

POINTS OF VIEW

Budding group fertilizes society's prototype

I remember the beginnings of the Birmingham-Bloomfield Race Relations and Cultural Diversity Council. Here we were, mostly whites, concerned with developing a more diverse community. But first we had to figure out how to get the blacks, Asians, Jews, Chaldeans and other ethnic groups among us to join in the effort. It took a while. But now, the group has become both larger and more diverse, addressing the dual concerns of attracting minorities to Birmingham-Bloomfield plus promoting understanding and awareness of various cultures.

Southfield has opposite problems. Thursday night, it was relatively easy for the Southfield/Lathrup Multicultural Coalition to get about 300 residents of visibly diverse backgrounds together. Their concern: to discover how to retain and market Southfield's diversity, particularly to whites.

Amazingly, out of that large crowd of whites, blacks, Asians, Chaldeans and Jews, a number of them Orthodox, just

three people raised their hands when asked if they had been born and raised in Southfield.

This group was made up of people planting roots — not seeking to move on.

Lynette Campbell, a Southfield resident who is also a grant-getter for the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan, sowed the seeds for discussion.

"How do we create the 'I care for you, Tom, because you are my neighbor?'" she asked.

"There is something about this community — let's find it and sell it," she said.

As they broke up into small discussion groups, the caring and concerns were evident. The challenge was to list the pros and cons of life in Southfield. Among the group that I joined:

- Most were appreciative of and happy with city services.
- Some were sorry Southfield wasn't more of a walker's city with a real downtown.
- All agreed that maintaining quality schools is key to maintaining property values.



JUDITH DONER BERNE

It was relatively easy for the Southfield/Lathrup Multicultural Coalition to get about 300 residents of visibly diverse backgrounds together. Their concern: to discover how to retain and market Southfield's diversity, particularly to whites.

Several spoke to the decline of the family in terms of unsupervised children at home and in neighborhoods — deemed to be both a community and national problem.

Nods of agreement were seen when one man said that even in integrated neighborhoods, the various minorities may keep to themselves.

And blacks whose children attend Southfield-Lathrup High School were critical that there were no black teachers or counselors for them to relate to.

A Japanese businessman from Birmingham said that none of his company's Japanese employees live in Southfield (they live in Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Bloomfield Hills). It seems that those are the communities that are hyped as the places to live back home. He is working with the Southfield Chamber of Commerce and his company in Japan to change that.

With some prompting from the facilitator, several said local businesses (including the Fortune 500 companies) need to become more involved with the schools.

A consensus: Government, schools, business, religious institutions all op-

erate in their own spheres. There should be a vehicle for them to come together.

Reconvening, the lists of pros and cons were pasted up throughout the room. They will be compiled and mailed out to participants. Then in September, this group of 300, and anyone else who is interested, will gather again to reach solutions.

Some stood up to express anger that no television cameras showed up to cover this event.

They're here when there's a shooting, but where are they when all these people have come together to save their community, one woman griped.

The truth is, journalists aren't keen about covering process. But this process was newsworthy because Southfield is such a special place. It's a city striving to be a prototype for the way our society is developing.

As one white man said about raising his sons in Southfield: "Southfield's an important classroom for these guys to learn to mix with the rest of the world."

Judith Doner Berne is assistant managing editor for the Oakland County editions of the Observer & Eccentric.

Education is not to blame for woes

QUESTION: You say there will be no support and little sympathy from the public for teachers who strike with people losing their jobs, taxes at an all time high, etc. However, as a teacher, I take great exception when these same people blame public school teachers, administrators and boards of education for everything wrong in our society, from low test scores to drugs in the schools, to encouraging active sexual behavior. Do you support those parental attitudes?

ANSWER: I take great exception to the attitude that it is a failing school system that has caused the problem of supposedly low test scores, drug use and other societal problems.

Schools and what goes on in schools is a reflection of the family values students bring with them when they enter the school building each morning. Values are taught and caught at home.

We don't teach open sex or violence as the means to solve issues as shown in the movies and on TV, nor drugs as an enhancer for a high or to solve problems.

Low test scores and poor student achievement is more a direct fault of the home and those parents who have placed all responsibility for learning on teachers, administrators and boards of education. We have plenty of evidence to support this position.

Dr. Nathan Caplan, University of Michigan professor emeritus (and others) recently completed a major Institute of Social Research study.

Dr. Caplan and his colleagues set out to determine why children of Southeast Asian boat people have done so well in our school system. How could children, most non-English speaking when they arrived, out score our own students on standardized tests and in grade point averages?

Indeed, I'll always remember the Vietnamese girl at one graduation being introduced as valedictorian, a girl who could not speak English when she arrived in the seventh grade.

Without going into detail, Dr. Caplan's study concluded that the U.S. educational crisis is far more a societal problem than a school or academic problem.

Consider some of the finds of the Asian student study and compare them with what many teachers are faced with everyday in our liberated society.

- The Asian parent refugees made education the priority. They endorsed the value of working in a disciplined manner with their child's own energy being the key factor in learning and in attaining high grades and high test scores.
- Teachers and administrators have too often become the scapegoat in our present society, a society where parental authority and responsibility have taken a vacation.
- The family of Asian refugees is the central institution by tradition; parents and children honor a mutual collective obligation to one another. Divorce is rare. Asian parents attended all parent/teacher conferences.
- But for others, the divorce rate is at an all time high. Teachers daily face numerous children from one-parent homes; too often a woman works two jobs. And only 30 percent turn out at



DOC DOYLE

high school teacher/parent conferences.

- High school children of Asian boat people spent an average of three hours a night on homework; junior high students spent 2 1/2 hours; and grade schools spent two hours.
- Parents requiring homework in our society, however, are a joke. Probably less than 30 percent are on top of homework.
- Other factors were evident in Caplan's study such as the Asian parents reading aloud to their young elementary children every night. Children pay attention and follow rules.
- Caplan points out other examples. Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe excelled in our school system. A 1961 study by Judith Kramer and Seymour Levintman of the University of Pennsylvania reported that nearly 90 percent of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants' third generation attended college, despite the fact that the first generation had little or no education in their country.
- The emphasis on family and culture was found to be instrumental in their amazing success.
- In another study, the Japanese, after World War II, also thrived academically. Their success was attributed to cultural and family values and parental influence.
- So to what do we attribute our supposedly lower test scores and achievement? Is it the teacher, is it the educational system or is our society going down the drain?
- We have a society where, according to the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, forcible rape has gone up 10.5 percent over the past 20 years; where women are afraid to go to a mall alone at night; where aggravated assault has increased 206 percent; where murder has increased 50 percent; and where violent crimes have increased 145 percent.
- We have a severe breakdown in family and societal values in this country. History shows every great country held the crown for about 250 years before its decline. We are at year 217 since the Constitution of 1776.
- Parents, let's get a clue! Take some leadership in the home and quit blaming teachers, administrators and the educational system. The non-English speaking Asian boat families have shown the way.

James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm. To leave a message for Doyle from homes, do a touchtone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1856.

Crime of rape judges us all

Rape is a crime that tests our judicial system, the news media, and some of our most basic beliefs about civilized behavior. We have by most accounts regrettably failed all of those tests.

A recent workshop for journalists on sexual assault addressed most of the issues reporters and editors face when covering the crime, but a discussion about revealing the victim's name never really materialized.

That is a shame, because that question is not only one of journalistic ethics, but one that exposes the problems we all have in dealing with rape and other violent crimes.

This particular workshop, sponsored by the University of Michigan Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, addressed many of the dilemmas journalists face in covering the crime.

And although there were representations of both TV and print media, law enforcement people, rape counselors, victims of rape, and parents of a rape/murder victim, what was not addressed could shed more light on why sexual assault has not diminished despite tougher laws, more enlightened prosecutors and judges, and many workshops and seminars.

Stories show that one of three women and one in 10 men in this country will be sexually abused in his or her lifetime. That should be an alarming statistic. But only when several rapes are reported, or a particularly violent rape occurs, does the crime receive much attention. It often is reported in cycles, leading to greater public awareness for a period of time.

Although the names of rape victims are public record once a suspect is charged, unlike other violent crimes, including murder, they are not treated as such. News organizations, with few exceptions, have treated rape differently, with the aim of protecting the victim from the additional pain of reliving the crime and the public humiliation



BILL COUTANT

that would be sure to follow.

But recent cases, most notably the highly publicized William Kennedy Smith case in Florida in 1991, have brought forth the issue of whether to identify the woman who brought the charge.

In that case, one television network, NBC, identified the woman on the grounds that if Smith was being named although he was presumed innocent, his accuser should also be named. Articles denouncing NBC's decision followed, but surprisingly, many women who had either been raped or had counseled someone who had been raped, said the victim's name should be public.

Their reason is quite a taken one: In order for rape to be treated seriously, it had to be reported like other crimes — with sensitivity to the accused and accuser but without kid gloves.

That opinion is getting more and more play, especially since the Kennedy case. It could push victims back into hiding and make it easier for rapists to repeat the crime. But now that the argument has been made, it must be addressed.

Knowing that some newspapers do print victims' names could give a victim second thoughts about reporting the crime.

Ideally, newspapers will print the

names of victims who ask to be identified and tell their story, but not those of victims who don't want the publicity.

Often, even when newspapers don't identify the victim, other facts of the case point to the victim, or to someone else. And because the rapist is named, he will sometimes get to air his side of the story, while the victim is shrouded in desperate silence.

One victim said she read a story in which her attacker said he wanted "to put this all behind him and get on with his life."

The stakes are high. Since so few rapes are already reported, the chances are that a rapist will get away with the crime and repeat it. The man whose daughter was raped and then murdered later found out that the killer had attempted the same crime two other times. Once he had been pulled off the victim. The other time the victim survived, but her father sought to keep the crime quiet because he thought the publicity would hurt his community standing.

It's not likely that if his daughter had been robbed, injured by a hit-and-run driver, or murdered that the man would have tried to keep it quiet. But somehow, to many people rape implies some complicity by the victim. The terms "date rape" and "acquaintance rape," used to describe the vast majority of sexual assaults in which the rapist and victim know each other, trivialize the crime. As one victim at the workshop said, "I knew him, but I wouldn't hardly describe this as a date. All I asked for was for him to stop."

Journalists need to try to expose this problem and the underlying hypocrisy that allows rapists to prey on us all. And people have to do some soul searching as to why this crime punishes the victim.

Bill Coutant is a reporter for the Farmington Observer. He may be reached by calling 477-5450.

Here are some sure fixes for schools

Want to know some sure fire ways to fix Michigan's schools? Since many of them are "politically incorrect" or "economically unfeasible," it's unlikely that anyone from Lansing or universities or school boards will buy them all. Many ordinary taxpayers may shy away from some as well. But for anyone who really wants to fix things, here's how:

1. Teach all kids to read and reason. Competent readers/reasoners can learn anything.
2. Pay for all public schools with income and luxury sales taxes and then fund according to need, with each school getting at least \$7,000 per student, and many with disadvantaged populations getting more. All community colleges become tuition-free, and no private school gets subsidized.
3. Combine education with social services (health, recreation, child care) under one administrative umbrella and house them in the schools.
4. Cut administrative costs by radically reducing the number of school districts, and then establish qualifications for local boards and pay them to serve.
5. Create exchange programs for the best public school and university staff



JOHN TELFORD

to teach, administrate and do research at each others' levels. Set up similar staff exchange and student exchange programs between more and less socio-economically advantaged districts.

6. Enable teachers to retain their seniority if they transfer from one district or institution to another, and standardize inter-district salary scales.
7. Establish cross-district magnet schools to address special interests, such as talented and gifted, alternative education, creative arts, science and technical education.
8. Recruit more able teaching and administrative candidates — including minority candidates — and train them longer and better before and after hiring them.

9. Devise career ladders for K-12 teachers which compare favorably with administrative salaries, and require all administrators to teach periodically. Also pay substitute teachers a decent wage.
10. Retain retired educators' teaching, counseling and administrative services on a part-time basis.
11. Decriminalize adult use of drugs and divert those police and prison dollars to beef up education and treatment programs. (Even the mayor of Detroit is saying this now.)
12. Evaluate educators more stringently. Lengthen probationary periods for new teachers and make it legally easier to remove incompetent tenured ones.

If we do these things, the next generation will flourish. If we don't, it won't, but that's what my solutions will counter just as soon as we muster the moral strength to implement them.

John Telford, a Rochester Hills resident, was an assistant superintendent in the Rochester School District. He previously was executive director for secondary education in the Plymouth Canton district. To leave a message for Telford from a touchtone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1879.