

Message is clear: Rude behavior is colorblind



terry dickson

BRUNSWICK, GA. | If you're surprised that Nancy Gordeuk is looking for a job, you haven't been paying attention.

Gordeuk was the principal at TNT Academy in Stone Mountain who called out African-Americans for leaving commencement exercises during the valedictorian's speech. She did it with all the sensitivity of a tiger shark that swims into a school of mullet.

"You people are being so rude," Gordeuk said. Then she pointed out it was "all the black people."

So what if it was all the black people. Remember when the discriminatory barriers first began falling — getting kicked down, actually — and African-Americans were finally getting opportunities to climb professional ladders? People would say things like, "He's not a black school superintendent. He's a school superintendent who happens to be black."

That wouldn't have worked for Gordeuk. "Look who's leaving. All the rude people who happen to be black."

Nope. She's still in trouble.

Former Principal Gordeuk should know rudeness knows no race nor social station. People just don't know how to act.

Once solemn events, high school graduations are hootenannies recorded on cellphones.

Students talk back to teachers, their parents or anyone else. I've seen young men in orange coveralls answer questions

with, "Yeah, Judge."

A few years ago, I heard an officer of the Glynn County Republican Party ask a man "Why don't you shut up and sit down?" because he didn't like the questions the man was posing to a U.S. senator. White, conservative, rude and well dressed.

I saw something the other day that may explain it. The Pew Research Center released the results of enormous surveys that showed the number of Americans who claimed to be Christians declined from 78.5 percent in 2007 to 70.6 percent in 2014. There was an equally dramatic rise in people who said they "weren't much of anything."

Some say it's because of an influx of immigrants, but I think it's what the Bible would describe as a falling away.

Christians don't have a monopoly on good manners, but most of them go to church at some point. That's a good place to learn to sit quietly and listen to speeches, some of which can be excruciatingly boring. At the church of my youth, they didn't even laugh at the choir.

In the pews, you learn discretion in looking at your watch. At the old traditional churches, you filed out, made small talk with other worshippers, then shook the preacher's hand and lied, "That was a wonderful message."

Too bad more people didn't stay and listen to the TNT valedictorian's speech. He would have loved to have looked over a lot of faces as he spoke, regardless of their color.

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WOODS

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English skills because of her personality. And despite where she has ended up as an adult, she still has an upbeat, endearing personality, one that makes it easy to picture her as the kind of kid a teacher would love.

"I'm not bashing my teachers," she said. "But I feel like in life, you cannot enable somebody. You just can't. I feel like I finally took the reins in my life."

She mentions her parents. Her father is 74 years old. She describes him as a workaholic. He said something to her recently about what she's been doing at 6:30 each morning.

"My dad actually told me he was proud of me," she said. "He started tearing up."

She turned to Batten at one point while describing what the program has done for her and said, "So thank you."

Batten smiled and explained that what happens at 6:30 each morning doesn't just change students. She said she wants to stop spinning her wheels, doing the same things and expecting different results. She wants to go back to college. She wants to keep tutoring.

"It makes me excited to help someone," she said.

Amy Brown, 41, knows the feeling. She went to college, studying anthropology. For several months, she has been a tutor, and Alisha Moore has been one of her students.

Moore is 36. For most of her life she was told she was a slow learner who never would amount to much. And for most of her life, she believed that.

She has a different personality than Holland, the other student I met. Much more reserved. But she wanted to talk about this. And she brought some paperwork to show me test scores. She pointed to some numbers and explained that they mean she went from a fourth- or fifth-grade level to 10th- or

11th-grade level. But they clearly mean even more than that to her.

"I can learn," she said. "I am smart. I am going to do this. I'm going to get my degree. And I'm going to go to FSCJ and work really hard at it."

She said that she was abused at a young age. She had a baby when she was 13 years old. That's when she dropped completely out of school and began down the path she once believed was her destiny.

"I've been to prison twice," she said. "I've been in jail many times. But I never took these steps. I never had this feeling of accomplishment. ... It makes me feel more like somebody. Like I'm not a nobody."

She recently wrote her daughter, now 22, a letter. Her daughter wrote back and said, "OMG, Mom. Who was that who just wrote me?"

It wasn't just that she used correct punctuation and a few "10-dollar words." It was what those words conveyed.

She gives credit to the support and patience of Miss Brown. To understand what she did as a tutor, you could look at some of the work they've done in those early-morning sessions. But you could start with what the tutor says about the student.

"She's really smart," Brown said. "I was basically just there for moral support. She's so eager to learn. She teaches me, too. She really does. She's the sweetest person and the best student anybody could ever have."

She adds that as she watched Moore make strides, "It helped my self-esteem as well, knowing that, wow, I was important to someone."

They are hardly the only inmates saying this.

Each morning before 6:30, some of them line up for tutor time, hoping to prove, among other things, one measure of intelligence is the ability to change.

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Senate hopefuls court supporters

Lieutenant governor is on long list of those considering Rubio's seat

By **Brendan Farrington**
Associated Press

ORLANDO | Chances are good that U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis will have a primary opponent as he seeks Marco Rubio's Senate seat, and four people also considering a run were at the Republican Party of Florida's quarterly meeting Saturday gauging interest for possible campaigns.

Several people are eyeing the open seat created by Rubio's decision to run for the Republican presidential nomination, from U.S. Rep. David Jolly, who has yet to serve a full term in the House, to former Attorney General Bill McCollum, who has run for Senate twice and served 20 years in Congress.

Also at the party meeting were Lt. Gov. Carlos

Lopez-Cantera, who has already set up a political committee to raise money as he considers a run, and U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller, an eight-term congressman from Pensacola.

The meeting is one-stop shopping for candidates to be seen by and talk to the party's top activists from around the state.

Lopez-Cantera said he used the two-day meeting to talk to grassroots supporters and potential donors about a possible campaign.

"Florida is not a state where you can make this decision quickly," said Lopez-Cantera, who said his experience working with Gov. Rick Scott will benefit him if he runs.

"One of the things that's motivating me to consider this is we have a playbook

that's proven to work here in Florida and maybe there should be a voice on that playbook in DC."

So far DeSantis, who represents Northeast Florida, is the only announced candidate. He was expected to attend the meeting but campaign adviser Barney Keller said the congressman had a family emergency.

Miller, who hasn't attended a party quarterly meeting in more than three years, hosted a reception Friday night for activists. He also recently met with Republican groups in Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties, far from his district in the western Panhandle.

"The decision is huge, and I'm trying to figure out if I have a message with the citizens of Florida," said Miller. "I have a proven record of working not only within our own party, but across the aisle."

He and Jolly addressed

activists at a breakfast with McCollum and Lopez-Cantera in the audience. While neither specifically addressed their own plans, both predicted a Senate primary.

"Primaries are a great thing," Jolly said. "The Democratic Party is not the inclusive party. It is not the open party that the Republican Party is."

The Democratic Party uses a machine in Washington, D.C. to decide who a local candidate is going to be and they run that candidate and they push everybody else out of the way."

That was a reference to U.S. Rep. Patrick Murphy, the only announced Democrat running for the Rubio seat.

Party leaders in Washington and Tallahassee are coalescing behind him hoping he'll have a clean shot at the nomination, though Democratic U.S. Rep. Alan Grayson is also considering a run.

ELECTION

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They have some work to do. Democrats had about a 1,500-vote advantage over Republicans by Friday, according to elections data.

"That's not good for the Democrats," said Michael Binder, a University of North Florida political science professor and faculty director of the college's public-opinion research lab. He said the Democrats need a much bigger margin before Tuesday because Republicans traditionally have the turnout advantage that day.

Although Brown has often campaigned throughout the race as a nonpartisan leader who has the support of Democrats and Republicans, his get-out-the-vote events cater heavily toward black Democratic voters.

Brown held one major rally Saturday and is holding another one Sunday at the Gateway Town Center — which has traditionally served a largely black neighborhood off Interstate 95 and near Norwood Avenue.

Sunday's rally includes big Democratic names, including civil rights icon and Georgia U.S. Rep. John Lewis; South Carolina U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn; U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, who also chairs the Congressional Black Caucus; New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu; and local U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown.

Brown also has pivoted to the left in recent weeks,

ELECTION DAY

On Election Day, voters can only cast ballots at their assigned precinct. You can find those at www.duvalelections.com. Voting runs from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday. Voters must have a valid and current photo and signature ID to vote.

- Acceptable IDs include:
- Florida driver's license
 - Florida ID Card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
 - U.S. passport
 - Debit or credit card
 - Military ID
 - Student ID
 - Retirement center ID
 - Neighborhood association ID
 - Public assistance ID

advocating — for the first time — for the state to increase its \$8.05 an hour minimum wage to \$10.10, pushing for equal pay for women and for affordable college costs.

Curry seems comfortable with the narrative he has stuck with since the early days of his campaign, making the city's violent crime the front-and-center issue.

He'll be getting a boost from presidential candidate and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio. The two will hold a rally Monday at the downtown Hyatt.

DOWN THE TICKET

Brown and Curry have generated the most money, attention and acrimony, but

voters will also decide several key races.

Republican Mike Williams and Democrat Ken Jefferson want to replace longtime Sheriff John Rutherford.

Leadership has been a prominent issue in that race: Jefferson gained a name as a spokesman for the Sheriff's Office and later as a television crime analyst who is promising voters a major change and more engagement with the community. Williams retired as director of patrol after 23 years and had been director of investigations and homeland security before that and had led investigative units, including the SWAT team. He's pledging to target drugs and gangs.

The race has also focused on personal demons: Jefferson's more than decade-old bankruptcy and Mike Williams' home foreclosure, which was settled.

Several City Council seats are also up for grabs.

■ **Council At-Large Group 1:** City Councilwoman Kimberly Daniels, a Democrat and the only incumbent seeking reelection who didn't win outright in March, is in a competitive race with Republican Anna Brosche, a political newcomer, certified public accountant and managing partner at local accounting firm Ennis, Pellum & Associates.

■ **Council At-Large Group 3:** Former Mayor Tommy Hazouri, a Democrat, is squaring off against Mandarin businessman Geoff Youngblood, a Re-

publican.

■ **Council At-Large 5:** Democrat Ju'Coby Pittman, the longtime leader of the Clara White Mission, is running against Samuel Newby, a route supervisor for Pepsico and former vice chairman of the local Republican Party.

■ **District 1:** Democrat Joyce Morgan, a former local news reporter, and Republican Mike Anania, a small business owner, are squaring off.

■ **District 2:** Republican Al Ferraro, who has owned a lawn-care business for nearly 30 years, is running against Democrat Lisa King, a grant consultant for local governments and chair of the city's Planning Commission.

■ **District 4:** Democrat Ramon Day, an account manager for Allstate with a background in banking, is running against Republican Scott Wilson, a council aide to the district incumbent, City Councilman Don Redman.

■ **District 7:** Former Jacksonville Port Authority Chairman Reggie Gaffney and attorney/accountant George Spencer are running for this heavily Democratic seat. Both candidates are Democrats.

■ **District 8:** Katrina Brown, daughter and business manager for barbecue master Jerome Brown, is facing off against Pat Lockett-Felder, who served on City Council from 1999 to 2007. Both candidates are Democrats.

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Music lovers dance in the street during the Dancin' in the Street festival on Saturday.

FESTIVAL

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on a day like today," she said. "Of course, I picked this day intentionally to have a sale."

Alejandro Rojas said he wished he had thought of a cause to raise money for when he set up a giant inflatable water slide outside his house at First and Cherry Road Saturday.

"I wish I could call this entrepreneurship," he said. "We can make it a cause.

OK, the cause is, we support having a good time."

And a good time it was, for those taking in the sights along First Street leading up to the festival and for those at the festival.

"This is great," said Dana Isabella as she stood in front of a stage where the song "Safety Dance" was being played.

"I come out here every year. Everyone is just so friendly."

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PARK

Continued from B-1

Ninah Cummer — and anchored by "Life," a large sculpture by artist Charles Adrian Pillars.

But after 91 years, the park needs a makeover.

In 2012, the association initiated plans to restore and rehabilitate Memorial Park to its original grandeur, and in 2013 commissioned a master plan to lead the way. The sculpture has undergone several restorations but needs another, at a cost of about \$60,000. Restoration of the entire park would cost about \$5.5 million.

Last year, the Jacksonville City Council joined the fundraising effort with a \$200,000 allocation. The city money will come from a recreation/parks account designated for Councilman Jim Love's council district, which includes the park.

The city money will match \$200,000 in donations from past and current association board mem-

MEMORIAL PARK ASSOCIATION

To purchase a business sponsorship, make a donation, volunteer or get more information, contact the association at 1650-302 Margaret St., #322, Jacksonville 32204-3869 or info@memparkjax.org or go to memparkjax.org.

bers, who have already committed about \$156,000, Houlihan said.

Meanwhile, the Adopt the Park program has won support from businesses in the Riverside and Five Points area who will be identified on signs soon to be placed at the park. Allan DeVault, managing partner of Black Sheep Restaurant on nearby Oak Street and president of the 5 Points Merchants Association, was the first to sign on.

Memorial Park, he said, "is the anchor" of Five Points.

"The open spaces and view of the St. Johns River and South Jacksonville make it hugely popular day and night, throughout the week," he said. "Young and old, neighbors and visitors ... enjoy the park for games

and sports, picnics, weddings, exercise, or just lying on the grass and reading a book.

"Memorial Park exemplifies the diversity in our neighborhood and is a vital part of the quality of life here. We appreciate, applaud and could not be happier to support the efforts of the Memorial Park Association," he said.

Houlihan said she hopes ultimately to win corporate sponsorships and increased public donations as well.

"We hope as we move forward," she said, "it will instill confidence in the public that we are good managers of the funds."

The May 24 concert — the last association-sponsored event before the renovation begins — will serve as a reminder of the

park's origins, said board president Agnes Danciger.

"It is an opportunity to reflect upon all those who gave their lives and the fact that the preparations for the park began the day after the signing of the Armistice in 1918," she said, referring to the Nov. 11, 1918, agreement between the Allies and Germany that ended World War I. "The citizens decided that it would be a very important for Jacksonville to honor the 1,220 who died for Florida."

At the time, Jacksonville Rotary Club President George Hardee proposed a memorial to honor Floridians who died in service during the war, which led the city to buy the park property for \$125,000. Hardee then led the formation of a public committee to plan the park's development, according to the association website.

Memorial Park, Houlihan said, "has always been a public-private partnership."

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