

**THE LAST DECADE** has seen an explosion of open dialogue on the web. Personal WebPages, blogs and hosting packages such as Facebook and Myspace all allow individuals to log in and gab to their hearts content. The Internet offers an immediate publication of an author's work; no ink, paper or publishing company needed.

Editorials and commentaries frequently take on a life of their own, acting like the proverbial chain letter on steroids as they pass from inbox to inbox. In the blink of an eye a little known commentary on the discontent of Americans can make its way into the hands of millions. The immediacy of cyber-print is a fast paced, well-oiled machine the likes of which neither magazine nor newspaper can ever hope to replicate.

#### AN EDITORIAL ON THE HAPPINESS OF AMERICANS

The following commentary has made its way around the Internet through emails, forwards and blogs.

*"As most of you know I am not a President Bush fan, nor have I ever been, but this is not about Bush, it is about us, as Americans, and it seems to hit the mark.*

*The other day I was reading Newsweek magazine and came across some poll data I found rather hard to believe. It must be true given the source, right?*

*The Newsweek poll alleges that 67 percent of Americans are unhappy with the direction the country is headed and 69 percent of the country is unhappy with the performance of the President. In essence, two-thirds of the citizenry just ain't happy and want a change. So being the knuckle dragger I am, I started thinking, "What are we so unhappy about?"*

*Is it that we have electricity and running water 24 hours a day, 7 days a week? Is our happiness the result of having air conditioning in the summer and heating in the winter? Could it be that 95.4 percent of these unhappy folks have a job? Maybe it is the ability to drive our cars and trucks from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean without having to present identification papers as we move through each state? Maybe it is the ability to walk into a grocery*

*store at any time and see more food in moments than Darfur has seen in the last year? Or possibly the hundreds of clean and safe motels we would find along the way that can provide temporary shelter? I guess having thousands of restaurants with varying cuisine from around the world is just not good enough either.*

*Or could it be that when we wreck our car, emergency workers show up and provide services to help all and even send a helicopter to take you to the hospital. Perhaps you are one of the 70 percent of Americans who own a home. You may be upset with knowing that in the unfortunate case of a fire, a group of trained firefighters will appear in moments and use top notch equipment to extinguish the flames, thus*

## Sociology of an Internet Editorial

By Debbie Vallejo

*saving you, your family and your belongings. Or if, while at home watching one of your many flat screen TVs, a burglar or prowler intrudes, an officer equipped with a gun and a bulletproof vest will come to defend you and your family against attack or loss.*

*This all in the backdrop of a neighborhood free of bombs or militias raping and pillaging residents. Neighborhoods where 90 percent of teenagers own cell phones and computers. How about the complete religious, social and political freedoms we enjoy that are the envy of everyone in the world?*

*Maybe that is what has 67 percent of you folks unhappy.*

*Fact is, we are the largest group of ungrateful, spoiled brats the world has ever seen. No wonder the world loves the U.S., yet has a great disdain for its citizens. They see us for what we are. The most blessed*

*people in the world who do nothing but complain about what we don't have, and what we hate about the country instead of thanking the good Lord we live here.*

*I know, I know. What about the president who took us into war and has no plan to get us out? The president who has a measly 31 percent approval rating? Is this the same president who guided the nation in the dark days after 9/11?*

*The president that cut taxes to bring an economy out of recession?*

*Could this be the same guy who has been called every name in the book for succeeding in keeping all the spoiled ungrateful brats safe from terrorist attacks? The commander in chief of an all-volunteer army that is out there defending you and me?*

*Did you hear how bad the President is on the news or talk show? Did this news affect you so much, make you so unhappy you couldn't take a look around for yourself and see all the good things and be glad?*

*Think about it...are you so upset at the President because he actually caused you personal pain OR is it because the "Media" told you he was failing to kiss your sorry ungrateful behind every day. Make no mistake about it.*

*The troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have volunteered to serve, and in many cases may have died for your freedom. There is currently no draft in this country. They didn't have to go. So why then the flat-out*

*discontentment in the minds of 67 percent of Americans?*

*Say what you want, but I blame it on the media. If it bleeds it leads and they specialize in bad news. Everybody will watch a car crash with blood and guts. How many will watch kids selling lemonade at the corner? The media knows this and media outlets are for-profit corporations. They offer what sells, and when criticized, try to defend their actions by 'justifying' them in one way or another.*

*Turn off the TV, burn Newsweek, and use the New York Times for the bottom of your birdcage. Then start being grateful for all we have as a country. There is exponentially more good than bad. We are among the most blessed people on Earth and should thank God several times a day, or at least be thankful and appreciative. "With hurricanes, tornadoes, fires out*

of control, mud slides, flooding, severe thunderstorms tearing up the country from one end to another, and with the threat of bird flu and terrorist attacks, 'Are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the Pledge of Allegiance?'"

## ORIGIN OF AN INTERNET EDITORIAL

The above commentary gained momentum on the worldwide web when a blogger added the heading "Jay Leno Hits the Nail on the Head," suggesting the comedian actually authored the memo. The substitute title plus the final remark of 'Are we sure this is a good time to take God out of the *Pledge of Allegiance*,' a line from a joke Mr. Leno made on the *Tonight Show* in the wake of the hurricane season that spawned Katrina and Rita, lead readers to believe they were catching a glimpse into some true feelings of the *Tonight Show* host.

In reality the editorial was written by Craig Smith, an author, commentator and speaker who considers himself a provider of a common sense outlook on politics and the U.S. He wrote the editorial for an online source called *WorldNetDaily* in November of 2006 when, according to *snopes.com*, the editorial was passed around and altered from its original version to the one you see above. The altered version took out Mr. Smith's closing paragraph with a quote from B.C. Forbes discussing how Americans have more to be thankful for than anyone else, and replaced it with the above paragraph ending with the Jay Leno spin off.

## ARE WE REALLY THAT UNHAPPY?

Instead of losing momentum over time this editorial actually gained in popularity and is still popping up all over cyberspace two years after its creation. To discover the reason behind the growth of blogs and spam-like essays we went to our own panel of experts. Dr. John Glass'



Introduction to Sociology class at Collin College took the time to weigh-in on the issue and to discuss the "Sociology of an Internet Editorial."

Of the 34 students in the class, 13 consider themselves bloggers. Almost everyone in the class uses the Internet with relative frequency and a little over half of the students say they receive the majority of their news information from online sources. Asked if who authored the memo mattered, most didn't care since it was not hard news but rather a thought provoking commentary on generalities and abstractions.

The vast majority of the students could relate to the sentiment behind the writing and do feel that Americans, in general, are not content with what they have. Danielle Russell is a student in the class. "Despite a lack of stated sources, the editorial points out a lot of things Americans take advantage of," she says. "It makes me appreciate what I have versus being fixated on what I don't."

Another part of the discussion focused on geography and socio-economic status. Does where you come from and how much money you have influence how you feel when you're reading an editorial like this? Almost

every student said, "Yes." Nathan Sharp, another of Dr. Glass' students, put it this way, "I'm a poor college kid and this editorial speaks truth about what I see to be wrong with our country." Fellow student Curtis Coleman agrees, "I would think that people who come from a low income or poverty stricken area might be able to count their blessings easier than someone who has always had 'everything.'"

Asked if who authored the memo mattered, most didn't care since it was not hard news but rather a thought provoking commentary on generalities and abstractions.

Jill Cumnock is the executive director of Frisco Family Services Center and

Caring, Comprehensive Dentistry with Leading Edge Technology



**NEW HORIZONS  
DENTAL**  
*General and Cosmetic Dentistry*

**Now Accepting New Patients  
Most Insurance Accepted  
0% Financing Available**



*Savitha Hara, D.M.D.*

**Call for an appointment today!**

**972.668.8200**

[www.NewHorizons-Dental.com](http://www.NewHorizons-Dental.com)

**NEW PATIENT SPECIAL**

**\$99.**

**Exam, Xrays and Cleaning**

*(In the absence of gum disease) Limited Time Offer*

**ZOOM 2 WHITENING**

**\$285.**

**Zoom 2 Teeth Whitening Special**

*(Reg. \$599) Limited Time Offer*

1125 Legacy Dr., Ste. 200 • Frisco, TX 75034 *NW Corner of Legacy & 121 above Cantina Laredo*

## Welcoming Familiar OB/GYN Faces



**Now Serving Both Presbyterian Hospital of Plano and Baylor Medical Center of Frisco**

*Call today and schedule your appointment. We accept most major insurance plans.*

Dr. Richard C. Kaye  
**972-981-7783**

[www.drkaye.yourmd.com](http://www.drkaye.yourmd.com)

Dr. Tania White Jackson  
**972-981-3535**

[www.drjacksonobgyn.com](http://www.drjacksonobgyn.com)

Dr. Christopher Riegel  
**972-608-8979**

[www.drriegel.com](http://www.drriegel.com)

Dr. Briant Herzog  
**972-981-8333**

[www.drherzogwomensspecialist.com](http://www.drherzogwomensspecialist.com)

Dallas  
IVF

Reproductive Endocrinology & Infertility  
BRIAN D. BARNETT, M.D. ★ LOWELL T. KU, M.D.



Dr. Brian Barnett



Dr. Lowell Ku

- Providing basic and advanced infertility treatments to Collin and Dallas Counties since 1997
- Individualized treatment plans
- IVF pregnancy rates consistently among the best in the nation

Common treatments include:

- IVF
- ICSI
- Artificial Insemination
- Gonadotropin Superovulation
- Infertility Surgery
- Management of Recurrent Pregnancy Loss



Visit our website to view our outstanding IVF pregnancy rates and services available

Presbyterian Hospital of Plano  
6124 West Parker Road, Suite 334, Plano, Texas 75093

972-981-8700  
DallasIVF.com

# DO YOU SUFFER FROM BACK PAIN?

## Decompressive Traction Therapy for: Herniated Discs • Sciatica • Low Back Pain • Neck Pain

**Decompressive Traction Therapy** is a traction based modality shown in studies to help correct the symptoms associated with herniated and degenerative discs. This therapy provides relief by unloading of the joints due to position and distraction. This FDA cleared therapy may be especially beneficial for pain that has not responded to surgery, steroid injections, physical therapy, chiropractic or drugs. **Call today** to see if you are a candidate for this therapy.



DAVID KAFF, D.C.

## FRISCO SPINAL REHABILITATION

972-712-7744

3550 Parkwood Blvd., Ste. A206,  
Frisco, Texas 75034

[www.friscorehab.com](http://www.friscorehab.com)

Covered By  
Most  
Insurances!

### ••• WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING •••

#### Failed Low Back Surgery?

I had surgery in my lower back, however the pain had returned and was worse than ever. I am an RN and actually stopped working. The pain kept me from wanting to do any activities. I am almost 100% pain-free.

*Donna Conatser, Registered Nurse, Frisco, TX*

#### Sciatica?

My whole life had come to a halt from my normal routine. Walking was almost impossible and therefore every aspect of life was impacted. After treatments, my life has returned to normal. Dr. Kaff's use of the stretching table allowed my discs to shrink back and took the pressure off the nerve.

*Douglas Damewood, Plano ISD Administrator*

#### Herniated or Bulging Disc?

I had lower back pain around the hip area. It hurt to walk, sit or stand. Every time that I would roll on my side, I would wake up. The progress seemed to take a very short amount of time. Every time that I went back in it felt better.

*Scott Rackers, D.R. Horton, McKinney, TX*



Dr. Henderson's student roundtable discussion

photo by Chris Fritchie

Frisco STYLE's 2008 Person of the Year. Mrs. Cumnock's work in social services offers a different perspective. "I think the opinion that our clients might have could slightly differ from others...I think they appreciate what they do have," explains Mrs. Cumnock. On the other hand, she feels that sometimes bad things happen to good people. "I do think a person's circumstances would impact their opinion on the editorial," says Mrs. Cumnock. "I would think (our clients) would not feel that all Americans are blessed because of the difficult time they are experiencing."

Is part of the American Dream 'package' driven by our own desires to have more and never settle for less than what we want? Does it take money to be happy? "Absolutely not," says Mrs. Cumnock. "We definitely see people who have positive attitudes that come to us for help." Danijela Alijic, one of our sociology students, put it this way, "As Americans we don't like to settle, we want the best of the best and nothing less."

Our own Bob Warren weighed in on the discussion as well. "I think it's

human nature to want things to be better regardless of how good they are," explains Mr. Warren. "If we stop and think about what we have now that we didn't have 20, 50 or 100 years ago, not many of us would want to go back."

As Americans we don't like to settle, we want the best of the best and nothing less.

Dr. John Henderson is a family counselor and advisor. When asked if he feels there are really so many unhappy Americans, his answer was clear. "Absolutely! Most people, from my point of view, completely misplace the source of their unhappiness," explains Dr. Henderson. "Waking up each day on a quest to feed my own desires and guard against all I fear is a sure ticket to bitterness and resentment."

Why are editorials and commentaries such as this one so popular now on the Internet? Most of our sociology students feel that people love to read about bad news and the media drives it. Dr. Henderson agrees about the negativity. "The passage is a lengthy complaint about complainers, a long statement of ingratitude about ungrateful people and a series of grumbings about grumblers," says Dr. Henderson. "Since people apparently like to express dissatisfaction, the spirit of the article suits the preferred spirit of many people."

So, how helpful are these blogs and commentaries constantly popping up on the Internet that seem to point out our every deficiency? Camden Barlow, another of our talented sociology students, has his own take on why young Americans should keep reading. "With more constant reminders like this essay, then maybe more Americans will realize how blessed we are. Maybe we can be more happy about living in a free country." Amen to that.

---

Debbie Vallejo is a freelance writer living in Frisco.