

# OUR VIEW Teen Angst

News that a group of Massachusetts girls made a "pregnancy pact" has alighted the Internet. At least 17 girls, including many age 16 and younger, are expecting children. High school officials were tipped off by a surge in pregnancy tests—150 in the last academic year; Gloucester High has 1,200 students. Rumor has it that the girls agreed to get pregnant in the past year.

The story has dredged up all sorts of issues. There's the inevitable questions about whether abstinence-only and/or safe sex education programs make a difference. After 14 years of declines (from 1991 to 2005), birth rates among teenagers 15 to 17 rose three percent in 2006, according to the National Center for Health Statistics. Then there's the issues of who the fathers are. If any of them are age 18 or older, they could face criminal charges—it's a crime in Massachusetts to have sex with anyone under 16. Less talked about is the racial aspect of this bombshell story: the teenagers live in a mostly White town (which monkey-wrenches the image of promiscuous teens having a babies out of wedlock being Black or Hispanic).

The biggest issue is that of teen-pact behavior and groupthink. As Dr. Carole Lieberman, a Beverly Hills psychiatrist and a clinical faculty member at UCLA, told the Huffington Post: "The act the teenagers conjure up together is forbidden and self-destructive, and therefore must be kept secret ...The members of the pact develop trust, camaraderie and rebelliousness by sharing this secret," Lieberman said. "These bonds then impel them to commit the forbidden act that they wouldn't have the courage to do on their own..."

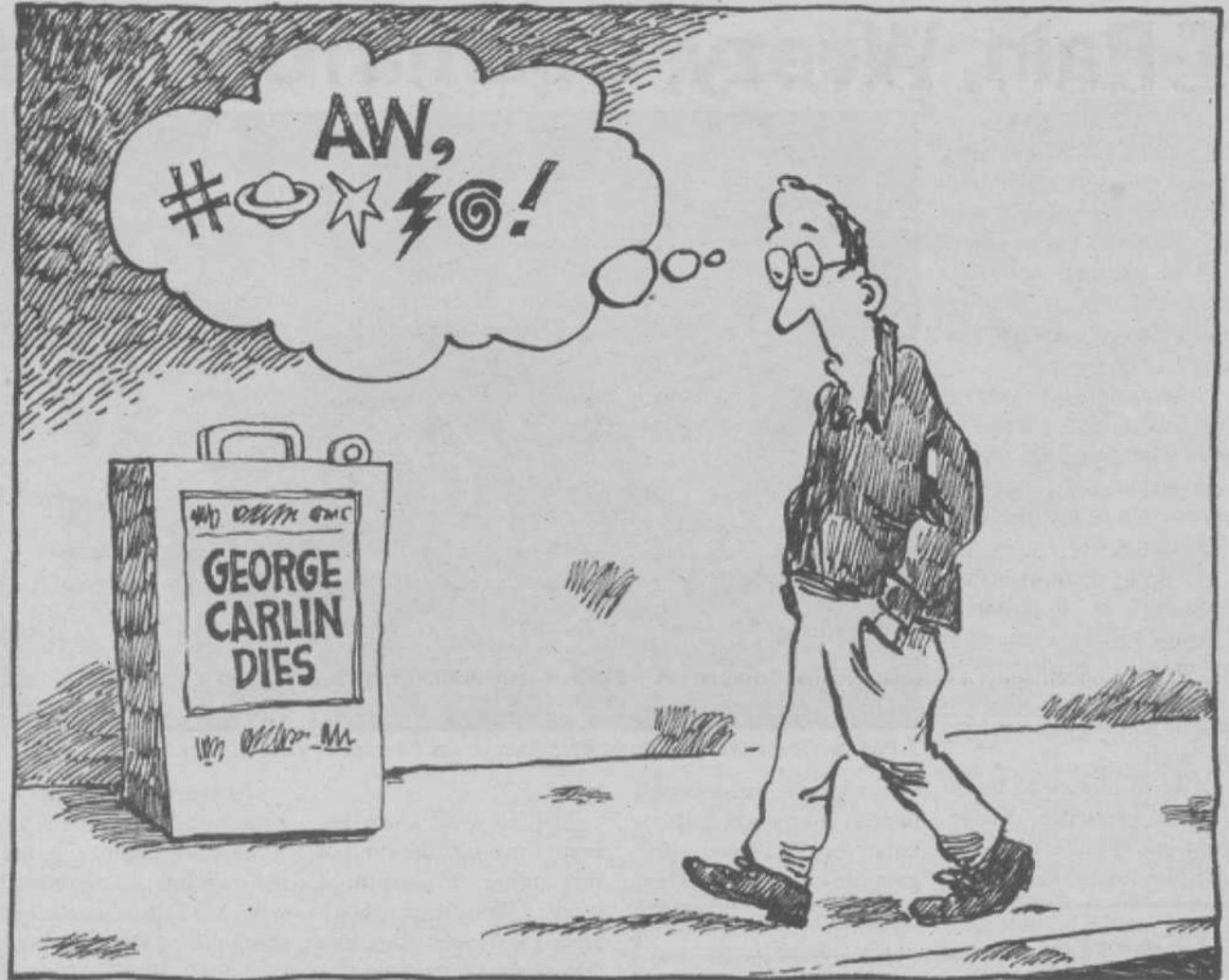
"...There is no doubt that the media influence people—consciously and unconsciously—to copycat what is portrayed, whether it's to become violent or to become pregnant," Lieberman said. "Movies like 'Juno' or 'Knocked Up,' soap operas, and pregnant teen celebrities like Jamie Lynn Spears make teen girls believe that getting pregnant is cool, regardless of your age, and whether you love—or even know—the father."

While Lieberman's points may be on point, they speak to a cognitive disconnect among certain segments of young people. They're either unable or unwilling to weigh the magnitude of adult decisions. Little is given to weighty decisions like having illicit sex, doing drugs or committing crimes. The concept of penance is distorted. Who among adults can fathom a lifetime of pain for few moments of pleasure? Being sentenced to life in prison is very different from spending your remaining days on earth behind bars, never to breathe free air again. Many women will tell you the fairytale ideal of pregnancy in no way mirrors the reality: swollen feet, morning sickness, Caesarean sections, painful childbirths.

Maybe if these girls had a chance to sneak peak the new NBC show, "The Baby Borrowers," whose premise involves teens "borrowing" a baby, a toddler, a pre-teen, a teenager and then a senior for three weeks. "They'll begin with an infant, followed by a toddler, pre-teen, young teenager and lastly a senior citizen," according to the NBC website. "In the end, will these couples be able to cope with the pressure of parenthood or will they break?"

Sadly, this well-intentioned show may only deter a small number of teenagers. Research seems to indicate that nothing less than a fundamental rethinking of how we raise children, especially women, will suffice. A well-sourced article in the *Final Call*, the publication of the Nation of Islam, reveals how deeply ingrained misogyny and racism are ingrained in American culture. Black woman continue to be overly sexualized and companies marketing sex appeal to a younger demographic.

A 2007 American Psychological Association a study reported that girls and young women suffered intellectual, psychological and physical problems as a result of messages that push sexualization which, in turn, undermines feelings of confidence and comfort with their own bodies, leading to emotional and self-image problems, according to the study. Teen angst is not new, but it's consequences are worse than ever. How many more pregnancy pacts will it take for us to wake up?



# Fox News crossed racist line

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The famed comedian D.J. Hughley has stated that whenever he accidentally rests his television dial on the Fox News station it will automatically start tilting to the right.

That's funny, but it also illustrates the dogma and mantra that comes from this station that claims to be "fair and balanced."

That claim is indeed untrue. In fact, there has never been a cable channel so devoted to one area of political debate. Fox News is not extremely committed to the right-wing dogma of the political debate it is pro ultra conservative awash with neo conservative views, which are not compatible with traditional or progressive Black views.

Anti-Democratic, anti-Liberal but also anti-Black, and this is what sickens me and should cause great concern for the free nation known as America.

The Obama run for the presidency has turned this station into a bastion for hate, propaganda and sick satire. Mahatma Gandhi once stated that when you start a movement "they will first ignore you; then they will laugh at you; then they will fight you; finally, you will win".

Fox News is engrossed in



HARRY C. ALFORD

the third stage with Sen. Obama and the entire Black race in general. It appears to them that the Senator and the entire Black race are one and the same and must be stopped at all costs. The level of hate and racism from the Rupert Murdoch station is turning up to a very serious level.

It has decided to demonize the entire Black church. Since the tape and follow-up of Rev. Wright, Sen. Obama's former minister, the television station has repeatedly blamed this on typical Black church rhetoric coming out every Sunday from typical Black churches and their ministers throughout the land.

They have even brought on their dependable colored buffoons who claim, "This is what's wrong with Black people. They have stupid, hate mongering preachers telling them what to do."

Someone needs to tell this medium that it is the Black

church that has gotten our race through the Jim Crow apartheid era of the United States and that it is the Black church that has spawned great leaders, like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who have led us to victory in the great Civil Rights Struggle.

I guess that's it: They despise the Black church for what it has done—delivering us from oppression through faith and courage. Apparently, this station hates what the Black church stands for and is.

It was not funny at all when one of the paid pundits on Fox News made a Freudian slip by saying, "it would be nice to stop Al Qaeda and kill Obama," when checked by another pundit she continued, "Osama/Obama, let's knock off both of them."

This is intolerable! They tried to cover themselves

with a mild, jovial apology the next day. This was nothing to joke about and based on the history of this nation it was clearly a threat that should not be taken lightly. How can a "news show" carry on in such a dangerous and sick manner? If the Ku Klux Klan has an endorsed television channel, this is it.

Racists can clearly be illustrated with the hatred of the Black female. Their fear of the Black male causes them to hate the one who loves him—the Black female. The personal mean spirited-attacks against the honorable Michelle Obama are terribly sad. Another Fox News pundit referred to her as "Obama's baby mama." This is reducing the most celebrated Black family today to an unholy affair, replete with illegitimate children. This is

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