

# FINGER LAKES TIMES

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"The First Amendment ensures that all points of view may be heard; it does not ensure that all points of view are equally likely to prevail."

— Michael McConnell, U.S. appellate judge, 2006  
Community Media Group

## THE GOOD & THE BAD

**FREE ANTIBIOTICS** — It's a terrific public relations move for Wegmans to set aside charges for nine common antibiotics until the worst of cold-and-flu season should be over (March 31).

And it would be easy to cynically dismiss it as that, knowing the supermarket chain stands to gain much more in extra sales and new customers than the \$1 million in grants it expects to give away.

But no one should overlook that Wegmans personnel found a practical way to give immediate help to the average person while economic forecasts are so dire.

It's an important community contribution.

**HE SAID WHAT?** — It's the kind of comment that makes your jaw drop.

Supervisor Lloyd Kinnear has reportedly admitted that it was politically incorrect for him to explain that the Town of Canandaigua might not be able to buy some Ontario County services because

"There is a blind guy in Albany making these decisions."

Stupid in private conversation, this comment was made during his board's reorganizational meeting Tuesday, raising it to the level of unconscionable and insulting.

Kinnear, who is fighting a felony DWI charge these days, would do well to concentrate on cleaning up his image.

# Our country's success story

BOSTON — There was a time when any woman who attributed her success to luck risked getting ticketed by the feminist police. To say that your crowning achievement was a matter of good fortune rather than your own smarts, ambition and hard work was as politically incorrect as a blush.

Women had, after all, been forced to follow a cultural script that said femininity and ambition were contradictions. They learned to demur. Most men, on the other hand, followed the cultural script that attributed greatness to their own brains and effort. They were self-made.

Well, despite a serving of tickets, I never discounted luck. Looking at my own life and those around me, I saw a combination of factors that smacked of chance. Not the kind of luck where you plunk down a dollar at the lottery, but the kind you tip your hat to.

If anything, the standard male narrative about flying solo to the top, bootstraps in hand, energized only by your own talents, always seemed a bit cockeyed to me. The female narrative was not so much self-effacing as it was realistic.

Thoughts about success have come creeping back into the conversation since Malcolm Gladwell got a hold on the top of the best-seller list with his book "Outliers," more aptly subtitled "The Story of Success." Gladwell is the anti-Horatio Alger. "It is not the brightest who succeed. ... Nor is success simply the sum of the decisions and efforts we make on our own behalf," he writes. "It is, rather, a gift. Outliers are those who have been given opportunities — and who have had the strength and presence of mind to seize them."

On his chart of "opportunities" there are, for example, the Canadian junior hockey stars born disproportionately in the early months of the year, when the age cutoff date gives them a better shot at getting coaching. There is the computer bought for Bill Gates' high school long before other schools had such equipment. There is also the cultural luck of the draw: the language that gives Chinese students a leg up on math and the "rice paddy" economy that imbues them with a certain work ethic.

Even the "10,000-hour rule," the number of hours it takes to achieve mastery, is not just a matter of willpower but of opportunity. So the Beatles got their training in long hours at Hamburg nightclubs. And conversely, children in our poorest schools are disadvantaged less by the schools than by summer vacations.

This is the perfect moment for Gladwell's

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success story. In good times, we look up to heroic CEOs and masters of the financial universe as if their surfboards were making the waves they rode. Suddenly there's an undertow and we're more likely to see the shared currents such as family, culture and timing.

Still, there are missing elements among the provocative ideas that Gladwell draws together. In homage to the feminist police, I couldn't help noticing that there are virtually no women among his "Outliers." And those who do appear are almost exclusively moms. It's as if women were a separate culture.

In the same sense, this exploration of success casually neglects the great social changes that altered opportunities. Anti-Semitism, for example, crops up oddly as an *advantage* to the Jewish lawyers banned from white-shoe firms who (therefore?) became experts at corporate takeover law. There's no mention that the "rice paddy" culture that produces successful mathematicians today produced "coolie labor" for railroad builders of the 19th century.

And what of the heirs and heiresses of the civil rights and women's rights movements who were "lucky" to be born in that culture of empowerment? Those movements are oddly absent from a populist call for replacing the "patchwork of lucky breaks and arbitrary advantages" with "a society that provides opportunities for all."

There has always been this paradox at the heart of our national idea. Americans do believe that individuals are agents of their own destiny. Sometimes to a fault. But we also believe in creating a level playing field to enable that destiny. This duality is as much a part of the American environment as the rice paddy economy is of the Chinese.

At the heart of our culture is something else very much back in the air during this rocky, troubling, optimistic, transitional time. It's a bedrock belief in the possibility of change. This is the fundamental creed that defines our country's own success story: America the Outlier.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Phelps hasn't gotten funds similar to Arcadia's

To the Editor:  
Isn't it interesting that the Town of Arcadia (*Times*, Jan. 6) can acquire \$1.76 million through a grant/loan for a water project, but the Town of Phelps cannot secure any money for the same purpose?

CAROLE GOSTLEY  
Clifton Springs

## Women's rights park deserves better care and funding

To the Editor:  
The struggle for women's rights has an extraordinary history, and the struggle is ongoing. On a recent vacation in the Finger Lakes area, my wife and I made a special pilgrimage to the Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls. We were appalled to see the embarrassing state of the Visitor Center.

The exhibits, while attractive and well-maintained, were woefully out of date. Not one of the exhibits is current. It appears that the information presented to the public has not been updated since 1993? Nothing about a single female leader in any field for the last 16 years. How humiliating!

I inquired and was told by Park staff that funding has never been available to update the data presented. If that is the case, then why keep the Visitor Center, filled as it is with obsolete data, open?

In an effort to publicize this travesty more widely, I wrote to all 17 female senators who currently sit in Congress. I also made a contribution to the Friends of the Women's Rights National Historical Park, a non-profit based in Seneca Falls, but that organization seems to be moribund. My check has not been cashed, my letters of inquiry have not been answered.

I am a continent away. You live in the cradle of women's rights. On behalf of women of the 21st century, please remedy this embarrassment.

STEPHEN COTLER  
Healdsburg, Calif.

## You can't always see another person's burdens

To the Editor:  
I am writing regarding a note that was attached to my windshield in the Wegmans (Newark) parking lot

Tuesday. I have a handicapped-parking sign to hang from my rear-view mirror, so I parked in a disabled-access parking space. I found a note under my wiper that read "you don't look handicapped to me!" My first reaction was to be furious with this person and my second was an overwhelming feeling of hurt.

Then, I decided I could focus on all of the negative aspects, but I have chosen not to. Instead I'd rather educate them.

There are many different disabilities in this world. Some are obvious, some are not. Let's break it down to two categories — mental and physical. A disability isn't necessarily visible in either.

Someone can be mentally retarded, but if you see them walking in a parking lot you may notice the disability. Some high-functioning mentally retarded people have driver's licenses.

Then there are physical disabilities. A wheelchair or walker makes some obvious, but a heart defect or lung issue may have no outward sign.

Think about the number of people who have died during a sport with no knowledge that there was anything wrong with their heart. They looked and acted fine, but obviously it was deceiving to the naked eye.

So, in closing, let me just assure the person who didn't think I look disabled that my handicapped sign belongs to me and I am disabled. I am fortunate at this time "not to look disabled," but I can assure you that in time my condition will progress and I will have more outwardly recognizable signs.

Meanwhile, I hope this person and others who read this letter show a little more compassion and understanding toward the people in their lives and those they encounter, because you might never know someone else's burdens.

I once read something that made a lot of sense to me and I think it is appropriate now: "Christ has no body now on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out on the world, Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good, And yours are the hands with which He is to bless us now."

Let's work on positive choices.  
God bless.

BRENDA CARR  
Lyons



# Bush Darfur timing suspect

## The Los Angeles Times

After years of standing on the sidelines and making ineffective threats about punishing Sudanese leaders for slaughtering the people of Darfur, the Bush administration finally took concrete action this week. Its decision to airlift vehicles and heavy equipment to an undersupplied United Nations peacekeeping force was a welcome, if largely symbolic, gesture. But more interesting was the timing of the move.

In his announcement of the airlift Monday, National Security Adviser Stephen J. Hadley took pains to point out that it was "further evidence that Nicholas Kristof's portrayal last week of this administration's response to the genocide in Darfur was inaccurate." Hadley was referring to a Dec. 28 column in *The New York Times* in which Kristof cited a leaked memo by Ambassador Richard Williamson, the U.S. special envoy to Sudan, that laid out three possible military responses aimed at the Sudanese regime: The U.S. could jam all communications in Khartoum, the nation's capital; it could blockade Port Sudan, from which the country exports its oil; or it could destroy Sudan's air force.

Kristof reported that these options were ruled out by Hadley and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Hadley acknowledged Monday that military responses had been considered and rejected, but he said the decision was driven by pleas from leading church, advocacy and humanitarian organizations that feared such actions would only

make things worse for Darfur. That came as news to the Save Darfur Coalition, an umbrella organization for Darfur advocacy groups that has long favored a tougher response by Washington, and whose spokesman told this page on Tuesday that the coalition hadn't been consulted by the administration.

It's perfectly true that implementing any of Williamson's recommendations would have dangerous repercussions. A blockade would infuriate China, Sudan's main oil buyer. Attacks on communications or aircraft could result in the expulsion of humanitarian aid workers. Yet the weak sanctions imposed so far by the U.S. have done nothing to stop Sudanese soldiers and government-backed Arab militias from murdering, raping and displacing Darfuri civilians, and it's obvious that tougher measures are needed. Fortunately, they're probably on the way.

In 2007, Susan E. Rice, President-elect Barack Obama's nominee for U.N. ambassador, advocated strong actions against Khartoum in testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including a bombing campaign against Sudanese aircraft and other military assets. The fact that Obama almost certainly will take Darfur more seriously than President Bush did might explain the timing of the airlift, a last-minute attempt to show that a president whose positive legacy rests largely on his generous approach to Africa didn't entirely ignore the crisis. Too bad it's much too little, too late.