

## Behind silent walls

The *Vermont Guardian* is launching an important series examining domestic violence in Vermont, an issue that often only receives attention when tragedy strikes.

Thanks to the leadership of Sen. Richard Sears, D-Bennington, perhaps we can avoid the next tragedy by putting in place better systems to catch and track domestic violence before it erupts.

Domestic violence affects thousands of people in Vermont. Consider these statistics:

- In 2006, 8,692 survivors of domestic violence reached out for services.
- In 2006, 9,119 children in Vermont were estimated to have been exposed to domestic violence. That's 7 percent of all children who live in Vermont.
- From 1994-2006, 49 percent of all Vermont homicides were related to domestic violence. When incorporating suicides prompted by domestic violence, the percentage increases to 61 percent.
- Nationally, more than one out of every three women killed is at the hand of a husband or boyfriend.

Our series will ask the tough questions about what is working and not working in the courts, corrections, and community service providers, and what we're doing in schools and our homes to help foster more awareness among children. As a society, we need to face this problem head on, rather than letting it hide behind silent walls.

## What we talk about when we talk about race

By now, just about everybody in the country knows that Don Imus — one of the original radio “shock jocks” — was fired over inappropriate remarks he made about the Rutgers University women's basketball team.

The tempest allowed everyone to become indignant about the racism and misogyny in our society and culture — from popular radio programs to popular rap stars.

Imus should have been fired a long time ago for the sheer fact that he was boring, unimaginative, and boorish. Making offensive remarks isn't a crime in our country thanks to the First Amendment. In this case, however, the power of the marketplace won out. CBS Radio, facing a wave of national criticism and the loss of sponsors, sent him packing.

Issues of race are often couched in tones of remorse, regret, lessons to be learned. But, when we're faced with owning up to one of the greatest crimes in history — the outright genocide of Native Americans, or the enslavement of African Americans — we shrug it off and simply say, “Well, we've put that behind us.”

Have we?

Some states have taken it upon themselves to make formal apologies for slavery. Virginia and Maryland have already issued such apologies, and Delaware is contemplating one. Another measure is currently moving through the North Carolina state Senate.

This week, however, we in Vermont will have a rare opportunity to see that more than 100 years of institutional racism — from slavery to Jim Crow to slight-of-hand segregation today — has wrought on this country.

William Darity, one of the nation's foremost economists doing research on racial inequality, will be in residence this week at the University of Vermont, and his primary lecture will make the economic argument for slavery reparations, which he believes are long overdue.

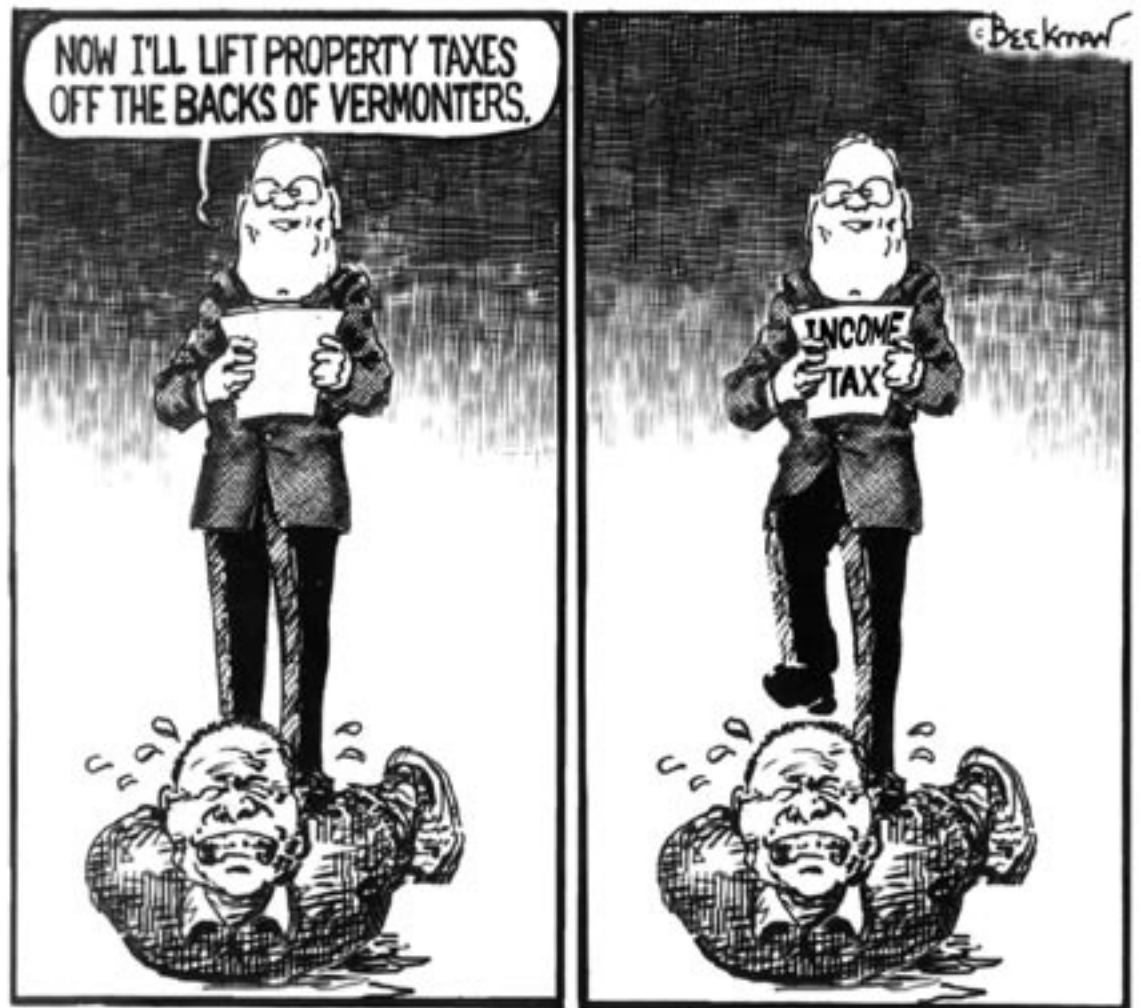
As a result of slavery, and Jim Crow-era laws, African Americans could be owed more than \$10 trillion if you take into account wages they could have earned as free citizens, land holdings that were taken, and wealth that did not accumulate and pass along to their heirs.

And, the shadow of slavery still is at work today with African Americans treated differently in the criminal justice system, public education, and the workplace.

A reparations program will be hard for many to come to terms with, but we did provide compensation for the Japanese and other Asian Americans we interred during World War II.

A lump sum payment isn't needed, but asset-building programs, business and education loan programs, and perhaps some monthly cash payments like the Germans did to Jewish survivors, is just what might help to stop the past from affecting the future.

This may be a tall order, but firing a radio shock jock for doing what he is paid to do — shock — isn't going to put this country's house in order.



## letters • • • • •

**Editor's note:** On April 16, we had a major e-mail program crash that stored much of our contact with the outside world. As a result we lost dozens of letters to the editor. So, this week's sampling is unusually small. For those who have submitted letters in the past two weeks, and who didn't see them get printed, feel free to send them along again.

### Farm Bill impacts hungry Vermonters

Many Vermonters were listening carefully during the U.S. Senate Farm Bill hearing on March 12 at the Vermont State House.

The consequences of the 2007 Farm Bill reach far beyond our state's struggling dairy industry. The Nutrition Title of the Farm Bill also includes nutrition assistance programs that help thousands of low-income Vermonters put food on the table. Vermont's two state-wide anti-hunger organizations — the Vermont Foodbank and the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger — along with 165 partner agencies and congregations, are united in our efforts to ensure that the Farm Bill provides adequate nutrition resources to reduce the growing problem of hunger in the Green Mountains.

The largest of the food assistance programs in the Farm Bill is the Food Stamp Program, this nation's first line of defense against hunger. Food

Stamps ensure that households have access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food during difficult economic circumstances. Studies show that children living in households receiving monthly benefits eat better — and as a result, are healthier, perform better in school, and have reduced rates of obesity. In Vermont, healthier families mean stronger communities, increased educational performance, a productive workforce, and reduced health care costs. A strong Food Stamp program also supports agriculture and builds a strong economy. Food Stamps supplement the buying power of 49,000 Vermonters each month and bring more than \$48 million in federal money into our state each year, supporting local businesses and farmers.

The 2007 Farm Bill includes two other food programs that assist hungry families in every corner of the state. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) allows the Vermont Foodbank to stock the shelves of its 270 network partners, including pantries, community

meal sites, and senior centers across the state. The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) nourishes 4,000 income-eligible senior citizens, pregnant women, and new mothers by providing monthly food boxes that include items such as meat, poultry, peanut butter, tuna, cereal, milk, fruits, and vegetables. These programs often make a huge difference for families struggling to make ends meet.

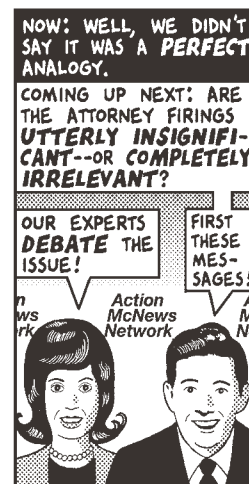
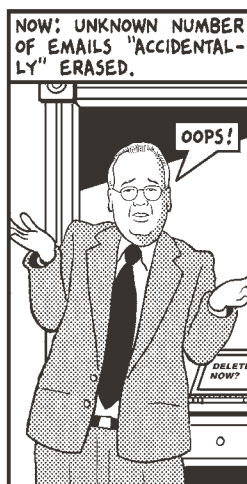
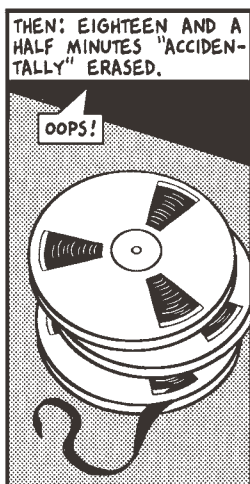
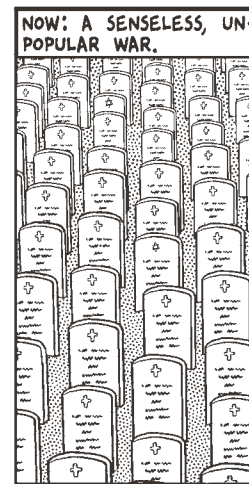
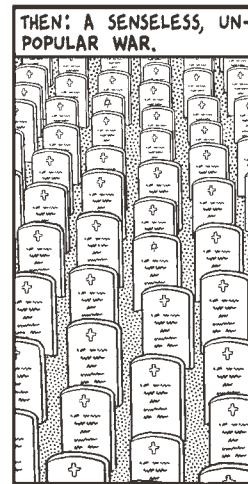
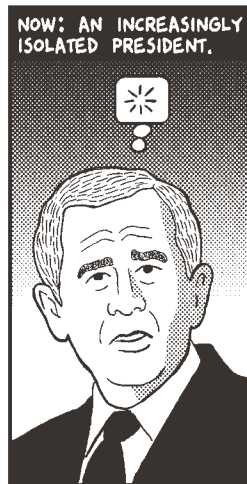
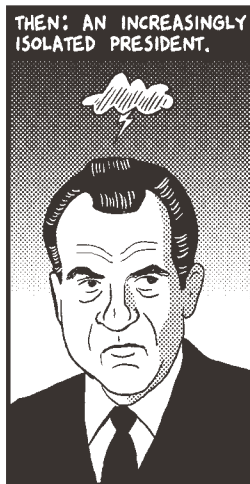
Farm Bill reauthorization occurs once every five years and the stakes are high for both farmers and anti-hunger advocates. A strong Nutrition Title in the 2007 Farm Bill will ensure full funding for these vital programs, increase food security for thousands of low-income Vermonters, build healthier communities, and support local agriculture.

Vermont's advocates can send a strong message to Congress that nutrition assistance programs and agriculture work hand-in-hand to ensure that no child goes to bed hungry and that every Vermonter has access

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# THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



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to the fruits, vegetables, and dairy for which our farmers are famous.

Robert Dostis  
Waterbury  
Christine Foster  
and Edward Fox  
Barre

Robert Dostis is the executive director of the Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger. Christine Foster and Edward Fox are interim co-CEOs at the Vermont Foodbank.

## Giving voice to Palestinians

I was delighted to see published "Gaza reporter defends stories" (*Vermont Guardian*, April 19), the excellent and well-informed letter by Mohammed Omer.

He wisely, firmly confronts and refutes the slanderous as well as totally toxic Zionist propaganda that is so pervasive in U.S. newspapers. I have been hoping for years that (for everyone's sake) more people would start sincerely challenging Israel's manipulative public relations games that have created so much havoc (and planted hate) everywhere they can reach.

I have also been hoping that the people of Palestine would be given more chances to simply

speak for themselves, although that is quite hard to do in a world where Palestinians are routinely demonized and dismissed.

I do hope that Omer's letter is the beginning of a trend with more and more Palestinians everywhere speaking out to explain what they know to be true about our "friend" Israel. And, I do hope that soon everyone on Earth understands the vital importance of fully respecting the Palestinian refugees' sacred right of return to original homes and lands as clearly spelled out by international law since Israel came to be a sovereign state in 1948.

Anne Selden Annab  
Mechanicsburg, PA

## Emergency official fiddles two tunes

In Brattleboro the public hears that the buses needed to fulfill the demands of the Radiological Emergency Response Plan will be arriving from Swansea, NH.

Simply put, to evacuate the students from all levels, the day care centers, the nursing homes, the hospital, and the indigent, Brattleboro depends on Laidlaw buses to drive more than 20 miles from Swansea, NH, into the plume pathway to move our residents from harm's way in the event of a radioisotope release

at the Entergy Nuclear Vermont Yankee nuclear reactor.

I wish to encourage the state of New Hampshire to coordinate its emergency planning zone bus drills of towns such as Hinsdale and Chesterfield with Vermont's planning drills. Are there enough buses to fill the needs of both states at once?

On April 3, Vermont Emergency Management Director Barbara Farr stated she has faith in the radiological emergency response plan to safely evacuate local residents. The complete plan has never been tested. Most of the public does not know what to do. The state of Vermont's information campaign (a kangaroo — no joke) ran out of money after a few months.

On April 4, we are told that shelter-in-place is the best choice. Does anyone besides me get the notion that we are hearing our emergency planners speak two stories?

New England housing stock is the oldest in the nation. In houses built to 1948 building codes, complete air exchange occurs in less than an hour. Wood and shingles do not stop gamma rays. Shelter in place, if it fails, is like making the local citizens into rats in a box.

Gary Sachs  
Brattleboro

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"Books give not wisdom where none was before. But where some is, there reading makes it more."

—John Harington (1561-1612)

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