



CAROLYN HAX

More reasons to step away from judgments

While I'm away, readers give the advice.

On judging strangers who use the elevator instead of the stairs:

Try imagining 10 positive-attitude/healthy reasons why that person might be taking that elevator. S/he is battling cancer successfully, but having to conserve strength; needs to get the knee surgery done; got an injury during the new exercise program and is trying not to exacerbate the problem; was closer to the elevator than the stairs; is not familiar with the building and where everything is yet; was talking with someone up to the elevator doors, but the person went the other way on another elevator, so just took it because it was there; needed a quiet moment to stand and think without having to look where s/he was going; just wasn't thinking about health this very moment because s/he she was thinking about how to save 200 jobs in another division.

You can believe most people are evil and selfish, or you can believe most people try to do the best they can with the energy they have. Not everyone has the same thoughts, experiences, energy levels, priorities. Be open to others or be closed out. My favorite snap-judgment story was one where I was saved before I actually embarrassed myself. A neighbor put out HUGE recycling bins of beer cans. I'm thinking my neighbor has a serious problem. Then another neighbor commented, "That catering business has really taken off!" So glad I kept my mouth shut

On bedbugs in the guest room:

Before you make a guest sleep somewhere in your house or use a particular bathroom, you should do it first. Spend a night using the same things you want your guests to use and the flaws will rise. Your guest accommodations, like your cooking, can fall into the "your fantasy meets the rest of the world's reality" category. Most guests won't tell you what they really think of your lumpy, flea-infested sofa or your "special" meatloaf. Enlist a local friend to be your "hotel and food inspector" and you won't be dealing with strained relationships with relatives or others you might be dealing with for the rest of your life. Give a damn enough to change what should be changed. And if you can't or won't change, keep the peace by suggesting a local hotel that will give them what you won't.

On outside pressure to pair off:

At 38, I have a lot of people in my family really get on me about dating more, always bringing up how "happily married" they are. One thing quite a few of them have in common is they're happy BECAUSE they're married, meaning they were miserable alone. They just don't get it that I'm happy by myself and I often enjoy my solitude. I'm not saying that I wouldn't welcome companionship. I do date on occasion, and am not dead-set against ever finding someone. It's just not the guiding force in my life. A couple of family members have finally gotten it and have made peace with it; the others, well... a vehement "Shut your hole!" does just that. Alone, but by no means lonely

Spoken in the spirit of good fun, right? (Right?)

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

ONLINE DISCUSSION Carolyn Hax's weekly Web chat is at noon Fridays at www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

REPORT FROM WEEK 858 in which we offered a list of very obscure words from the Oxford English Dictionary and asked you to produce fictional definitions for them. The real meanings – or one meaning per word – are listed at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.



Governail (actually a rudder): Pontius Pilate. (Mike Gips, Bethesda)

- 2 the winner of the book "The World's Worst: A Guide to the Most Disgusting, Hideous, Inept, and Dangerous People, Places, and Things on Earth": Effray: The invisible beam of pure malice emitted by a raised middle finger. (Andrea Kelly, Brookeville)
3 Exossation: Deterioration of the spine that often occurs following a wedding ceremony. (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)
4 Exerce: Minimal activity logged as a workout: "As I sat in the tub, I got some exerce by fighting the current as the bathwater drained." (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

LEXICONTAMINATIONS: HONORABLE MENTIONS

Ebulum: That stuff left on the beach after the tide recedes. (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

Ebulum: A single particle of ebullience. "His last ebulum disintegrated when the pretty woman replied, 'Yes, I'd love to dance – do you know anyone?'" (Michael Reinemer, Annandale)

Ebulum: Oatmeal that dribbles back out of a baby's mouth. (Michael Anderson, Billings, Mont.)

Echeneis: The spray produced during a sneeze: "His gazpacholaden echeneis left his date looking like Howdy Doody with a the measles." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Eclégme: Decorative but flavorless sauce dribbled around a restaurant entree. "Carl was unimpressed by the colorful eclégme surrounding his skimpy veal cutlet." (Bruce Rusk, Portland, Maine, a First Offender)

Ecod: What you wrap in the online Post. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Ecod: Cache of the day. (Mike Gips)

Eglatere: A restaurant's euphemism for an omelet that falls on the floor while being flipped. "The cook wiped off the dirt and droppings and sent the eglatere out to Table 3." (Robert Inlow, Charlottesville)

Eglatere: Special title reserved for the first non-WASP member of a country club. (Jenny Boelter, Boyce, Va., a First Offender)

Eglatere: The French name for Easter Island. (Marie Baumann, Arlington, a First Offender)

Elatcha: An emotion that reporters feel when they gotcha. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

Emunge: The stuff that collects between the keys of your computer. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

Endship: A callipygian alliance. When Louie leaned over to toss the Vichy water, Rick noticed that this could be the start of a beautiful endship. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Endship: An iceberg. (Lawrence O'Connor, Arlington, a First Offender; Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Endship: Bogus camaraderie offered by someone who's dumping you. "We can still have an endship." (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Exerce: Hang out, but not work out, at the gym. "Patty loved her new exerce clothes." (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

Exossation: The tedium of playing 27 games of tic-tac-toe with your first-grader. (Peter Metrinko, Gainesville; Ken Gallant, Conway, Ark; and both John O'Byrne and John Stephenson of Dublin, who called it Noughts and Crosses)

Festino: A zit that appears on the end of one's nose at 6 p.m. on prom night. (Bob Reichenbach, Middletown, Del.)

Fibutor: The part of a Toyota engine, under the distributor cap,

designed to obfuscate any errors in the electronic engine codes. (Peter Metrinko)

Fibutor: Someone who lies about giving at the office. (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

Fistic: The residue left on your hand after reaching in to unjam your garbage disposal. (Peter Ostrander, Rockville)

Galion: A particularly aggressive cougar. (Brad Alexander, Wanneroo, Australia)

Galion: A little understood, highly charged particle that quickly flips from positive to negative without warning. (Cathy Lamaze, North Potomac)

Gemew: A jewel recovered two days after being swallowed. (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

Gemew: What the cheerleaders shout at George Mason. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.; Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Governail: A fastener used to hold a politician's feet to the fire. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Hicket: A dense growth of rural necessities: "Surrounded by Bud's Boot & Gun Emporium, A-1 Bail Bonds and a Waffle House, Thad realized too late he had driven straight into a hicket." (Mark Gardiner, Faulkner, Md., just near those motels on Route 301)

Next Week: Can't goods, or Swill in the blanks

Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

MUSIC REVIEW

With swagger and synths, Keys unlocks her edgier side

BY SARAH GODFREY

Alicia Keys is a self-help-spouting, love song-singing force of positivity, delivering messages of hope and peace with the help of a grand piano. At her show at Verizon Center on Thursday, however, the Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan-born singer-songwriter wasn't her usual dervish of pedals and hammers, big ballads and motivational speechifying.

Instead, she treated the packed crowd (which included first lady Michelle Obama along with daughters Sasha and Malia) to interesting arrangements and some of the weirder tracks from her latest album, 2009's "The Element of Freedom." She sang more and preached less, and spent more time standing at a synthesizer setup than she did glued to her piano bench.

The concert revealed a slightly edgier side of Keys: There's not exactly a razor blade buried beneath all that candy coating, but definitely a hidden thumbtack or staple.

After Jermaine Paul, Melanie Fiona and Robin Thicke kicked things off, Keys appeared on a video monitor and stated "I am a renegade," along with a few

other unexpected declarations of fierceness. Then, from behind projections of barbed wire, she surfaced — not sitting behind a piano, but locked in a cage.

Keys sang most of "Love Is Blind," on the latest album, from that prison cell, before bending back the "bars" and ambling out onto the stage. It was a nifty, if not quite subtle, way of letting the crowd know that on her tour (as on "The Element of Freedom") she's shrugging off some of her stylistic trademarks and doing come creative wing-spreading.

After her emancipation, Keys launched into a version of "You Don't Know My Name," which scrapped much of the girl-group style of the version on 2003's "The Diary of Alicia Keys" in favor of a more aggressive approach. During "Fallin,'" a giant heart throbbed and bled on a video screen while Keys stripped away the song's pretty melody and put in some dark key work.

Despite a crowd that seemed equally stocked with youngsters and adults who fell in love with her back when she was a straightforward, earnest soul singer, the audience stayed with her the entire night. Fans even rocked out to "Another

Way to Die," her Jack White collaboration from the "Quantum of Solace" soundtrack — an unexpected choice for her live show, considering the large body of well-known hits she has to draw from.

Keys utilized different keyboard setups while making "The Element of Freedom," and on Thursday she showed off her newfound skills by fiddling with knobs and creating echo effects for "Try Sleeping With a Broken Heart."

That's not to say Keys has completely broken out of her box. She still said such things as "I want you to know you can be free to be yourselves under this roof tonight," and "We are truly unstoppable beings," along with other platitudes one would normally hear during some sort of Saturday-morning seminar held in a Holiday Inn ballroom. And, naturally, the piano eventually appeared and Keys used it for regular versions of "Diary," "If I Ain't Got You" and "Superwoman" that were safe but definitely seemed to satisfy. Because while experimentation is nice and all, alienating longtime fans definitely isn't.

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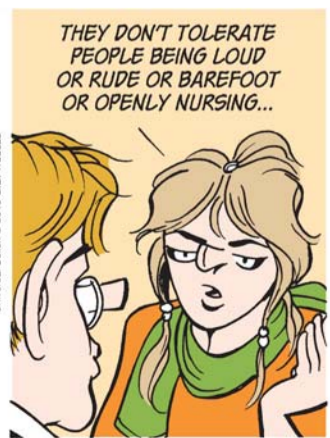
Godfrey is a freelance writer.



MARK GAIL/THE WASHINGTON POST

UNCAGED: Alicia Keys appeared onstage in a cell before escaping to give an edgier show than usual at Verizon Center.

DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



on washingtonpost.com

Never miss another "American Idol" after-show analysis. Text "IDOL" to 98999 to have a link to Lisa de Moraes's blog post sent directly to your phone.

