an impactful dialogue sea change. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Bread Machine Baking Month (January): Feb. 1: Take Your Baked Bread Machine to the Dump Day. (M.C. Dorman, Scottsdale, Ariz.; Craig Dykstra)

Wave Your Fingers Day (February 2007): Part of Exercise for the Obese Week. (Craig Dykstra)

National Potato Lover's Month (February): Please dispose of potato after using. (Craig Dykstra)

International Mother Language Day (Feb. 21): And I suppose that if everyone else were celebrating it, you would too? (Charles Koelbel)

World Thinking Day (Feb. 22): Beats World Doing Something Day. (Charles Koelbel)

Ethics Awareness Month (March): Strictly speaking, it's just "awareness" of, not "actually acting" on. (Russell Beland)

Community Service Month (April): Go on, get arrested for DUI — it's for

a good cause. (M.C. Dorman)

Save the Rhino Day (May 1): In a few years, those horns will be worth even more. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

World Press Freedom Day (May 3): Brought to you by the Polyester Institute. (Charles Koelbel)

Hug Your Cat Day (May 29): Held in conjunction with Visit Your Emergency Room Month. (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

Fireworks Safety Month (June): We get this one out of the way in June so you can let loose in July. (Russell Beland; Steve Power, Woodbridge)

Adopt-a-Cat Month (June): Coming this November: Abandon a Cat Because It's No Longer a Cute Little Kitten Month. (Russell Beland)

Take Your Pet to Work Day (June 26): Unless you work at a slaughterhouse. (David Kleinbard, Jersey City; Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Doghouse Repairs Month (July): For those whose calendars omitted their spouses' birthdays. (Vicki Sullivan, Washington)

Anxiety Day (July 5): Today could be the first day of the rest of your life; then again, it could be the last. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Cow Appreciation Day (July 15): Tipping encouraged. (Craig Dykstra)

National Recovery Month (August): National Ccovery Month was such a hit, we're doing it again. (Russell Beland)

Waffle Week (Aug. 31-Sept. 6): Well, National Waffle Week is Sept. 6-12. And National Waffle Day is Aug. 23 — we just can't settle on one

date . . . (Angela Gonsorcik, Alexandria, a First Offender)

Organic Harvest Month (September): Not to be confused with National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Month. (J. McCray, Hyattsville, a First Offender)

Pain Awareness Month (September): It's the pain you aren't aware of that hurts the most. (Tom Murphy, Bowie)

Patriot Day (Sept. 11): Tap a neighbor's phone. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Felt Hat Day (Sept. 15): Not as meaningful as Felt Blouse Day, but less likely to get you arrested. (Mike Ostapiej, Tracy, Calif.)

National White Chocolate Day (Sept. 23): For people who dislike chocolate in their chocolate. (Lee Dobbins, Arlington)

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October): Why should we continue importing violence from China? (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

Columbus Day (Oct. 12): When descendants of indigenous peoples celebrate their discovery of European sailors. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Disarmament Week (Oct. 24-30): You first. (Michael Turner, Takoma Park, a First Offender)

Human Rights Day (Dec. 10): A day of protest against the Klingons. (Charles Koelbel)

National Fraud Awareness Week (several): Requires a \$50 awareness fee. (Don Kirkpatrick)

Next Week: Art Re-View, or Who's Your Dada?



THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 822: For Real Folks

Suburban Male Cuisine: Backyard cooking with flamethrowers, arc welders and explosives.

This week is the start of the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival on the Mall, formerly the Festival of American Folklife. There's sure to be a delightful variety of performances, demonstrations and food that celebrate our country's (and selected others') quainter traditions. But it can include only so much. **This week: Suggest some attractions for a Festival of Real American Folklife**, as in the example above by Loser Peter Metrisko, who suggested this contest.



BY DEAN EVANGELISTA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

If your entry passes muster, you may get to pass mustard.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets Mustard Marvin, a nifty bottle topper. Squeeze on the bottle and out oozes the viscous yellow stuff from the monster's mouth. Donated by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (fir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, June 29, at midnight wherever you are. Put "Week 822" 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 July 18. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Tom Witte; the revised title for next week's contest is by Mike Ostapiej.

ONLINE DISCUSSION Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join **The Style Conversational** at www.washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

CAROLYN HAX

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Hi, Carolyn:
My husband and I have been married for a year, together eight years. He has recently decided he doesn't want kids now or maybe ever. This was the one quail I had about marrying him: that he was twitchy about the idea of spawn.

During our engagement, he told me he wasn't as afraid of the idea of kids (as I thought he was). At the time, he said he had fears but that he'd deal with them.

They've gotten worse. His dad was totally uninvolved with him as a kid, and mom let him get away with it.

My problem is that I'm ready, like yesterday. My expectations of parenthood were explicit.

So, what do I do? I feel like I was duped into believing he would come around. We talk about it (a lot) but it's not going anywhere and we're both feeling defensive, hurt and angry. Ethically, I would never engineer an "accident" but I'm starting to feel like it might be my only hope. I love him and don't want to leave, but this is a deal-breaker for me. Thoughts?
Bait and Switchville

An "accident" is a betrayal, not a hope. You are not entitled to choose parenthood for someone else. It's bad for him, bad for you and cruel to the child, who has no say in being used as your pawn.

To be fair, if we classified your idea as two wrongs in search of a right, yours would be the second of the two wrongs. Your husband pulled a horrible bait-and-switch on you by providing false assurances that he'd confront his fears.

That's why I think your first move has to be to find a way to forgive him — or, if you can't, to admit that, both to yourself and to him. If you don't deal with your anger now, it might defeat the purpose of saving your marriage — even if he eventually warms to having children. The marriage won't make it if its foundation is broken.

Forgiveness likely will come from understanding his reasoning, and whether he lied to you or to himself when he minimized his fears. And, as it happens, understanding him — uh-gain — is the natural starting point for exploring — uh-gain — whether your husband is set against kids.

Some people who declare they don't want kids really mean it, and see it as disrespectful when their partners lobby them to change their minds.

There are others, though, who have doubts, not convictions, and might be open to kids if they had a better understanding of parenthood — not just of the day-to-day rigors, but also specifically of ways to avoid repeating their parents' mistakes.

Your ability to read your husband's doubts, and be sympathetic to them, and to figure out the most realistic and respectful approach to them, will not only help you figure out whether it's hopeless, but also might make him more inclined to reconsider.

In what might be the longest preamble to "get some good marriage counseling," I'm simply arguing for approaching this not as a lobbyist for child-rearing, but instead as his mate, someone who's willing to set anger aside and think clearly for the four interests represented here: yours, his, the marriage's and the potential child's.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

BOOK WORLD

Agony and Insight: It's All in His Head

A BRAIN WIDER THAN THE SKY
A Migraine Diary
By Andrew Levy
Simon & Schuster. 289 pp. \$25

By CHRISTINE MONTROSS
Special to The Washington Post

It's no easy business to write about pain. Memoirs of illness and injury too frequently end up either as proud testimonies of endurance or self-indulgent tomes. Andrew Levy's beautiful memoir, "A Brain Wider Than the Sky," is welcome relief.

A professor of English at Butler University, Levy is also an accomplished writer, who here turns his exacting gaze inward: He invites us to accompany him on a harrowing descent as he changes from a man who has suffered from occasional headaches into the victim of an unremitting, four-month-long, life-al-

tering migraine. Inevitably, when Levy is confronted with this disorienting and disabling pain, he is driven to wonder why he is afflicted. Happily for his readers, he does not ask, "Why me?" but rather, "Why any of us?" What follows is an affecting, readable account of the pain of migraine and the weird wonder of it. Levy seamlessly glides from the experience of his own suffering to broader neurological and historical realms, including a number of jaw-dropping anecdotes about migraine and its treatment.

Levy guides us through a range of theories regarding the causes of migraine, including Sigmund Freud's laughable hypothesis that his daughter's first menstruation gave him "a migraine from which I thought I would die." Levy also includes descriptions of patients who endured wacky and often violent attempts at treatment, such as the 17th-century intellectual Lady Anne Conway, who

allowed her brother to cut open her head. Levy asserts that such a preposterous-sounding cure simply reflects the victim's desperation.

Levy's prose shines most in his descriptions of the illness. Sometimes these moments are quietly gorgeous, as when he writes of how he feels when a migraine lifts: "just an abundant sense of thankfulness that the attack has receded. A few distant electrical wires sizzling in puddles at the edge of the flood, perhaps, dogs sniffing in curiosity at the sparks and at the imitation of life provided by the jittery cables, but I'm over here, standing on my rooftop as the waters recede, as the front steps and the lawn reappear." Sometimes the narrative voice is witty and sharp: "And then a throbbing hits you on the left side of the head so hard that your head bobs to the right. You look for the referee counting you down to ten. There's no way that came from inside your head, you think. That's

no metaphysical crisis. God just punched you in the side of the face."

For all its beautiful description and compelling research, the book's poignant center lies in the fact that Levy's pain is compounded by some nameless guilt. "The idea that the pain exists to make a point, probably a moral one, is embedded deep in us," he writes. But more devastating than any existential sense of moral complicity is the way in which his illness affects his wife and the couple's 4-year-old son, Aedan.

Levy lies on the couch one early morning, stricken, and the boy whisks into the room. "From an early age," Levy writes, "Aedan has understood that he had to negotiate with the headache, as if it were a third party." He guiltily plunks Aedan in front of the television when faced with child-care duties. The everyday noises of a household are excruciating to a migraining head, so Levy isolates himself to feel less

awful and then feels awful for being an absent father and partner: "A family of three starts to become a family of two," he explains.

This unflinching self-scrutiny is what elevates "A Brain Wider Than the Sky" beyond many less successful memoirs of illness. As readers, we're caught in Levy's conundrum. There is no reason for him to feel responsible for his pain, let alone guilty for it. But blameless as he may be, the irrefutable reality is that Levy's suffering is not his alone, and the consequences of that fact are where the heart of this fine book lies.

Montross is the author of "Body of Work: Meditations on Mortality From the Human Anatomy Lab."

ON WASHINGTONPOST.COM
Read an excerpt from Andrew Levy's memoir at www.washingtonpost.com/books.

Obama, Other Celebs Tout Their Most Cherished Role: Being Dads

FATHERS. From Page C1

tional day of conversation about fatherhood and personal responsibility. Father's Day is tomorrow, and Obama — whose father's absence shaped his life and inspired a best-selling book — deployed famous and semi-famous men to eight sites in the Washington area to interact with nonprofit organizations that focus on youth mentorship. Obama visited one such group in Arlington yesterday morning before heading back to the White House for a town-hall meeting on fatherhood and a mentoring session with young men on the South Lawn.

At Ballou, Cowher gets in some less-lofty words.

"Part of life is acquiring a skill," he says. "I'm not saying you are going to [repair cars] for the rest of your life, but your skill separates you from a lot of people. I couldn't even change the oil on that car."

Then DMC takes over, popping around in his black CBGB shirt and paint-splattered jeans. He gesticulates with passion, stressing the importance of not dropping out of school, not using foul language and not getting shot.

"Put me on the stage with any rapper," he challenges the students. "I will defeat them and I won't curse at all."

Then he says that if he hadn't been given up for adoption and cared for by a loving family in Hollis, Queens — *We're funky fresh from Hollis, Queens!* — there would be no Run-DMC and, hence, no hip-hop.

And it would follow that without Barack Hussein Obama the father, there would be no Barack Hussein Obama the son, and maybe without the father's absence, there would be no President Obama, and no White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, which coordinated yesterday's events and will sponsor regional town halls on fatherhood in the future.

The events "are designed to send a strong message — a PSA — that fatherhood matters," says the Rev. Jim Wallis, who's on the president's advisory council for the faith-based office. "It's about visibility. This is all a bully pulpit."

Later, Cowher, DMC and a phalanx of famous fathers (Sen. Evan Bayh and Washington Wizard Etan Thomas, for example) sit in gold-colored chairs under a glittering chandelier in the air-conditioned East Room of the White House, a galaxy removed from Ballou's auto shop. Obama paces in front of a roomful of volunteers, activists and reporters. He's starting a "national conversation" because, as he says, 23



Bill Cowher, center, and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, right, spoke at Ballou High.

percent of young people are growing up without a father.

"This isn't an obligation," he says. "It's a privilege, being a father."

He takes a question from a student from St. Albans School for Boys.

"Which is funner: Being a father or being president?" the student asks.

"I mean this," Obama says. "Nothing is more fun than being a father. But my kids aren't teenagers yet." Everyone laughs.

The event is followed by a mentoring session on the sunny, swampy expanse of the South Lawn, where groups of well-dressed local high-schoolers sit in semicircles and talk about manhood and fatherhood and brotherhood with Ray LaHood, Obama's transportation secretary, among others.

Obama drifts between the pods of young and old men, who share their life experiences.

A reporter calls out, "Mr. President, what do you want for Father's

Day?"

"A health care bill," he says, without missing a beat.

DMC holds court nearby and Cowher listens, unable to get a word in. Only snippets of the hip-hop pioneer's mentoring can be heard above the other hubbub:

"... importance of being responsible ... leaders of tomorrow ... Jay-Z ... I ain't talking about all the great rap records ..."

At one point Vice President Joe Biden sits down with another group and talks at length about his sons. Some of the teenage fathers-in-training are drowning in sweat, and Biden talks so long his bald spot seems to burn purple in the sun.

More DMC: "... the showbiz aspect ... iPods! ... 3 percent of what pop culture is all about. ... You ain't the king, I'm the king ..."

Bobby Flay, father and celebrity chef, grills rib-eyes and corn on the cob nearby. The conversations about how to be a good man and father will continue over lunch.

DMC redux: "... what it's like to live in the 'hood ... take advantage of every opportunity ... I had a Cadillac gold chain ..."

At one point, the president walks past DMC and Cowher, pats the former on the shoulder and tells the kids, "I suspect these two are interesting together."