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Vic

Georgia's flag: does it speak for you?



Donna Delaney
Spectator Editor

They're only small rectangles of cloth, but they carry the weight of emotion for all who stand behind them: our flags speak for us, and we fly them high atop poles to send messages for all to see. Every country and every state around the world recognizes the importance of an identifying flag—it is what leads the battle or announces the surrender. The pride and respect a people hold for the message their flag sends is shown by the dignity with which they

treat their flag: We salute and pledge allegiance to our countries' flag, take it in at night, retire and replace it with pomp and ritual, we enshrine it in statues like the one of the Iwo Jima battle. We care for it, and so we confer it with dignity.

Funny thing about dignity: in its absence, nothing else matters very much, for life without it (as a flag or as a person) hardly qualifies as worth the effort. Without dignity, respect and self-esteem seem to wither away.

Dignity, and the unalterable need for it, are at the heart of every step forward we have made as civilized peoples; it is the essence of the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address. Ghandi and King built their revolutions on the demand of "dignity first," and people like Joe Hill and Rosa Parks understood that—they held their ground in an effort to hold onto their dignity.

In 1956, some people changed the Georgia state flag. They changed its message by changing its appearance. Despite coy claims of tribute to fallen forebearers, they added the Confederate stars and bars, the Confederate battle emblem, to tell the world that they believed in segregation and the inherent inequality of the races. It was a direct response to federal integration orders. To this day, that revised flag flies over this University and across the state. That message flies over our courthouses and our children's schools; on the uniforms of our police and in the offices of our senators and representatives.

This message of hatred and division silently destroys the dignity of all who, by complacency or ignorance, allow it to continue to speak for them when it does not tell the truth.

Georgia's flag is no place for the glorification of a cruel and embarrassing past and such a time as it represents is no heritage, but an unfortunate period of history that provides an opportunity to grow beyond, like the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust and the subjugation of women.

Some people have already decided that they will not live under a flag created to champion disenfranchisement—there are businesses and apartments and schools, in Valdosta and elsewhere across the state, that have chosen to fly the old state flag, the one that flew before it was subverted by a few narrow-minded bigots. Although a step in the right direction, it is too small, too easy, too quiet.

If you would have your flag speak for you, consider the means at your disposal: you can petition your local and state representatives to demand the removal of the Confederate battle emblem from the state flag; you can let Gov. Miller know that as the leader of our state, he has a responsibility to initiate action in support of this cause; you can ask everyone who flies a state flag to display their unity by flying the original Georgia flag; and you can go visit VSU President Hugh Bailey in his West Hall office on Monday from 2 to 4:30 p.m. to share your concerns about a flag whose signals distress you.

ew Points



Program hopes to 'weed' problems, 'seed' progress

By JODI M. SCOTT
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — When asked to identify the biggest problem in his south Valdosta neighborhood, one resident was quick to reply.

"Drugs, drugs, drugs," he said. Valdosta officials hope implementation of a federal program will help change that.

On Friday, Valdosta officials, joined by Middle District Assistant U.S. Attorney Beverly Martin, announced plans to implement Operation Weed and Seed, which works to combat crime in high-crime neighborhoods.

"We hope to weed out the problems and seed in progress," Police Chief Frank Simons said.

Residents who watched the press conference on Friday, held at Martin Luther King and South Lee Street, said improvements are needed. One man said the police department often patrols the area, while others disagreed.

“
This is my home, I want to make it safe for my daughter. I want to make it safe for her friends. I want to make it safe for residents and businessmen.
”

— Bunnis Williams

But all agreed drugs and drug dealers, who sell in the streets, are their top concerns. If the areas were cleaned up, the dealers likely would leave, they said.

Three areas have been targeted for improvements. According to Valdosta District 2 Councilman Bunnis Williams, the first area borders south on Hill Avenue, north on Griffin and between Fry and Toombs; the second includes the area north on Hill Avenue, south of Brookwood and between Forrest and Ashley; and the third, south on Gordon and north on

Hill and between Hightower and Ashley.

"This is my home," Williams said. "I want to make it safe for my daughter. I want to make safe for her friends. I want to make it safe for residents and businessmen."

The program, started by the Department of Justice in 1991, involves four elements — law enforcement, community policing, prevention, intervention and treatment and neighborhood restoration.

Martin said participating com-



Valdosta Police Chief Frank Simons addresses a group at a press conference held Friday in Valdosta. — Times photo by Ben Butler

munities work to "weed out" crime and then "seed" change through social services, economic development and neighborhood restoration.

Local residents decide which specific programs would be best for their neighborhoods. Four meetings will be held to get input from citizens about their con-

cerns, with the first held at 6 p.m. Tuesday at Lomax-Pinevale Elementary School.

Delores Williams, Johnny Washington, Delores Mitchell Brown and Doris Foy have agreed to serve as representatives for the program, Simons said.

Southern District Attorney David Miller said some residents already help to make their communities safer. Since taking office, he was approached by a group of people complaining that their neighborhood was being terrorized by one offender. Miller, a judge and others in the justice system worked to put the man in jail.

"This is an example of how the program can work," he said.

The Department of Justice requires that communities demonstrate that they can implement the program without funding, but can apply for grant money after becoming officially recognized.

Residents discuss Weed and Seed plan

By JODI M. SCOTT
Time Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — For the past two months, the Rev. Kelly Dawsey has preached to the congregation of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church about the need for change in south Valdosta.

He led them on a walk around the neighborhood, pointing out dilapidated houses that he envisions as a halfway house, a gym, a social center.

"The people looked at me strange, and said, 'Amen, pastor. Where do we get the money?'" he said. "I don't know. We'll work it out."

The church may have found the answer to its prayers.

The city of Valdosta, along with Project Change, the Southern District Attorney's office and the Middle District of Georgia United States Attorney's



A map designating the Weed and Seed target area 1 is presented to a group of about 80 residents gathered for a public hearing Tuesday at the Lomax Pinevale gymnasium. The program, supported by federal, state and local authorities is designed to assist neighborhood residents in reducing crime. — Times photo by Mike Tanner

Office are working to implement a federal community revitalization program. Known as Weed and Seed, the program focuses on "weeding" out violent crime and "seeding" in social services, economic revitalization and neighborhood restoration.

Three areas have been targeted

for improvements. Area 1 stretches south from Hill Avenue, east of Oak Street and west of N. Fry Street; the second includes the area north of Hill Avenue, west of Forrest, south of Brookwood Drive and east of Ashley Street; and the third, south of Gordon,

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Weed

from page 1-A
east of Hightower, north of Hill and west of Ashley.

As part of implementing Weed and Seed, community meetings must be held in each area. The first meeting was held Tuesday for Area 1, attracting about 80 residents, including Dawsey.

"If you do the weeding, then certainly we as a community can work to do the seeding," he said. "It's going to take some collaborative effort, and it's going to take some prayers."

Valdosta Police Chief Frank Simons asked residents to speak about their concerns, which included drug trafficking, lack of jobs and job training, need for more visual leadership, clean-up of trash and dilapidated homes, gang activity, speed enforcement, self-reliance among residents and more activities for youths. Simons said he was not surprised by any of the issues, noting that 3,738 felonies occurred in the area last year.

William Franklin Collier was raised in the area, moved away and returned. He said that drug sales often take place in the streets.

"Something has to be done

because this is not the same community that I left," he said.

Isiah Isom argued that without jobs and job training, drug dealers and others have nowhere to turn.

"We do not have jobs for those people who are standing on the street corner," he said. "Some need to be taught how to work. They've never had the experience of working. We need to show them how to work."

Arlene McClain said that while the Weed and Seed program seemed to be a good idea, the community needs to work together to make improvements, including economic development.

"Look on our side of town," she said. "Look on the other side of the overpass. Look on the north side of town by the mall. We're giving away our future. We're giving away the future of our children."

"What does it take for us to get up and do something? Please tell me what it takes."

Meetings in areas 2 and 3 will soon be held, and then the information will be evaluated before a final report is sent to the Justice Department, which oversees the program.

Farewell And Good Luck To Gerald Guy

Today is the last day Gerald L. Guy, former managing editor of The Valdosta Daily Times, will grace the offices at that paper with his presence. For me, this is a day of mixed emotions.

I'm happy Jerry and his family are moving on to higher ground where they'll find contentment and appreciation. Yet, personally, I'm sad he's leaving.

It was over two years ago when I first met Jerry. I went over to the Times to make corrections to a letter I had submitted to the editor.

During that visit, Jerry asked if I would like to serve on the paper's Reader Board. I agreed and since then, I've come to know Jerry Guy as the outstanding person he truly is.

Like most outstanding newspaper editors, Jerry not only provided credibility, objectivity and diversity to the news we

received each day, but he always worked very hard to improve both the product and our view of that product.

He also always tried to keep his finger on the pulse of the community. And one of the things he did when he first arrived at The Times was to start the "Peaches and Kudzu" feature on the editorial page.

According to the folks I talk with, Peaches and Kudzu is one of, if not the most popular feature in the paper. The only exceptions are when some unwilling non-volunteer's name would appear as an exclusive kudzu highlight.

Of course, I'd rather not have to walk through the kudzu side of a Peaches and Kudzu salutation myself. In addition to this feature, Jerry implemented the Reader Board.

He did this as a sincere effort to get firsthand knowledge of a random cross-section of views regarding his readers' concerns and opinions. Surprising to me, it was very difficult for Jerry to get enough willing guinea pigs...I mean people... to serve as members of his board.

Nonetheless, in addition to his job at the Times, Jerry was very active in the community. Among his many civic activities, he worked with Habitat for Human-



Charles Moore
Mailbox Post Columnist

Moore

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ty and Project Change.

No, he wasn't a figurehead. Well, maybe sometimes he was. But he would always take off his suit and tie, and pick up a hammer and nails and work harder than anyone on community projects.

He also never run away from the tough issues such as racial discrimination, economic disparity, freedom of the press and local partisan politics. Perhaps it was his integrity more than anything else that caused his untimely removal as editor this past July.

It was either that or he possibly stepped outside one of the imaginary boundary lines reserved for "outsiders." Then, again, Jerry may have been the victim of mean spirited ghouls. I'll never know.

And he'll never say, because whatever anyone may think of Gerald Guy, he's a person of humility and is a real gentleman. As Jerry makes final preparations to move to his new job as executive editor of The Times Herald Reporter in Manitowoc, Wis., he did have a few things to say.

He loves Valdosta and told me, "Valdosta has been one of the best news towns I've worked in." There was also praise for those who worked for him.

He also said to me, "I've been fortunate to have been surrounded by some talented and inquisitive people who loved to tell a good story."

The Reader Board and Peaches and Kudzu, if they continue to exist will be hollow without

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The Valdosta Daily Times

Thursday, October 16, 1997 3-A

Briefly

Gerald Guy takes editor position in Wisconsin

VALDOSTA — Former Valdosta Daily Times Editor Gerald Guy left the newspaper Wednesday to take a job as executive editor of *The Manitowoc Herald-Times-Reporter*, in Manitowoc, Wis.

Guy was with *The Valdosta Daily Times* for four years after being named editor in Fall 1993. He led the paper to the statewide Georgia Associated Press'1995 Freedom of Information Award, Story of the Year and Public Service Award, in addition to several other awards during his tenure here.

"My stay in Valdosta has been all about people, working with good people and telling stories that impact people's lives," Guy said.

Guy was actively involved in several local charitable organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Project Change, the American Red Cross and the United Way.

—Staff reports



GERALD GUY

Savannah-area schools slipping back into segregation, report states

The Associated Press

SAVANNAH — When a federally mandated integration order was lifted three years ago, school officials in Savannah-Chatham County pledged to “fight like hell” if the mix of black and white students in their classrooms slipped.

Despite the tough talk, the county’s suburban schools have become more white and its inner-city schools more black since federal control was relinquished in 1994, the Savannah Morning News reported Sunday in the first of a series of stories.

“It’s a sad, sad day for Chatham County public education when, in October 1997, we’re all about back where we started with a segregated school system,” said school board member Connell Stiles.

Gains that prompted a federal judge to declare the coastal Georgia school system desegregated have largely been lost in the three years since, according to a computer analysis of school records by the newspaper.

The latest numbers come from the school system’s semiannual desegregation report issued earlier this month.

■ In 1994, 11 of 45 schools were still 20 percent too white or too black, meaning they were still segregated. Now, 16 of the county’s 43 schools would be considered too segregated. That’s about a third of the schools, the same as when the county’s busing program was deemed a failure in 1986 and the schools were ordered to use other methods of integration.

■ This year, four schools are 90 percent black. All such schools had been eliminated in 1991 through school closings or magnet programs, which offer specialized programs to attract white students. In 1986, the system had six 90 percent black schools.

To determine that the schools were sufficiently desegregated in 1994, U.S. District Judge B. Avant Edenfield compared the schools’ racial mix that year to ratios from 1986.

The decline in integration in the last three years contrasts sharply with promises school board members made in 1993 when they voted to ask Edenfield to release the schools from federal control.

“If we take one step backward, then I am going to fight like hell to make sure that this system moves forward,” board member Daniel Washington said at the time.

“Massive change has been brought about,” board president Karen Matthews said in 1993. “Today, every child of any race has an opportunity for an equal education in this school district.”

Confronted with the latest statistics showing a slide in integration, schools officials blame in part a recent redrawing of districts that determine which children attend which schools.

They also note that the system has an increasing proportion of minority students. Nonwhites account for 67 percent of the system’s students, compared to 60 percent in 1991.

“The bottom line is that, as we become more nonwhite, it’s more difficult to have all our schools racially balanced,” said Superintendent Patrick Russo.

Final area Weed and Seed meeting held

By JODI M. SCOTT
Times Staff Writer

VALDOSTA — Residents attending the third and final area meeting Tuesday for a proposed federal Weed and Seed program expressed the same concerns made during prior gatherings.

Drug use, cleaning up dilapidated houses and creating social and educational programs, particularly for youth, have been discussed at all three public hearings for Weed and Seed, a community revitalization program.

Under the program, each neighborhood within the area targeted for the selected programs must have the commitment of its residents. Tuesday's meeting was

for residents of Area 3, which includes those living south of Gordon, north of Hill and west of Ashley.

If Valdosta is designated as a Weed and Seed community, it would be eligible for federal funds. The program involves law enforcement, community policing, prevention, intervention and treatment and neighborhood revitalization.

The Rev. Leroy Dye said his congregation had made a list of concerns, including job training, apprenticeship, a community center, inclusion of ministers and community leaders in decision making, slum absentee landlords, preserving historic homes and stopping drugs. Others spoke of

the need for businesses in the community and more police patrol.

"I hope Weed and Seed does something for the community," one man said. "We're in bad shape."

A city-wide meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at Valdosta City Hall. Information will be evaluated before a final report is sent to the Justice Department, which oversees the Weed and Seed program. . . .

VSU explores the diversity of mankind

Jeffery Clark
Spectator Reporter

Multiculturalism was the "buzz" at the third annual Multicultural Education Conference. The conference was held at the University Center on Sept. 25, 1997 from 7:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. The conference is held each year to provide educators material, concepts and training about multiculturalism in the classroom.

These events educate the educators on cultural diversity and enable educators to relate to each student on their own cultural ground. The conference offered various cultural booths and resource tables where literature about different cultures was available. Color Me Human, a cultural organization which believes in the oneness of humanity, had tables set up with tee shirts, coffee mugs and other paraphanelia for sale.

The conference had seven sessions and began with Dr. Jerald L. Durley, of Health Promotion Resource Center and Morehouse School of Medicine, as keynote speaker. Each session addressed ways to heighten cultural awareness. One of the sessions consisted of a cross-cultural simulation game called Bafa-Bafa. Dr. Shirley Hardin, executive director of African-American Studies at VSU, was the speaker at the "Multi-Cultural Centering in the Classroom" session.



Nancy Williams offers a "Color Me Human" T-shirt for sale at the multicultural conference. Photo by Michael Ford.

"Every child, every student needs to be culturally centered in the classroom and the way it is done is that the professor or teacher makes the student a part of the information

disseminated in the classroom allowing him to speak his own cultural truth," Dr. Hardin said.

The purpose of this conference was to achieve equality

in education. This free workshop provided teachers with ideas and resources to take back to the classroom.

"I think that this conference is

bringing about an awareness about cultural diversity that this area, I feel can benefit from," Ceila Mitchell, director of health services for coastal plain area EOA Headstart, said.