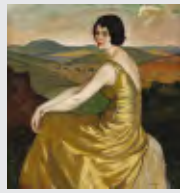




Slavery Exercise?



O'Kane Gallery



Park Esse INTERVIEW

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# Dateline: Downtown

S T U D E N T - R U N S I N C E V O L U M E O N E

## Is the Minimum Wage Policy Good?



google images

By Andrzej Wojcik Staff Writer

Back in the early 90's, comedian Chris Rock eloquently summed up the plight of the minimum wage worker: "You know what it means when someone pays you minimum

wage? You know what your boss is trying to say? It's like, 'Hey if I could pay you less, I would, but it's against the law.'" Once again, the issue of the federal minimum wage has come to the forefront of the national dialogue. Washington has finally taken notice of the grumblings of the workers of America, who have slaved away for \$5.15 an hour for almost a decade, and started to take action. Earlier this month the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation raising the federal minimum wage by a

whole \$2.10 to a whopping \$7.25 an hour. However, it is too early to celebrate yet. Just because such a 'progressive' bill has been passed in the House, which is controlled heavily by the Democrats, it has quite a way to go before the average U.S. minimum wage worker sees a change on his or her paycheck. It has to be first approved by the Senate, in which the Democrats have only a slim majority, and then be approved by the executive branch, our Republican President Bush. This leaves a lot of room for a potential derailing of such a needed change. The voice of Business, as channeled by many Republicans and moderate Democrats, has spoken against the proposed increase, citing that the subsequent

higher labor costs would put a major holdup in its operations. Many small business owners have argued that raised wages for their workers would lead to increases in prices, thus hurting the American consumer. There has even been talk of possible layoffs in order to compensate for lost net revenue; though, there has been no talk from the CEOs who make hundreds of times more per hour than their employees of possible salary cuts for themselves. Fortunately, and compassionately, the powers-that-be are also listening to the fears of the employers. Senate Democrats have signaled that they would be willing to add billions of dollars in tax breaks in order to make minimum wage increase easier for business to swallow.

The White House indicated that it would support a raise in the minimum wage as long as it came in conjunction with tax relief to help small businesses keep their competitive edge and keep the economy growing. The final package presented to the President for approval will be the result of negotiations between both legislative chambers. If all goes well, the wage increase would go into effect in three stages over 26 months. It would go to \$5.85 an hour 60 days after signed into law, then to \$6.55 an hour a year later, and finally to \$7.25 an hour a year after that. This is a very long time to wait for the estimated 5.6 million workers in the United States who currently make minimum

See WAGE pg 8

## One More Time!

### Metro revives the UPass another semester

By Kristopher Overholt Staff Writer

Last semester, Metro sparked much controversy among colleges city-wide, including UHD, as they announced the death of a faded blue friend: the Metro UPass. In the previous two-and-a-half years at UHD, the UPass could be purchased for about \$20 and allowed students at most universities across Houston to ride the local Metro buses, Park and Ride commuter buses, and the MetroRAIL for an unlimited number of rides during the semester. It was targeted towards college students and available at

schools that elected to participate in the UPass program. The UPass was advertised on the Metro website as a way for students to not only travel between school and home, but also to special events and for quick runs to the grocery store. After much deliberation and controversy last year, Metro had decided to do away with the UPass and all other stored value cards as of December of 2006 in favor of a new technology-packed pass named the Q Card. This was met with thousands of students outraged at the idea of a 200% to 900% cost increase just for them to get to school and back, not including additional bus or train

rides. The Student Government Association at UHD organized an informational campaign for students, collaborating with numerous other schools across the city, and spoke to Metro directly at the monthly Board of Directors meeting late last semester. Surprisingly, Metro responded one week later and called for a special student open forum with Chairman David Wolff of the Metro Board of Directors. This immediately spelled success in students' voices being heard because such an opportunity for students to speak one-on-one with a Metro Chairman was unprecedented. It allowed much more dialogue and many concerns to be expressed in a close-quartered format. The 75-minute forum held quite a different tone than the 3 minutes that Metro had

See UPASS pg 8



Will U be commuting by car come next semester?

photoby Juan Ortiz

S T U D E N T - R U N S I N C E V O L U M E O N E

# IS IT JUST ME?!?

## Slavery in the Fifth Grade

by Dr. Yvonne Kendall

My mom is a woman warrior. She's been a teacher in Clarksville Tennessee for over 45 years, so she started back in the day when teachers actually taught and students actually learned (I was her student one year, so I know). Part of that time she was a principal. While she was a principal, the captain of the elementary school ship, standardized reading and math scores went up annually. This was not common in the school system. On the theory that no good deed goes unpunished, she was busted down to remedial math teacher for lodging and losing a discrimination lawsuit. The number of minority principals was reduced once she lost the suit. Things that make you go "hmmm."

Now, her so-called punishment was nothing of the kind. What they didn't realize was that she loves to teach. I mean, she LOVES to teach. When asked to teach kids with the worst skills in math, she was eager to get to work. Many of these kids are so frustrated that they become discipline problems. Every year she brought more and more kids up to and beyond grade level, easily surpassing any other teacher of remedial skills in her school. Some teachers became jealous, but others learned from her.

So, mom is sailing along and then one day her fifth grade students were supposed to be working on an assignment. One little White girl in a red tunic was not working. She just sat there while my mother approached. When asked why she was not working like all the other students, the following dialogue ensued:

Smug little White girl: "I don't have to listen to you."

Curious Black teacher: "Why not?"

Proud little White girl: "You're Black and I'm a master."

Deadpan, but interested Black teacher: "Master of what?"

This was when the girl and other students explained that their social studies teacher had them reenacting the pre-Civil War

periods by dividing into masters and slaves. The next day they switched over and little missy, not liking the slave thing, threw her green tunic onto the floor and stomped on it. There had even been an email (which my mother had not yet seen) that asked faculty and staff not to be abolitionists, don't free the slaves. More about this later.

My mother went up in smoke. She remembered that she could not take day courses at the local university forty years ago because "White students might be offended." She remembered how her husband, with a doctorate and experience, was passed over in a promotion at that same university twenty years ago for a White woman with a Master's degree and no experience. She remembered that fifteen years ago her attorney daughter, my sister, and MD husband tried to move into a nice neighborhood with a duck pond. They wanted a nice place to live with their four-year-old son. They didn't realize they would be integrating the neighborhood. Their house was burned out by White neighborhood teenagers. Nobody was ever arrested, although it was clear that neighbors knew who did it. She remembered that five years ago the city council had voted to ban the naming of any street after a person so that they could avoid naming a street after world famous Olympian and Clarksville native Wilma Rudolph.

Despite recent gains, she knew that the legacy of slavery was still with us. She also knew



Torture revisited for young children through slavery exercises

enough about child development to know that fifth grade was much too young for such an experiment. She went to the White teacher, who was not willing to change. She went to the White principal, who saw no harm in it. She went to the NAACP and they got busy. They went to the Director of Schools, and he took it seriously. The media found out and reported that my mother was the only one who had complained. Meanwhile, a janitor, secretary, teacher's aide and two teachers admitted to mom that this had been bothering them for the four years it had been in practice. Even some parents had expressed concern but the principal had explained it away.

At this point the media stories took off. The story broke right around the MLK holiday and within days, newspapers

and radio stations in four Tennessee cities (including Nashville, the capital, and Memphis, the largest), three Florida cities, two Alabama cities, Arkansas, Virginia, a New York-based internet site, a Japanese anime internet fanzine, *Jet Magazine*, and my current home, Houston Texas picked up the story. There were blogs everywhere; my mom didn't even know what a blog was before this.

The basic response outside of Middle Tennessee was pretty consistent as outrage. However, many local newspaper readers couldn't figure out what the big deal was. Why should one little girl who went over the top, stop an "innovative" teaching exercise. Why was my mom "overreacting"?

These people just don't get it. I was talking to my sister about it. If you asked kids to play Nazis and Jews in death camps to learn around WWII, we decided, the Anti-Defamation League would be on Clarksville like white on rice, but twice as deep. Aside from teaching kids to be bullies, it teaches little White kids to treasure their privileged position and reminds little Black kids of the torture of our African American ancestors.

Recent reports released by the Houston Police Department that announced statistics showing

Black people were twice as likely to be tasered when stopped for the same reasons than Whites, shows that we are still living that poisonous legacy. Well-meaning, but insensitive teachers in a multicultural society must become aware of this. This is reality for us. Reality. Not mouldy history, current reality. Asking children to return to a time that is not yet over is cruel and senseless.

And by the way, the note against abolitionists was prompted by a specific event. Another little White girl decided that she didn't like being enslaved so she read a bit more of the history book and decided to be a runaway slave. She was missing half the day. You go, girl. Kudos to the little White sista girl.

As one person ironically put it on (of all things) the anime fans blog "Slavery exercise not such a good idea? Who knew?" ■

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# Bullets not Butter

## Recap of the State of the Union Address

By Don Pieper  
Editor

Tuesday, 23 January 2007, President Bush delivered the State of the Union address to Congress and the American people. Facing declining popularity, even within his own party, an increasingly unpopular war, and a number of issues of stretching executive power and limiting civil rights, the President faced the nation to give his analysis of the year behind and predictions of the year ahead.

Perhaps the largest single issue, though seemingly strategically placed later in his speech, Mr. Bush spoke about the American military, and military operations. He called for the expansion of the active military by 92,000 troops in the next five years, just days after announcing the deployment of an additional 22,000 to the Middle East. Some people may criticize the cost in terms of these specific troops. But a glaringly absent aspect is the increasing, but mostly hidden, cost of our military. The most obvious of these increases comes in the form of private contractors operating alongside coalition troops. These private companies have obtained massive contracts in the region and are passing it along to their personnel in the form of high wages, reasonably good accommodations, and frequent time off. A recent study announced that more than 100,000 contractors are currently operating alongside our troops in Iraq. While many of these handle non-combat related occupations, they all earn considerably more than the troops with whom they serve. Indeed, the contract companies need not actively recruit soldiers and Marines into their ranks; they are daily approached by troops interested in getting out of the military and coming back to the Middle East to earn top dollar. I was personally offered a \$150,000 salary (the first \$87,000 being tax free) to do security work, essentially the

same tasks I was doing in Iraq for about a quarter of those wages. I must admit that I considered taking the position for some time. Many experienced troops are taking those positions, furthering depleting our personnel resources. As a direct result, the military has been forced to increase enlistment and re-enlistment bonuses in order to attempt to compete with the private sector. Bonuses of \$20,000 for re-enlistment are no longer unheard of.

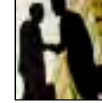
In the long term, there are additional costs that are little considered in the mainstream media. The Veterans Administration has been overburdened and underfunded since the war began. Perhaps casualty rates were not taken into consideration when the administration planned out the cost of the war. But returning veterans will affect the economy in a number of ways. Those with major disabilities will receive a stipend for life, as well as medical treatment from the VA. In addition, they will be less productive members of society, unable to physically contribute as they might have otherwise. Others may be impacted physically or mentally in ways that may never prove quantifiable. It is for these reasons that some economists have placed the total costs of the war at well over \$3 trillion.

The President invoked the memory of 9-11 once again. For some, these continued invocations are simply politically useful. For others, they are outright offensive. He claimed that America is taking "the fight to the enemy," further solidifying his dualistic moral stance. He specifically mentioned Sunni Muslim terrorists, but neglected to state that our friends the Saudis maintain as their official religion, the Wahabi sect, a large and violent group from which many terrorists come. Mr. Bush also mentioned Shia terrorists, noting the funneling of funds from Iran into groups in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, specifically the Hezb'Allah. Ramping up tensions between the United States and Iran may not be

wise in the current global climate, particularly considering that most of the "coalition of the willing" has left Iraq already.

Related to terrorism and to military build-up, the President wants to double the size of the Border Patrol. At the same time, he wants to grant a temporary worker program to migrant workers from Mexico and other Central and South American nations, in order to relieve the pressures at our southern border. Federal law prevents the U.S. military from engaging in operations within the United States. We have already seen the loop hole in this law as governors in the southwest, including Texas, have called up National Guard troops to support the Border Patrol. National Guard troops have been used for years in

See BUSH pg 8



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## O’Kane Gallery

### Audrey Buller

#### *A Magic Realist in Retrospect*

By Don Pieper  
Editor

The O’Kane Gallery opened this year with a wonderful display entitled “Audrey Buller: A Magic Realist in Retrospect.” UHD is honored to house, until the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, 27 of Ms. Buller’s works. Audrey Buller was Canadian born, but began painting in New York at an early age. She seems to lead the viewer to her ideas through her brush, but not quite all the way. Buller expects the viewer to meet her halfway, to make some effort to reach the idea on their own. Her paintings are not quite literal, and so the viewer must relate his or her own emotions to this uniquely modern experience.

Magic Realism is a genre

that grew, in part, from surrealism, though it is sometimes considered a subcategory of postmodernism. The genre held an honored place in the art community in the 1930’s and 1940’s, until abstractionism took center stage.

Reaching across various art forms, magic realism is a contrasting of the realistic with the fantastical. Perhaps the most famous examples of this are in the field of literature, where such writers as Franz Kafka (“The Metamorphosis”), Toni Morrison (“Beloved” and “The Bluest Eye”), and Laura Esquivel (“Like Water for Chocolate”) are often classified. In music, magic realism can be expressed by the use of non-instrument sounds, such as traffic, in a fusion of otherwise traditional musical elements in order to invoke an emotional reaction.

Of course in the visual arts, Audrey Buller was among the heavy weights. Described as possessing an “ordered design of great intelligence” by New York artist Reginald Marsh, her works were displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago, the National Academy of Design, the Whitney, and the Museum of Modern Art during her decade of immense popularity.

Perhaps in response to changing times following World War II, the art world quickly changed their focus to such artists as Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, abstract contemporaries of Buller’s. She did not like the move, telling a friend that “they have no eyes for objective painting just now. They dismiss it all as realism, nothing else, and how meager that would be if that was all there was to it.”

Magic Realism has been a greatly underrepresented art style for the last half century, relegated chiefly to serious artists and an occasional art history course. O’Kane’s director, Mark Cervenka,

feels that Buller’s works deserve greater exposure, and is offering them up to UHD students, and to all Houstonians.

Make time between, before, or after classes to stop in and see what you think of Buller’s vision.



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# Swing!

## INTERVIEW with Parker Esse



photos www.tuts.com

### Native Houstonian Parker Esse

By Monica Maza  
Staff Writer

*Swing!* the musical is coming to the Hobby Center January 30<sup>th</sup> - February 11<sup>th</sup>. It received five nominations, including "Best Musical," at the 2000 Tony Awards. This show is a celebration of the dance phenomenon that occurred during the 30's and 40's and will highlight a mixture of styles including Jive, Latin Swing, West Coast Swing, Hip-Hop Swing, and Country Western Swing. I was fortunate enough to talk with Parker Esse, one of the show's performers.

DL: You're a native Houstonian. Which part of Houston are you from?

PE: I grew up in River Oaks and went to St. John's. Then I went to the High School for the Performing Arts and was a Dance major.

DL: There must be a lot of preparation that goes into a show like this. My experience performing was in a high school marching band and my band director used to tell us "perfect practice makes perfect." How long is a typical day for you when you rehearse?

PE: We rehearse one to nine p.m. and have a one-hour dinner.

Just like with a marching band, repetition is the key and swing has partnering. You have to build that relationship and work on making them look good and then you can make yourself look good. *Swing!* is a harder show. Most of us have done the show before, but we still only have two weeks. *Swing!* is a marriage between dance and music. The music is electrifying. This is my third time doing *Swing!* I did the show in Chicago and Boston and when they asked me to do it here I was more than happy to come home and do this. It's great to be with my family again. I did a show called *Fosse* that was all dance and I would hurt after the show. We put a lot into our performance and it does wear down the body.

DL: I know this show must be physically demanding. What has been your worst injury so far?

PE: I've only had minor injuries. It may not sound like a big deal but the last time I did *Swing!* I jammed my thumb. But think about it; I have to lead and throw my partner in the air for the show and that took its toll on it. I had to wear a wrist brace to stabilize my thumb. Dancing is very demanding. We do physical therapy after we dance besides what we do before we dance: the warm-up and stretching. We have to get adjustments and just

maintain our bodies. I mean, after a show the first thing we do is grab ice packs and place them of various parts of our bodies to help with the inflammation. For me, I've always had problems with my left shoulder and left knee. I think the longest I was out of a show was one week. But I've never had an any injury bad enough to where I had to be in the hospital, knock on wood.

DL: In Act I, the number called "Harlem Nocturne" is called "a fine example of *Swing!*'s clever interaction between music and dance with a dancer and the bass." What sort of interaction is this?

PE: There's an instrumentalist on stage. It's a bass player and there are dancers that dance around and interact with him. It's one lady and three men who are vying for her attention.

DL: Sort of like a "call and response," like in music?

PE: Yes, definitely. For my number in Act II, it's a dance competition. The story is that a girl lost her partner and picks me off the corner at the last minute so she has to teach me some moves as much as she can and then we have to dance. Everything that can go wrong does go wrong. (laughing) It's comedic and I have a lot of fun doing it. You know I walk on stage with toilet paper on my shoe, when I'm dancing with her my glasses fall off so I have to act like I'm blind. Then I accidentally rip her skirt off. It takes a lot for my partner and I to look like we're out of control and still be safe because I am lifting her in the air.

DL: In Act II, the number "Caravan" says "the band gets one for itself." Is this some sort of free style moment for them?

PE: It's the half number and it features tap dancing. There's a lady that taps and then three men come on stage and try to show her up but she keeps impressing us with her tapping. You know

for a show like this, there is no right or wrong. I mean when we hear the music start, we just go for it.

DL: Going back to your number, is it a break from the rest of the show? The show sounds so high energy but is your number the time that you can finally breathe?

PE: It's interesting that you asked me that because you would think so but it's actually more challenging for me. I've had training in jazz, tap, and ballet and to put that aside and make myself "mess up" and look bad is hard. It's like a singer that you know has a beautiful voice and if they tried to sing badly it would be hard. I mean it goes against all those years training. It takes a lot to look smooth and afterwards I feel like I ran a marathon.

My character is a nervous wreck so I'm either holding my breath or hyperventilating. Once I leave stage I'm usually out of breath. This show is high impact like aerobics class for us.

DL: I hate to admit it but I've never seen a live musical. What can I expect as a first timer? What makes this a unique experience as opposed to an opera or a play?

PE: The minute you hear the music and the couples come out and dance, it is amazing.

The music will effect you. It's the joy and celebration of the swing era of music. Think back to when the stock market crashed and the Depression began. The young people went swing dancing as an emotional release. They left their worries at the door you know. That's what we want for you. As performers, we hope that you gain an experience from the show, whether you're humming a song afterwards or you really liked one of the moves on stage.

DL: All performers "feed" off the audience. How do we as an audience influence a musical?

PE: Just being there is great. To have a n audience enjoy our show is what we live for. Without you, we would be nothing. Reactions like laughter, applause, and the energy we

feel really motivates us to give our all. Your response tells us that we're doing ok. I love what I do. Once you see a show, and then you realize that we do eight a week and sometimes two a day, it is exhausting but we love what we do.

DL: Why do you think that this type of entertainment has lasted so long?

PE: Swing is timeless. You can measure the swing era by years but the music is still prominent in the way that we relate to it and anyone can relate to it. It never gets old.

DL: My school has a theatre program. Obviously there are differences between acting and what you do; however is it that big of

See MUSICAL pg 8



## NYU Students pleased by bill to cut student loan rates

By Nick Brennen & Sergio Hernandez  
Washington Square News  
U-WIRE (NYU)

(U-WIRE) NEW YORK - Interest rates on need-based federal loans may be cut in half over the next five years.

The legislation was passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday and is now being debated in the U.S. Senate.

The legislation was one of six bills introduced by the Democrats in their first 100 hours in Congress. It is aimed at lowering interest rates for students receiving need-based, federally subsidized Stafford and Perkins loans.

The bill, which cuts interest rates for undergrads from the current rate of 6.8 percent to 3.4 percent, would take effect on new loans made after July 1 of this year.

Barbara Hall, associate provost of enrollment management, said she does not believe the new legislation will have an effect on financial aid at the university, because it is unlikely lenders will withdraw from providing loans.

As of fall 2006, 13,704 undergraduate and 12,861 graduate and professional New York University students received some form of financial aid. Almost 8,000 undergraduates received subsidized Stafford loans with an average loan amount of \$3,847, Hall said.

The bill passed the House with a 356-71 vote, according to the U.S. Clerk's Office. Largely a bipartisan initiative, all 232 Democrats voted in favor of the bill, while 124 Republicans voted for it, 71 voted against it and eight did not vote.

Hall called for more efforts by Congress to provide alternate forms of aid. She said she wants to see Congress provide more federal grant money as opposed to "encouraging" loans.

John Doty, a spokesperson for New York's 8th Congressional District representative Jerrold Nadler, said congressman Nadler shared Hall's preference for grants instead of loans.

"Pell Grants haven't gone up, for example," Doty said. "The congressman is more in favor of grants, not so much loans, which students have to pay back."

Pell Grants, which students do not have to repay, are another form of financial aid available to low-income families. These grants have been capped at \$4,050 since 2003, when the amount was increased by \$50, according to College Board.

Doty hopes Congress will take more action. "People are excited by H.R. 5 [the bill], but can it cover more people? Can it do more?" Doty said. "That's what we hope will be addressed in the future."

Alicia Hurley, NYU's assistant vice president for government and community affairs, said the early focus on higher education affordability is a good sign. It's a terrific sign that among the Congress's top initiatives for the year--and indeed within their first 100 legislative hours -- is an initiative that aims at making higher education more affordable," Hurley said.

Hurley acknowledged the progress the Congress has made.

"As you may know, it was in the past year or so that the student loan interest rates were increased during an attempt by the 109th Congress to find some savings opportunities," Hurley said.

Last February, Congress passed legislation increasing the interest rate on Stafford Loans and cut \$12.7 billion from federal student loan programs over five years.

"It is commendable for the new Congress to undo the previous Congress' negative policies," Hurley said, but it remains to be seen whether this is the "best investment of \$6 billion."

Despite this, Hurley said she was optimistic about the future of federal funding.

"The good news is that it is only the beginning of a long-overdue conversation in Washington, D.C., about the federal funding for higher education," she said.

See BILL pg 8

# Justice Better Than Never



By Mike Faulk  
The Crimson  
White (U. Alabama)  
(U-WIRE)

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. - They were two black teenagers walking a rural road in Franklin County, Miss., only hoping to hitch a ride. Some white men pulled over for them but took them anywhere but home.

The last thing Charles Eddie Moore and Henry Hezekiah Dee saw were the waters of the Mississippi River rolling over their faces. They were weighted and drowned alive after a tortuous beating from several Klansmen in the solitude of Homochitto National Forest.

It happened in the summer of 1964, in the heat of the civil rights movement and one year before its climax with the passage of the National Voting Rights Act. Their bodies were found two months later near Tallulah, La., during a search for three civil rights workers who had also disappeared.

It was a time when blacks had less representation than the dirt they stood on, and their tormentors knew that nothing could be done to keep them from terrorizing innocent people.

Or could they?

James Ford Seale was

one of two white suspects initially arrested in connection with the killings, but once the FBI handed the case over to local authorities, a justice of the peace almost immediately threw out the charges. Nearly 43 years later, now at the age of 71, Seale was surprised to find authorities once again knocking at his door.

Finding Seale seven years after the Justice Department reopened the case might have been a surprise for authorities too, since Seale's family had been telling them for years that he was dead. But rattlesnakes don't commit suicide.

Seale's arrest is an example of the many newly reopened cases from the civil rights era, where militant racists who'd thought their violent past was put to rest under time and an unmindful judicial system are now being plucked from retirement and nursing homes to face laws never upheld.

"Forty years ago, the system failed," said FBI Director Robert Mueller, who appeared with Justice Department officials and siblings of the victims at a news

conference in Washington. "We in the FBI have a responsibility to investigate these cold case, civil rights-era murders where evidence still exists to bring both closure and justice to these cases that for many, remain unhealed wounds to this day."

It might come across as absurd to now put harmless senior citizens in shackles for things that took place in ancient history, but the difference between good and evil never ages. While some tight-lipped elders responsible for the violence of the 1950s and '60s still walk our streets with an image of innocence, the families of victims have spent nearly half a century wondering why the people they loved died and why no one was held responsible.

If it wasn't for these new prosecutions in the South, there would be no conviction for the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham that killed four black girls, nor would there be convictions in the case of the three civil rights workers officials were looking for when they found Moore and Dee.

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# EARTH TALK

## Questions & Answers About Our Environment

**Dear EarthTalk:** Are the animals used in classroom dissection taken from the wild? If so, wouldn't this be endangering their populations? Are there other environmental issues associated with classroom dissection?

-- William Conway, via e-mail

According to the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), most animals used in dissection--including amphibians, birds, snakes, turtles, fish and invertebrates--are taken from the wild, even though many have been declining in population. Smithsonian Institution

researchers who surveyed 14 major dissection supply catalogs found only one that offered "farm-raised" amphibians; none of the others verified their sources.

Researchers from the World Conservation Union reported in 2004 that a third of all amphibian species around the globe, including frogs, were threatened with extinction. Although habitat loss, pollution and climate changes are the primary causes, demand for dissection specimens only makes matters worse. Analysts estimate that as six million wild frogs are destroyed each year in the U.S. alone for dissection.

Taking frogs from the wild also increases insect populations, including those that carry disease. Frogs eat more than their weight in bugs every day. Farmers the world over have long relied on frogs to keep crops pest-free, but a lack of frogs in recent years has led many farmers to switch to pesticides. Concerns about this

prompted India to ban frog sales in 1987. India had been earning \$10 million yearly on frog exports, but was spending \$100 million importing insecticides, according to the group Mercy for Animals.

The use of formaldehyde in preserving animal specimens is also a concern. Classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a "hazardous air pollutant, water pollutant and waste constituent," formaldehyde can cause nausea, headaches and breathing difficulties in people, and has been linked to cancer in animal studies. Teachers and students involved in frequent dissections are exposed to it regularly. Further, schools discard millions of formaldehyde-laden classroom specimens each year, raising questions about its effects on the larger ecosystem as well.

Animal advocacy groups and some educators also question dissection on both practical and ethical grounds. While it is intended to interest students in science, they say, it may be having an opposite affect while also encouraging cruelty to animals outside class. According to the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM), a 1997 study of seventh graders found that fetal pig dissections fostered callousness toward animals and dissuaded students from pursuing science careers. PCRM also cites surveys where as many as 90 percent of students said they should be able to opt out of dissection.

A number of computer-based teaching tools now on the market provide alternatives to live

animal dissection. Digital Frog International's award-winning "Digital Frog 2" allows a student to "dissect" a computer-generated frog with a digital scalpel. The non-profit TeachKind provides a comprehensive online listing of such resources. Nine U.S. states--Florida, California, Pennsylvania, New York, Rhode Island, Illinois, Virginia, Oregon and New Jersey--now have laws that allow students to beg out of cutting animals and to use such alternatives. Other states have implemented policies that serve a similar purpose.

**CONTACTS:** HSUS, [hsus.org/animals\\_in\\_research/animals\\_in\\_education](http://hsus.org/animals_in_research/animals_in_education); PCRM, [www.dissectionalternatives.org](http://www.dissectionalternatives.org); TeachKind, [www.teachkind.org/dissectalt.asp](http://www.teachkind.org/dissectalt.asp).

Got An Environmental Question? Send it to: EarthTalk, c/o E/The Environmental Magazine, P.O. Box 5098, Westport, CT 06881; submit it at: [www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/thisweek/](http://www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/thisweek/), or e-mail: [earthtalk@emagazine.com](mailto:earthtalk@emagazine.com). Read past columns at: [www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php](http://www.emagazine.com/earthtalk/archives.php). ■

## Putting a Stamp on History



This month, the Harris County Public Libraries will be "Putting a Stamp on History" with a city-wide celebration of Black History Month. The following is some of the free fare available to Houstonians.

Tue 6 Feb @ 3pm: Discussion of Toni Morrison's "Beloved." Tomball Branch- 30555 Tomball Pkwy

Wed 7 Feb @ 11am: Discussion of Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God." West U Branch- 6108 Auden

Thu 8 Feb @ 4pm: Screening of "Malcom X: The Plain Truth," followed by a discussion with local historian Lankford Bolling. High Meadows Branch- 4500 Aldine Mail Route

Mon 12 Feb @ 3:30pm: Poetry Slam. North Channel Branch- 15741 Wallisville Road

For more information on these and other events, log on to [www.hcpbl.org](http://www.hcpbl.org).



## WAGE

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wage. They have been waiting almost a decade for a raise, the last increase having taken effect in September of 1997. This is the longest stretch of time without an increase since the minimum wage was established in 1938. Working for \$200 a week—minus tax—is not much money to say the least. Definitely not enough to be able to live in a city like Houston, where rent alone can consume an entire month's paycheck. Then, what about food? Transportation?

When Chris Rock worked at McDonald's before breaking into comedy, he did not earn all that much less than current Mickey Dees workers. That was literally decades ago, and he complained about it then. If the minimum wage functioned as was intended, to provide a living wage for people willing to do America's dirty work, then it would have been raised a long time ago. It's about time the government addresses this issue and does something about it ■

## UPASS

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previously allocated for a student (or anyone) to speak at its board meetings.

After students voiced their opinions and questions for over an hour at the special student forum, the day came to an end with a grim feeling of the future survivability for the beloved UPass. Metro took time to deliberate on the issue. On January 5, 2007, I received a letter from Chairman Wolff stating that availability of the UPass would be extended to August 21, 2007, for schools that wished to participate.

In short: the UPass is back for another eight months at least. At the start of this project, when I took on the task of chairing the "Save the UPass" committee in the SGA at UHD, I knew it would be a monumental task to have our 2100 voices at UHD heard by an organization as large as Metro. Additionally, after having scrutinized Metro and their practices closely for over five years, I had an unsettling feeling that, though our voices might be loud and clear, Metro would not undo the implementation of the

new Q Card system, especially since it was costing Metro over \$300 million. But that did not stifle our efforts. With the UPass being restored for eight more months, the students at UHD who depend upon Metro's services will be relieved for the time-being. Another benefit of the delayed switchover is that Metro riders will have a clear and fair warning of the future switchover date; that is, if the new system doesn't get delayed for a further launch.

However, the students across Houston are not the only ones trying to figure things out until August comes. The new changes will affect all bus and MetroRAIL riders across Houston as 2-hour train passes and all stored value cards disappear, in addition to other changes. The first launch date of February 4, 2007 was cancelled and Metro hopes "to work out the expected bugs and soften the shock to transit riders." Metro says that it "will phase in its new fare structure and Q Card payment system over several months and hopes to complete the changeover this summer."

So, why did Metro grant the students another eight months of such a convenient and loved student pass? It may be that their new multi-million dollar "improvement machines" would not have been in order by their own estimated implementation date. It is good, at the least, to see that they were responsive enough to customer needs in extending the UPass program. Furthermore, thousands of students across the city now have a fair warning, with several months to save funds for the rise in fare structure, find alternative transportation, such as car pooling, or to purchase a car.

The UPasses are available from the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor cashier's office at UHD. The passes can be purchased any time until they run out, and there are plenty of passes to go around. UHD has ordered 2300 UPasses, which is even more than ordered in the past semesters. The passes will be valid until August 31, 2007 and will continue to get you rides on any Metro bus or the MetroRAIL until that date.

After the Q Card system is implemented, all bus rides or train passes will carry a 50% discount for students, which is helpful for all students across the city. But don't let that fool you

into thinking the Q Card system will be as convenient and simple as the current UPass system.

I would like to thank the UHD SGA and the other students who contributed the hard work towards getting our voices heard by Metro on the UPass issue last semester. For more information on the upcoming Q Card system, you can visit Metro's website at [www.ridemetro.org](http://www.ridemetro.org). You can also follow updates closely with Metro's brand new weblog at <http://blogs.ridemetro.org>. ■

## BUSH

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border states to observe and report on drug smuggling operations. This has been largely ignored, and likely unknown, by the American people and the media. The recent build up, however, should be looked into by Congressional oversight committees. This is yet another example of the executive exceeding its power.

Despite the increases to these agencies, Mr. Bush began his speech with the declaration that Congress must balance the budget without raising taxes. The President did not mention which programs he thought should be eliminated in order for this to occur.

Again Mr. Bush pushed his No Child Left Behind initiative, but did not indicate from where the much needed funding would come. He encouraged the use of school choice for all children. The problem with this, as has been demonstrated by a recent study at the University of Houston-Downtown's own Dr. Amy Brandon, school vouchers and choice programs, while advantageous to those who are able and choose to participate, actually reduces the overall performance of the public schools.

The President stated that most Americans should obtain their medical care through private, possibly work funded, health insurance. He mentioned tax benefits for lower income families if they have no access to employer sponsored insurance programs, and the guarantee that children, the disabled, and the elderly should be taken care of regardless of other factors. As a demonstration of how a lower income family would benefit,

Mr. Bush pointed out that a family of four earning \$60,000 a year would receive \$4500 in tax benefits. However, in a two parent household, if both mother and father worked earning minimum wage, they would earn only 1/3 of that figure combined. At the same time, the President suggested the need for judicial reform, limiting the rights of citizens to sue for medical malpractice. The right to seek redress of grievances is central to any democracy, and it is frightening to see the amount of support that the political right has given this issue.

Lastly, Mr. Bush suggested a reduction in gasoline consumption by 20% over the next ten years. While he mentioned no specific planning, at least this suggestion is in keeping our nation within the first world as we move further into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ■

## MUSICAL

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a leap to cross over? I see Hugh Jackman and Matthew Broderick doing it but is it hard to make that transition?

PE: No. It's a different set of tools. I asked Hugh Jackman that when I worked with him and it's not that different from acting. You have to do your research, figure out the character's background, and think about what your character's relationship is with the other characters. With theatre, you get one shot but each audience is different and as a performer you get that instant gratification that you miss out on with film. Many actors have backgrounds in theatre and most of them say that theatre is better. It is more difficult to go from film to stage then from stage to film.

DL: Is there anything you would say to the ones who are thinking about making the transition into Broadway?

PE: Absolutely. Never give up and never except no for an answer. Always strive for the best. There will be lots of rejections. You have to know that this is what you want. If you want it bad enough then you can do it. You'll have many passing judgments—you're too tall, too short, too thin, too fat—but don't let it get to you.

DL: Don't take anything personal.

PE: Right because if you do then you won't survive this business. And you know if you audition and don't get something then to me it's like it just wasn't in the cards for you and there will be something better.

Tickets are available by phone at (713) 558-8887 or online at [www.tuts.com](http://www.tuts.com). Student discounted tickets are available one hour before performance. ■

## BILL

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Nora Toiv, president of the NYU College Democrats, also sees this new legislation as just the beginning.

"I think the bill is a first step in addressing the obstacles that exist for many students to attend college," Toiv said. "College tuition and the general costs of school are very unfair to low-income students. Colleges need to make a more conscious effort to open their doors to low-income students, as does Congress."

Junior Riaz Parsiani said he is looking forward to graduating with lower interest rates.

"Investing in students is the most important thing for Congress to do," he said. "We are the future." ■

## JUSTICE

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Those three workers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, by the way, were also murdered.

The argument among those opposed to charging suspects in older crimes is one of just letting go of the past when a suspect is considered "too old" to send to prison. In that case, I guess the victims were "too passionate" about their beliefs, or just "too far" from home to expect making it back alive. Go ahead - wrap a little more arbitrary points on circumstances to pardon those who still aren't apologetic for what they did.

The victims were "too young" to die and the present is never "too late" to reopen the cases their families never saw finished.

Mike Faulk is managing editor: news of The Crimson White. His column runs on Fridays ■.