

# OPINION

**THE HUTCHINSON NEWS**

**Editorial Board**

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**EDITORIAL**

## Gangsta gripe

Resolution protesting rap music is a waste of officials' time

The Kansas Legislature kicked off the 2008 session with an announcement from an Emporia representative stating that there's something she doesn't like, and she's not going to do much about it.

Rep. Peggy Mast, R-Emporia, announced plans this week to push for a resolution condemning gangsta rap — the ground-shaking, obscenity-laden music that is the bane of parents everywhere.

Mast doesn't want to ban it or even restrict it. She simply wants her colleagues in the House and Senate to stand alongside her as she delivers a tersely worded gripe against a brand of music that critics say demeans women and encourages violence.

The Recording Industry Association of America says such a move is unusual, with only Connecticut going on record in condemning rap music. They also defend gangsta rap, claiming that it reflects the daily struggles of the inner city, urban lifestyle.

Attempts by other states to restrict access or investment in the recording of gangsta rap rightfully have been struck down by the courts; any attempt to limit free speech, no matter how distasteful,

should be denied.

And using the Legislature to pass a pointless resolution is a waste of time and an ineffective use of elected officials' time. It won't do a thing to stem the popularity of the music, and it won't discourage a single teenager from purchasing the latest album from 50 Cent or Young Gunz.

If Mast doesn't like gangsta rap, she can shout it on the campaign trail, write a letter to the editor or talk about it on television. There is no need to draft other members of the House to her side or ask them to debate the merits of the music on the House floor only to sign a piece of paper that says Kansas — or at least its elected leaders — don't like the music.

Furthermore, if Mast really wants to do something about the social ills wrought by the music, she can explore other possibilities, such as asking for more detailed warning labels to caution parents about the explicit content or promoting education programs that counter the misogynistic and violent messages spewed out in some rap songs' lyrics.

But a "shame on you" resolution isn't going to thwart record-label moguls searching for fortune, and it's not going to scare gun-wielding rappers who boast in lyrical form about the number of times they've been shot.

**WESTERN FRONT**

## Reporter needs to mature

Fifty years ago, if you could not attend a sports contest you could not watch it on television. You had to listen to the radio if you wanted to follow the contest as it was played.

About that time, there was a young radio sports announcer who arrived on the scene. His name was Max Falkenstein. As he reported the event, there was absolutely no doubt who was his favorite team. If his team was having difficulty, you could hear the tears in his voice. Sometimes, they were so great you were afraid he would short-circuit the microphone. He very seldom gave opposing teams credit, but when he did, you could tell it was with great reluctance. As the years passed, Falkenstein became more tolerant and showed less and less favoritism toward his favorite. In later years, he would be recognized as one of our country's leading sports broadcasters.

One of your sports writers, Harold Bechard, seems to have the same problem hiding his favoritism that Falkenstein had in his early years. He is young, and we would hope he matures as well as Falkenstein did.

Yes, I too, have my favorite teams. Yes, I sometimes ridicule other teams or poke fun at them. But then, I am not a sports reporter and do not owe the public unbiased commentary.

**MERLE ORSBORN**  
Hutchinson

## Groups are different

I would like to explain the difference between American Legion Riders and the Patriot Guard. Every news story that you read, or see on TV, calls us the Patriot Guard.

The Patriot Guard was created by The American Legion Riders in Mulvane for a specific purpose. It was created in response to the protests going on at soldiers' funerals. It serves a very noble purpose. However, the mission of the Patriot Guard is only to attend funerals of fallen soldiers who were killed in action (KIA).

To belong to the American Legion Riders, one must be a veteran who has served during a conflict. And they must have a motorcycle of at least 250 cubic centimeters in displacement. Anyone can belong to the Patriot Guard. You do not have to own a motorcycle. You do not have to be a veteran. All you have to do is show up at a soldier's funeral to stand with us in blocking the view of the family from the protesters. You are welcome to join us for that.

American Legion Riders do much more than ride to funerals for KIA. Here is a partial list of the things that the American Legion Post No. 68 has participated in last year. We have attended more than 20 funerals, some of which were for policeman and fire-

fighters. We attended funerals for veterans who died of natural causes. We attended the funerals of two Christian Motorcycle Association members who were killed. We have gone to dozens of "Welcome Home rides" to honor troops back from serving overseas. We have attended dozens of "Send Off" rides to let soldiers know we supported them as they left for overseas duty. We put a new roof on a lady's house in Larned; her husband was stationed in Iraq. We rode to Pratt to welcome home an entire unit that made it home.

We rode in several parades, from South Hutchinson to Wellington. We escorted a National Guard unit home, from the airport in Wichita to Hutchinson. We escorted the National American Legion commander from McPherson to Hutchinson. We rode to other posts to support them.

We rode to the fairgrounds to show support of the Special Military Active & Retired Travel club that was there for the national muster. We flipped burgers at our local post once a month to support the American Legion.

We donated hundreds of dollars to various organizations. We went to Ponca City, Okla., to give gifts to kids at the American Legion Children's Home. We had chili feeds/auctions to raise money so that we could give it away. One of our members rode in the American Legion Legacy Run, which raises money for the education of children of veterans who were killed in action. We have supported our troops. They are our heroes.

I am, first of all, proud to be an American. Then, I am proud to belong to the American Legion. Next, I am proud to be an American Legion Rider. Finally, I am proud to belong to the Patriot Guard. Please call us what we are.

**JOHN M. RUST**  
Hutchinson

## Beware of 'predator'

Citizens of the United States beware. At this moment, you are being stalked by a cunning, sophisticated predator: Thousands of American men and women have fallen victim to this ruthless hunter. The tool this predator uses is a smile, and the warm embrace of a lover.

This predator has one goal, to gain entry into the United States by marrying an American citizen. Once this objective is accomplished, you have served your purpose. You will be discarded like a rag.

Be assured this predator is not alone. He or she will have access to attorneys who specialize in distorting the intent of our legal system.

No matter how unethical, they will get the job done. The predator, through legal maneuvering, is now transformed into a "victim."

**GREGORY H. BONTRAGER**  
Hutchinson

**WESTERN FRONT POLICY**

The News accepts Western Front letters from readers who want to share an opinion.

Please sign your name and include your phone number and address. We call to verify all letters before publication and strive to publish them within

one week of verification. Please limit letters to 500 words. No poems, consumer complaints, business testimonials or group petitions will be accepted. All letters are subject to editing for space considerations and libel concerns.



**COLUMNISTS**

## Big fuss over small differences



Clarence Page

In primary election campaigns, the fighting is often vicious because the differences are so small.

That helps to explain why, despite so many more urgent foreign and domestic issues on the table in the Democratic presidential primaries, so much attention has been riveted lately on exciting distractions.

Did Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois oppose the war in Iraq from the very beginning? He proudly did.

Did Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York insult the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.? She proudly did not.

Yet former President Bill Clinton suddenly found his honorary "first black president" status, famously conferred on him with tongue in cheek by author Toni Morrison, in jeopardy after he ridiculed Obama's version of his early Iraq war opposition as a "fairy tale."

And his wife has come under fire from some black leaders for saying in a televised interview: "Dr. King's dream began to be realized when President Lyndon Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. ... It took a president to get it done."

Actually, if anyone should feel offended by that remark, it is Republicans. Sen. Clinton could have showed a little love for Senate Republican Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois, who rounded up enough Republican votes to offset strong opposition from Johnson's fellow southern Democrats.

But facts often are not as important as feelings in neck-and-neck political races. The offense matters more than actual fault in the racial "gotcha" game. Political correctness? Sure. The important thing to remember about political correctness is that politicians

invented it. As an icon of black aspirations poses a serious challenge to an icon of women's aspirations, liberal PC has come back to bite liberals. That became apparent when South Carolina's most powerful and influential black politician, U. S. House Majority Whip James Clyburn, said he was so "bothered" by the Clintons' remarks that he was reconsidering his earlier decision to avoid endorsing any candidate before the state's Democratic primary on Saturday, Jan. 26.

That's serious. Clyburn's coveted endorsement carries a lot of weight in South Carolina, where blacks make up about half of the votes in the South's first Democratic primary. Polls showed Clinton falling behind Obama in South Carolina and among black voters nationally. Most threatening to the Clintons is the notion that Clyburn, amid a rising tide of black support for Obama, could be reaching for an excuse to endorse Obama, or at least to distance himself from the Clintons.

How quickly times change. Only a month earlier Clinton was so far ahead of Obama among African Americans that some people still were asking whether Obama was "black enough" for black voters. Even before Obama won the caucuses in over-

whelmingly white Iowa, black loyalty to the honorary "first black president" was turning toward the increasingly tangible possibility of a real one.

But as more voters saw Obama as a candidate worth fighting for, others saw him as increasingly worth fighting against.

Glوريا Steinem, another Clinton supporter, ironically played the guilt card in a New York Times essay on the day of the New Hampshire primary. She declared that a black woman who had Obama's stellar qualifications and African-sounding name would not have a prayer of gaining frontrunner status. You know things are getting vicious on the left when a pioneer of modern feminism stigmatizes Obama as someone who benefited unfairly from gender preferences. Can't we all get along?

The fighting is vicious because Obama and Clinton are so politically alike. Democratic voters who are still undecided after the bazillions of speeches and debates that have been held so far face an embarrassment of riches. In Clinton, Obama and Edwards, they have three attractive choices who speak the right Democrat-speak on the issues and show roughly same amount of pluses and minuses in terms of electability.

Republicans, by contrast, struggle to regain unity among their various factions. So far, GOP voters have had to choose between an array of candidates who have not energized more than a narrow segment of their party's base. Eventually, both parties will have to unify around a nominee. The best news for Republican unity then may well be found in the disunity brewing among Democrats now.

## No trusting the 'experts' in '08 race

Once in every generation a politician appears who transcends politics; someone who inspires a nation with his grace and eloquence, speaking to the better angels of our nature. Abraham Lincoln was such a candidate, so was John F. Kennedy.

Barack Obama is another. His performance in the Iowa caucuses was a picture-perfect example of what can be done when a gifted politician hits his stride and becomes one with the spirit of the times. Obama reminds one of a surfer catching the perfect wave, dancing effortlessly in its heart as he hurtles toward shore.

He went into the caucuses with the odds heavily against him. He is black and Iowa is white. He is young and Iowa is old. His opponents were more experienced, many had been through these wars before and had finely tuned organizations working to oppose him.

But he won. He won by reigniting the American dream, by convincing young people, among others, that the future is worth fighting for.

In doing so, he captured that strain of idealism that is the bedrock of the American society. With momentum on his side and the wind at his back, it is doubtful he can be headed off. I wouldn't be surprised if he ran the table from here on in.

(Excuse me, Mr. Columnist.) I'm not ashamed to admit that I haven't been this giddy about a candidate since Adlai Stevenson. Call it premature if you will, but I'm booking airline tickets for the inauguration right now.



Donald Kaul

(Mr. Columnist, sir.)

"Will you please stop that? Can't you see I'm writing a political column? Where was I? Oh yes, I've even considered throwing objectivity to the wind and writing a campaign song for Barack. See what you think of it:

"Obama, I've just met a man named Obama  
 And suddenly I've found how wonderful a name can be.  
 "Obama. Say it loud and there's music playing.  
 "Say it soft and it's almost like..."

("SIR! HE LOST.")  
 "What? Oh, it's you again. Will you stop? Who lost?"

("Your friend Obama. In New Hampshire, Hillary Clinton knocked his ears off.")

"You're mad. Why, the day before the election the experts were predicting he'd win by 10 points, 12, even."  
 (Yeah. Makes you wonder about the experts, doesn't it?)

"My good man, you don't understand. She couldn't have won. She is cold and aloof. People don't like her. She cried while talking to a voter in a coffee shop. She was being overshadowed by

her husband."

("All of that might be true, I suppose, but she won. Now the experts are saying the crying was a good move, made her seem human.")

"That's astonishing. I suppose this means Mitt Romney will be crying like a carwash from now on. By the way, how much did Gov. Romney win the New Hampshire primary by?"

("He didn't win either.")  
 "Whaat? The unstoppable Mitt Romney? The Storrnin' Mormon? Who beat him, Mike Huckabee? I was afraid of that. You know Huckabee doesn't know a lot but he's a very charming guy. I'd vote for him myself if I didn't believe in evolution and indoor plumbing and the rest of it."

("It wasn't Huckabee. He came in third. John McCain won the New Hampshire primary.")

"Surely you jest. McCain is washed up, has been since last summer. Everybody says so. Besides, he's old and if it weren't for unpopular opinions, he wouldn't have any opinions at all. He's even in favor of President Bush's war, for crying out loud, and everybody knows the public is against it. Why, I'm told he often goes into meetings with voters and argues with them. What kind of campaigning is that? You can't win an election unless you suck up to voters."

("Apparently, Sen. McCain didn't get the memo.")

"What are the experts saying now?"  
 ("Most say it's a wide-open race.")

"Hmm, that's perceptive. I wish I'd thought of it."

("I wouldn't worry about it. You will.")

**Doonesbury**

