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Views From Around the U.S.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Excerpts from recent editorials in newspapers in the United States:

Omaha World-Herald on "Olympics rightly bringing back wrestling"

After making a mess of things, the International Olympic Committee finally got it right.

Wrestling is back.

In an inexplicable move earlier this year, the IOC's executive board cut wrestling from the list of Summer Games sports, explaining that it wanted to look for new sports that would sell more tickets and be more television-friendly.

Wrestlers worldwide, and those in the Midlands, rightly protested. After all, their sport was part of the original games in ancient Greece and has been included in every modern Olympics except 1900.

The ill-conceived move even brought together some unlikely allies. The United States, Iran and Russia all threw their weight behind the campaign to reinstate wrestling.

The Olympic committee has admitted its mistake and voted to include wrestling in the 2020 and 2024 games. Although it stopped short of re-instating wrestling as a "core" Olympic summer sport, IOC President Jacques Rogge acknowledged that "wrestling has shown great passion and resilience in the last few months."

In the fight to remain in the Olympics, wrestling's international governing body reworked the sport's structure, added weight classes for women and adopted rules changes designed to make the sport easier for spectators to understand and more fun to watch. In the long run, those changes could be a real positive for the athletes. ...

Olympics officials axed wrestling because they said they wanted new, more popular sports. It was a dumb idea, and the vote to bring wrestling back shows they seem to understand that now.

Going back to its roots is a good move for the Olympics and for the athletes of the future.

Hopeful signs seen on path to better race relations

"From small things, mama, big things one day come."

— Bruce Springsteen, "From Small Things"

This snippet of a song by The Boss has been swirling around inside my head a lot these days in response to some recent events involving race relations in our community.

On the surface, these events seem relatively small, especially when compared to the more major issues of the day concerning race relations, such as those surrounding the Trayvon Martin-George Zimmerman verdict and recent rulings on the Voting Rights Act.

Still, these little local events are responsible for my having a rising sense of optimism when it comes to race relations in our corner of the world.

Given that these seemingly unrelated events have occurred just as another anniversary of our most infamous — and deadly — dealing with race relations is upon us, it seems like an appropriate time to reflect on how far we've come.

Past is not even past

Tuesday will mark the 51st anniversary of James Meredith becoming the first African-American to be admitted to the University of Mississippi. Back in 1962, the nation and much of the rest of the world turned its gaze to Oxford and Ole Miss to watch angry white mobs resort to violence as they battled against a society that had changed and a country that would demand that the members of these mobs change, too.

That episode has done much to define how we're viewed by many when it comes to civil rights and race relations. Those

tumultuous times also forced us to take a more in-depth look at ourselves and reassess the complex relationship that exists between whites and blacks in the United States in general and in the South in particular.

There's no doubt that we, as a community, learned something about how to better confront issues involving African-Americans and Caucasians. For instance, from what I've heard and read of the time when Oxford integrated its public schools, white leaders and black leaders in the community came together to ensure this process was accomplished peacefully.

Ole Miss has also made enormous progress in race relations by eliminating some of its more divisive symbols and traditions. UM has also been willing to explore its past and present relationship with minorities with its "Open Doors" series of events in 2002 and its "Opening the Closed Society" series of events in 2012.

Of course, we're reminded periodically that we still have far to go. It was just a few months ago when some white Ole Miss students illustrated how racially insensitive they were by their comments and actions on the night of President Barack Obama's re-election.

Present deeds show progress

Yet, it's these other, more recent events that tell me our community seems ready and willing to do more to forge stronger, more honest relationships

between whites and blacks.

For instance, the example set this summer by the congregations of First and Second Baptist churches in Oxford is one in which we can all be proud. The congregation of the historically white First Baptist Church acknowledged a harmful, racially motivated policy from 45 years ago, repented and apologized. Then, the congregation of the historically black Second Baptist Church accepted the apology. Now the two churches are finding ways to keep this conversation going and they've made a foundation on which to build a new relationship and create more opportunities for fellowship.

Just this past Saturday, hundreds of members of the community — white and black — came together to dedicate the Burns-Belfry Museum & Multicultural Center. A diverse coalition worked together for more than a decade to raise the funds needed to restore a structure that played a vital role in the local African-American community. Today it's home to a permanent installation on local African-American history.

This weekend, the community will have an opportunity to see the restoration of the Newell School, an old one-room African-American school in Lafayette County. It serves as a reminder to future generations of how separate and unequal our public education system was during the Jim Crow era. More details about the Newell School and this Sunday's open house at the school will be included in Friday's edition of The Oxford EAGLE.

Future leader for others?

I know the progress we continue to make in race relations will

not come without the occasional setback or misstep. As we grope our way along this unfamiliar path, we're going to stumble. But so long as we choose to continue on this journey, I'm confident we'll make progress.

Perhaps our attempts to find our way together will serve as an example to others.

I'm reminded of something Susan Glisson said this summer when she and I talked about the remarkable story concerning First and Second Baptist as it was unfolding in our community. Glisson is executive director of the William Winter Institute of Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi — a part of Ole Miss that is itself another amazing sign of how far we've come. She spoke eloquently as to the potential significance of what was happening between these two churches and how what they were doing here could influence others far from Oxford and Mississippi.

"The most substantive conversations about race are the ones that are most local — the ones that grow out of a specific socio-economic historical context," she said. "The most effective work that can be done in race relations to move forward is going to be done at the local level. Everything will come from that."

"I know that Mississippi has a unique place in the United States in terms of its history. I believe now that Mississippi can lead the nation in dealing with race in a better way. And as it assumes that leadership role, it will be because of the work like that being done by these two churches."

Indeed. From these recent events in Oxford, big things may one day come.

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JONATHAN SCOTT

News Editor



State's poverty numbers increase despite development successes

Listening to Gov. Phil Bryant and Mississippi Development Authority director Brent Christensen of late, it's hard not to be impressed with Mississippi's economic development efforts.

Bryant's talked a lot in recent days about his administration's creation of more than 5,000 new jobs so far in 2013: "This is a testament to Mississippi's workforce and to our efforts in fostering a strong business climate. Economic development is a dynamic team sport, and I appreciate the work of Mississippi Development Authority Executive Director Brent Christensen and the entire MDA team for their hard work and dedication," Bryant said.

Then there is the news that Area Development Magazine ranked Mississippi ninth for Top States Doing Business and Top "Mississippi is on an economic roll." Bryant also noted in a recent Twitter post that Mississippi's travel and

tourism industries — still rising from the impacts of Hurricane Katrina and lingering negative perceptions from the BP oil spill — added \$408 million to the state's Fiscal Year 2012 state revenue and contributed more than 83,000 direct jobs.

New tire plant

Perhaps the crown jewel in northeast Mississippi in recent months has been the Yokohama Tire Company plant in West Point. The first phase of the project represents a \$300 million investment by Yokohama and will create 500 new jobs. Potential future expansions are projected to increase the company's investment to more than \$1 billion and to raise employment from 500 to 2,000 jobs.

But at the same time as these very positive economic development numbers in the state are being cited, the Pew Charitable Trusts just released their analysis of data from

the Census Bureau which shows that Mississippi's poverty rate in FY 2012 was a highest-in-the-nation 24.2 percent and that during the same year Mississippi's median household income was a lowest-in-the-nation \$37,095.

During FY 2012, the national average poverty rate was 15.9 percent while the national median household income was \$51,371. Surprisingly, Mississippi's median household income in FY 2008 was \$40,323 and has declined steadily over the succeeding fiscal years to the present \$37,095.

The state's poverty rate has increased over the same period from 21.4 percent to the present 24.2 percent.



SID SALTER

Syndicated Columnist

So, how is it possible that the state's median income can steadily decline, the state's poverty rate can steadily increase, and that the governor and his economic development professionals can be telling the truth when they announce positive economic development numbers?

Easy. What the totality of the numbers reflect is that the national recession did a number on Mississippi and that as has historically been the case, Mississippi is usually slow to slip into a recession and slow to exit it as well when measured against national numbers.

Good news, bad news

But Mississippi's recent increases in sales tax revenues and other economic signals "feel" like the state's economy has improved. So why the increased poverty numbers in Mississippi and why the decreased median income numbers?

The hard fact is that like the rest

of the country, Mississippi lost a lot number of jobs during the recession. Bryant and his economic developers inherited a state economy that was a rocky as any in recent memory.

Success in economic development is hard every day in the poorest state in the union. It's harder still when the global economy is in the tank.

What Bryant's recent successes in replacing the state's lost jobs coupled with the undeniable poverty numbers do mean is that now that while the state's revenue stream is beginning to recover, economic development must remain a high priority. Like most public and private institutions in the country, Mississippi's economy is recovering but hasn't made it back to 2008 levels just yet.

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