

"FLORIDA THIS WEEK"

MARCH 28, 2008

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>> THE FOLLOWING IS A SPECIAL PRESENTATION OF WEDU, TAMPA, ST. PETERSBURG, SARASOTA.

>> COMING UP NEXT, BARACK OBAMA'S CONTROVERSIAL FORMER PASTOR CANCELS A SERIES OF TALKS IN TAMPA.

THE STATE LEGISLATURE ISSUES AN APOLOGY FOR SLAVERY.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVES AHEAD IN THE STATE LEGISLATURE.

AND THE HILLSBOROUGH STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE WILL NOT

PROSECUTE A CAR DEALER FOR MAKING ILLEGAL CAMPAIGN

CONTRIBUTIONS.

POLITICAL INSIGHTS NEXT ON "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

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>> FROM THE WEDU STUDIOS, THIS IS "FLORIDA THIS WEEK."

AND NOW, MODERATOR ROB LOREI.

>> WELCOME BACK.

AS OUR CURRENT FUND-RAISING CAMPAIGN DRAWS TO A CLOSE, WE

ENCOURAGE YOU TO SPONSOR THIS PROGRAM BY DONATING ONLINE

WHEN YOU PLEDGE \$75 OR MORE, "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" 15-OUNCE

MUG IS OUR THANK-YOU GIFT TO YOU.

JUST VISIT WEDU.ORG.

CLICK THE "FLORIDA THIS WEEK" BUTTON AND LOOK FOR OUR MUG AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE, AND THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT.

WELL, THIS WEEK, OUR PANELISTS, ERIC DEGGANS IS MEDIA CRITIC AT THE "ST. PETERSBURG TIMES."

DAVID KLEMENT IS PUBLIC POLICY AND LEADERSHIP DIRECTOR AT USF SARASOTA-MANATEE.

VIC DIMAIO IS A PUBLIC CONSULTANT AND A DEMOCRAT.

AND TOM LEE IS A FORMER STATE SENATOR, BUSINESSMAN AND REPUBLICAN.

GOOD TO SEE YOU, EVERYBODY.

THANKS FOR COMING.

WELL, ORGANIZERS CALLED OFF AN APPEARANCE THIS WEEK IN TEMPLE TERRACE BY BARACK OBAMA'S CONTROVERSIAL FORMER PASTOR REVEREND JEREMIAH WRIGHT.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH WHERE WRIGHT WAS TO SPEAK SAID HE DID NOT GET THE COMMITMENT HE WANTED FROM THE HILLSBOROUGH SHERIFF'S OFFICE.

THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE SAID THE TAMPA POLICE DEPARTMENT HAD JURISDICTION AND BOTH AGENCIES HAD AGREED TO PROVIDE ENOUGH SECURITY.

SOUND BITES FROM WRIGHT'S SERMONS PLAYED REPEATEDLY ON CABLE TELEVISION AND HAVE HAD CANDIDATE BARACK OBAMA ON THE DEFENSIVE FOR TWO WEEKS.

>> TO TAKE A PIECE, AGAIN, AS I SAID, AND POISON THE MINDS OF PEOPLE OUT OF CONTEXT, I THINK A GREAT DISSERVICE HAS BEEN DONE.

A NEGATIVE CLOUD HAS BEEN PLACED ON OUR TENTH ANNIVERSARY.

>> WE WERE PREPARED FOR THE VISIT AND WE WERE VERY SURPRISED TO HEAR THAT IT WAS CANCELLED.

>> ERIC, DO WE KNOW YET, ARE WE SURE YET AS TO WHY THE VISIT WAS CANCELLED?

>> WELL, GIVEN THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER VISIT IN, I BELIEVE, TEXAS THAT WAS CANCELLED FOR THE SAME REASONS, I THINK WE CAN GUESS.

YOU KNOW, THE CHURCHES DIDN'T WANT TO DISINVITE THE PASTOR, BUT THEY DIDN'T WANT THE EVENTS THAT THEY HAD PLANNED TO BE OVERSHADOWED BY THIS CONTROVERSY, SO THEY HAD TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO BACK OUT GRACEFULLY.

AND I GUESS THIS IS WHAT THEY CHOSE.

I MEAN, CERTAINLY, I COULD BE WRONG, BUT -- THAT'S MY READING OF WHAT HAPPENED.

>> THE OTHER ISSUE I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT RIGHT UP FRONT, THAT IS REVEREND MASON SAID THERE THAT REVEREND WRIGHT'S COMMENTS HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT AND REPLAYED ON CABLE TELEVISION.

WHAT ABOUT THAT?

>> YEAH, YOU KNOW, I HAVE A BLOG, AND I'VE PUT UP LARGER EXCERPTS OF SOME OF THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL SERMONS INVOLVING

REVEREND WRIGHT.

ONCE YOU SEE THE LONGER SERMONS, YOU GET A SENSE OF HOW HE WAS KIND OF WORKING HIMSELF UP PASSIONATELY TO GET TO THE POINT WHERE HE SAID SOME OF THE THINGS HE SAID.

OBVIOUSLY, THERE ARE SOME THINGS HE SAID THAT CAN'T REALLY BE EXPLAINED THAT WAY, BUT I THINK THE GREAT FAILURE OF THE MEDIA HAS BEEN TO TAKE 30-SECOND SOUND BITES OUT OF TEN-MINUTE SERMONS AND TRY TO MAKE THAT STAND FOR THE WHOLE SERMON, LET ALONE 40-YEAR CAREER AS A PASTOR.

AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF FOLKS OUT THERE WHO ARE MORE MODERATE IN HOW THEY EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS WHO SAY THAT DOES NOT REPRESENT THE MAN THAT THEY KNOW, THE MAN THAT MENTORED THEM AND THE MAN THAT HELPED THEM OUT.

>> TOM, THESE SOUND BITES HAVE HAD BARACK OBAMA ON THE DEFENSIVE FOR TWO WEEKS NOW.

>> THEY HAVE.

THEY HAVE.

AND I SUSPECT THAT THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN WOULD LIKE NOTHING MORE THAN REVEREND WRIGHT TO TAKE A VACATION TILL AFTER NOVEMBER.

THEY REALLY WANT TO GET THIS OUT OF THE NEWS.

IT HAS HURT HIM NATIONALLY QUITE A BIT.

WHETHER IT STICKS FOR A PROTRACTED PERIOD OF TIME, NOBODY KNOWS.

I THINK ERIC HIT THE NAIL ON THE HEAD.

THERE'S NOWHERE IN AMERICA THAT REVEREND WRIGHT CAN GO TODAY WHERE HIS CONTROVERSIAL COMMENTS WILL NOT OVERSHADOW WHATEVER IT IS HE'S GOING TO SAY IN ANY ENGAGEMENT.

SO IT'S A -- I THINK THAT HAS A LOT TO DO WITH WHY THESE APPEARANCES ARE BEING CANCELLED.

>> YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT OF CAMPAIGNS.

DOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS, THOUGH, EVENTUALLY RUN ITS COURSE?

WE ARE, EVEN, YOU KNOW, EVEN NOW, WEEKS LATER AFTER THESE SOUND BITES FIRST WERE REVEALED, THEY ARE BEING REPLAYED.

AT SOME POINT, DOES THEIR IMPACT ON THE VOTERS LESSEN AND PEOPLE -- THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE SHOCKED, DOES THAT SHOCK LESSEN THE MORE THEY ARE PLAYED ON TELEVISION?

>> WELL, I THINK IT DEPENDS.

THESE WERE PRETTY CONTROVERSIAL REMARKS.

I THINK THEY WERE PRETTY SHOCKING COMMENTS TO HEAR OUT OF CONTEXT.

AND THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE SAID THAT ARE VERY, VERY DIFFICULT TO PUT INTO ANY CONTEXT.

I THINK THE QUESTION -- THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION WILL REVOLVE AROUND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REVEREND WRIGHT AND SENATOR OBAMA GOES TO THE ISSUE OF JUST WHAT HIS PHILOSOPHY IS ABOUT RACIAL TENSION IN AMERICA, BECAUSE HE CERTAINLY HAS THE PROSPECT OF UNITING PEOPLE AS THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN CANDIDATE, BUT IF HIS VIEWS ARE AS DIVISIVE AS THOSE EXPRESSED BY REVEREND WRIGHT, I THINK

IT WILL CAUSE A LOT OF PAUSE TO A LOT OF INDEPENDENTS AND A LOT OF TICKET SPLITTER VOTES IN THE POLITICAL CENTER.

>> THAT IS THE PROBLEM.

ISN'T IT, VICTOR?

>> THIS IS A PROBLEM.

THIS IS A PROBLEM THAT BARACK OBAMA HAS TO ANSWER IS THAT --

>> DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE SPEECH THAT HE MADE IN PHILADELPHIA DIDN'T GO FAR ENOUGH TO ALLAY PEOPLE'S FEARS, WHITE MAJORITY'S FEARS ABOUT THIS?

>> I THINK RACE AND GENDER ARE TWO THINGS, YOU KNOW, WE HAVE A DYNAMIC OPPORTUNITY HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE UNITED STATES, WE HAVE A REALLY SOLID CHANCE OF POSSIBLY ELECTING THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN OR THE FIRST WOMAN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO BARACK OBAMA'S SITUATION, HE'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN, AND THIS IS HIS PREACHER.

AND THE ONE OVERRIDING QUESTION THAT HE'S HAVING A REALLY HARD TIME ANSWERING IS WHY DID YOU SIT IN THOSE PEWS FOR 20 YEARS LISTENING PRETTY MUCH KNOWING WHAT THIS, YOU KNOW, WHAT YOUR PASTOR SAID AND NOT REALLY SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT? I THINK THAT'S THE BIGGEST QUESTION EVERYONE HAS IN EVERYONE'S MIND.

WE TALKED ABOUT WHETHER IT WILL GO AWAY OR NOT, WHETHER IT'S A 527 HELPING HILLARY, IT'S NOT GOING TO GO AWAY.

IF HE BECOMES THE NOMINEE, I GUARANTEE YOU FROM NOW TILL

NOVEMBER 7th WE'LL HEAR HIM NONSTOP.

BECAUSE THAT'S ALL -- THAT'S THE BIGGEST STUMBLING BLOCK THAT BARACK OBAMA -- AND IT'S SAD, BECAUSE HERE IS A GUY WHO HAS REACHED OUT.

HE'S A DYNAMIC AFRICAN-AMERICAN.

VERY WELL SPOKEN.

VERY INTELLIGENT, AND YET THIS IS A REALLY MONKEY ON HIS BACK.

>> YOU KNOW WHAT STRIKES ME ABOUT THIS, THERE IS NOTHING IN HIS POLITICAL HISTORY, NOTHING IN HIS POLICIES, NOTHING THAT HE'S SAID THAT REFLECTS ANYTHING THIS GUY HAS SAID, ANY OF THIS MORE INCENDIARY STUFF THAT HE'S SAID.

BUT WHAT WRIGHT DOES, IS IT HELPS OBAMA'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS MARGINALIZE HIM AS THE ANGRY BLACK MAN.

BILL CLINTON TRIED TO DO THAT IN SOUTH CAROLINA WHEN THEY HAD A VICTORY THERE, HE GOES, WELL, YOU KNOW, JESSE JACKSON HAD A VICTORY HERE, TOO.

YOU KNOW, BLACK FOLKS COME, VOTE FOR BLACK FOLKS.

THAT WAS CODE -- THAT WAS THE MEANING OF THAT CODE.

AND, AGAIN, OBAMA'S POLITICAL OPPONENTS ARE TRYING TO USE WRIGHT TO SORT OF CAST THIS IDEA THAT, WELL, MAYBE BARACK IS REALLY LIKE THAT AND HE'S NOT TELLING YOU.

HE'S BEEN RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT FOR A YEAR AND A HALF.

I MEAN, C'MON.

IF HE ACTUALLY HAD THESE PHILOSOPHIES IN HIS PAST IN ANY WAY

ANYBODY COULD PROVE, THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN TALKED ABOUT BY NOW IN THE MEDIA.

>> ERIC, I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT PREACHING STYLE.

I MEAN, I THINK A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO AREN'T FAMILIAR WITH THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH ARE SURPRISED TO SEE THE PREACHING STYLE OF REVEREND WRIGHT, BUT HIS PREACHING STYLE IS PRETTY COMMON AND PREACHERS IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCH GET PEOPLE FIRED UP.

>> SURE.

YOU KNOW, HE'S VERY EXCITABLE, BUT THERE ARE A LOT OF EXCITABLE PREACHERS.

HE'S USED CURSE WORDS ON THE PODIUM, BUT I CAN REMEMBER GROWING UP AND HAVING MY PREACHER, YOU KNOW, USE THE OCCASIONAL, ESPECIALLY SOMETHING LIKE DAMN, WHERE THERE'S A THEOLOGICAL MEANING TO IT AS WELL.

AND SO I THINK SOME OF THIS IS THAT THE CULTURES AND THE CHURCHES ARE DIFFERENT.

I THINK THE MORE POWERFUL THING GOING ON HERE, THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW BARACK OBAMA AS WELL AS THEY KNOW HILLARY CLINTON.

AND THEY HAVE THIS VAGUE NOTION THAT THERE'S THIS PREACHER OUT THERE WHO SAYS ALL THIS AWFUL STUFF AND HE'S BARACK'S PASTOR AND THAT'S ALL THEY KNOW.

THAT HAS SORT OF MARGINALIZED OBAMA AS YET ANOTHER BLACK PERSON WHO IS ANGRY AND PLAYS THE VICTIM ALL THE TIME, WHEN

HE'S NOTHING LIKE THAT.

>> THEREIN LIES THE RUB.

HE HAS NOT BEEN VETTED ENOUGH.

WE'VE KNOWN HILLARY.

OBVIOUSLY, THE SENATOR FROM ARIZONA HAS BEEN AROUND A WHOLE LONG TIME.

WE KNOW HIM, BUT WE DON'T KNOW BARACK OBAMA.

AND THEREIN LIES THE RUB AND THEREIN LIES THE QUESTION MARK IN PEOPLE'S MINDS.

IT STILL HAS TO BE VETTED, I THINK.

>> DAVID, DOES BARACK OBAMA STILL CONTINUE TO HAVE TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE, TO COME BACK TO IT AGAIN?

>> YES, HE DOES.

IT'S MY HOPE THAT THIS LEADS TO A REALLY IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION, DEBATE ABOUT RACE IN THIS HAD COUNTRY, NOT JUST ABOUT HIM, BUT I THINK THAT REVEREND WRIGHT RAISED SOME VERY GOOD POINTS.

IF YOU PUT IT IN THE PROPER CONTEXT IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND THE SLAVERY EXPERIENCE, AS WE SAW IN THE LEGISLATURE THIS WEEK, WHEN THE LEGISLATURE ISSUED THEIR APOLOGY, THERE ARE SOME INCREDIBLY DEEP EMOTIONS HERE.

AND WE ARE ONLY JUST NOW STARTING TO BECOME AWARE OF IT, THE MAJORITY RACE, THAT IS, IN OUR COUNTRY.

AND TO ACKNOWLEDGE IT.

AND THIS COULD REALLY TOUCH OFF SOME REALLY MEANINGFUL

DEBATE.

>> THAT'S A GOOD SEGUE TO OUR NEXT TOPIC.

THIS WEEK, THE FLORIDA HOUSE AND SENATE APPROVED A RESOLUTION APOLOGIZING FOR SLAVERY AND CALLING FOR RECONCILIATION AMONG ALL FLORIDIANS.

SOME LAWMAKERS WERE MOVED TO TEARS.

THE VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS.

FLORIDA JOINS FIVE OTHER STATES, ALABAMA, VIRGINIA, MARYLAND, NORTH CAROLINA, AND NEW JERSEY THAT HAVE APOLOGIZED FOR SLAVERY.

AFTER WEDNESDAY'S VOTE, THE QUESTION OF REPARATIONS WAS PUT TO GOVERNOR CRIST.

>> YOU KNOW, CERTAINLY IF SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO DO, OBVIOUSLY, IN A DIFFICULT BUDGETARY TIME, IT'S A CHALLENGING THING.

BUT I JUST WANT TO FOCUS ON THE GOOD THING THAT'S HAPPENED TODAY, AND I THINK THAT'S IMPORTANT AND A SIGNIFICANT STEP THAT THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE, IN ESSENCE, ISSUES A FORMAL APOLOGY ON BEHALF OF THE STATE FOR THE SLAVERY OF THE PAST, I THINK IS ENORMOUSLY SIGNIFICANT.

>> TOM, IT'S SIGNIFICANT, TOO, BECAUSE THE DEMOCRATS WERE IN POWER SO LONG IN TALLAHASSEE, THEY NEVER DID THIS. WHY WAS THIS ABLE TO GET DONE WITH THE REPUBLICANS IN CONTROL?

>> WELL, I THINK THE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP IN THE

LEGISLATURE IS REACHING OUT TO THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
COMMUNITY.

SENATOR HILL FROM JACKSONVILLE AREA, AFRICAN-AMERICAN  
SENATOR, HAS BEEN VERY PASSIONATE ABOUT THESE ISSUES, AND I  
THINK NOW THAT REPUBLICANS ARE IN CONTROL OF THE  
LEGISLATURE, IT DIDN'T TAKE MUCH MORE THAN THIS REVEREND  
WRIGHT ISSUE FOR US TO SEE THAT THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF  
ANIMOSITY IN OUR SOCIETY OVER THE -- THE SINS OF THE PAST,  
IF YOU WILL.

AND THIS WAS AN UGLY TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

I DON'T THINK ANYONE ARGUES THAT.

THE BIGGER QUESTION I THINK THAT YOU RAISE, OF COURSE, IS  
HOW DO WE ATONE FOR THE LINGERING CULTURAL AND ECONOMIC  
DEFICIENCIES THAT EXIST IN OUR SOCIETY AS A RESULT OF THE  
SUPPRESSION OR RACIAL INEQUALITY THAT'S OCCURRED OVER TIME?  
THAT'S A MUCH LARGER SOCIAL QUESTION.

THIS IS MOVING US DOWN THE PATH.

I THINK REACHING OUT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO AND APOLOGY IS  
AN APPROPRIATE THING.

>> WHAT ABOUT REPARATIONS?

>> WELL, I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU PUT A PRICE TAG ON THAT.

THE LEGISLATURE HAS STRUGGLED WITH CLAIMS BILLS TO DEAL WITH  
PRISONERS WHO ARE WRONGFULLY ACCUSED WHEN DNA EVIDENCE  
PROVED THEY WERE INNOCENT.

YOU KNOW, IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO PUT A PRICE TAG ON

SOMEONE'S FREEDOM.

AND IT'S GOING TO BE A TOUGH ISSUE TO COME UP WITH A  
MONETARY SOLUTION TO IT.

>> ERIC, THE PROMISE OF EMANCIPATION HAS NOT BEEN MET IN  
THIS COUNTRY, AT LEAST TO SOME PEOPLE'S MINDS IT HASN'T BEEN  
MET.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT REPARATION?

>> WELL, I ALWAYS TELL MY KIDS THAT THE BEST APOLOGY TO ME  
IS TO START DOING THINGS RIGHT.

FROM NOW ON, RIGHT?

IN MY MIND, IF WE HAD HAD A LEGISLATURE THAT IMPROVED THE  
VOTING SYSTEMS IN PLACES WHERE THERE ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR  
THAT DEALT WITH ISSUES OF JOBLESSNESS, DO WE STILL HAVE THE  
SENTENCING DISPARITIES BETWEEN POWDER COCAINE AND CRACK  
COCAINE THAT KEEPS SO MANY PEOPLE OF COLOR IN PRISON RATHER  
THAN WHITE PEOPLE?

DO WE HAVE A SENSIBLE IMMIGRATION POLICY?

DO WE HAVE A SENSIBLE POLICY ABOUT CUBA?

YOU KNOW, THESE ARE THE KINDS OF ISSUES THAT AFFECT PEOPLE  
OF COLOR A LOT MORE SUBSTANTIALLY AND A LOT MORE DIRECTLY  
THAN OUR APOLOGY ABOUT SLAVERY.

I APPRECIATE THE APOLOGY, BUT I REALLY WISH LEGISLATORS  
WOULD GET MOVING ON THINGS THAT ACTUALLY AFFECT PEOPLE RIGHT  
NOW.

AND THE OTHER THING THAT STRIKES ME, WE CAN'T FORGET THAT WE

HAVE A DIFFERENT GOVERNOR NOW.

I MEAN, WHEN JEB WAS IN POWER, WE HAD PEOPLE CRY FOR YEARS TO CHANGE THE WAY IN WHICH FELONS GET THEIR VOTING RIGHTS BACK.

AND HE COULD CARE LESS.

AND NOW WE HAVE SOMEBODY LIKE CHARLIE CRIST WHO UNDERSTANDS AT LEAST HOW AN ISSUE LIKE THAT IMPACTS BLACK VOTERS AND IMPACTS BLACK PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR.

AND HE MOVED VERY QUICKLY ON THAT.

AND HE'S ALSO SUPPORTED THIS.

SO, YOU KNOW, I DON'T THINK IT'S JUST THAT THE REPUBLICANS ARE CONTROLLING THE LEGISLATURE, IT'S THAT WE HAVE A MORE SUPPORTIVE GOVERNOR.

>> AND DAVID, SOME PEOPLE REFER TO CHARLIE CRIST AS FLORIDA'S FIRST BLACK GOVERNOR.

>> I WOULDN'T GO THAT FAR.

[ LAUGHTER ]

>> HE'S TAN, BUT --

>> BUT NOT THAT TAN.

>> WHAT ERIC SAID IS THAT HE HAS SHOWN A SENSITIVITY AND SHOWN SOME LEADERSHIP ON ISSUES OF CONCERN TO AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

>> YES.

>> IN WAYS THAT PREVIOUS GOVERNORS HAVE NOT.

>> YES.

AND I THINK, AS ERIC SAID, THIS IS A LARGE -- CARRIES A LOT OF WEIGHT IN THIS DEBATE.

AND ALSO, BACK TO BARACK OBAMA, HE IS HELPING US ALL TO BECOME MORE AWARE OF RACE AND OF THE INEQUITIES THAT WE HAVE TOLERATED IN THE PAST, THAT WE MAYBE JUST AVERTED OUR EYES THAT AFRICAN-AMERICANS LIVE WITH EVERY DAY.

SO THIS WHOLE ISSUE IS NOW BUBBLING UP AS A RESULT OF HIS CANDIDACY, HIS POTENTIAL TO BE "THE" PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

>> VICTOR, I WAS REALLY STRUCK THIS WEEK BY THE BIPARTISAN NATURE OF THIS.

YOU HAD SOME REAL HARD-CORE CONSERVATIVES IN THE LEGISLATURE, BUT THEY WERE THERE.

THEY ALL ASSEMBLED FOR THIS VOICE VOTE.

IT WAS A VERY BIPARTISAN EVENT.

>> WELL, BUT IT DOESN'T COST ANYTHING.

I HATE TO SOUND CRASS ABOUT IT, BUT THIS IS SOMETHING, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU ARE REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT, SHOULD SUPPORT.

THERE'S BEEN A LOT OF DISCRIMINATION HERE HISTORICALLY IN FLORIDA, OVER HUNDREDS OF YEARS BETWEEN HISPANICS AND MORE RECENTLY IN AFRICAN-AMERICANS.

BUT, YOU KNOW, BUSH, ONE OF THE THINGS HE DID WAS GET RID OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN FLORIDA.

THE REPUBLICANS HAVE BEEN STUNG A LITTLE BIT BY THAT.

BUT, YOU KNOW, THE REPUBLICANS REALLY ONLY GET THREE TO FIVE PERCENT OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN VOTES.

IT'S A VERY, VERY SMALL NUMBER THAT THE REPUBLICANS HAVE GOTTEN TRADITIONALLY.

SO I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH IS REALLY GOING TO HELP THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, TO BE HONEST WITH YOU.

>> ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

THIS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN THEY GOT RID OF WITH THE ALTERNATIVE, LIKE FOR COLLEGE ENROLLMENT, REALLY HAS NOT EFFECTIVELY GOTTEN MINORITIES BACK UP TO THE LEVELS THAT WERE THERE BEFOREHAND.

ALL THE STUDIES, ST. PETE TIMES HAS DONE EXTENSIVE STUDIES ON THIS ON REALLY WHAT HAS BEEN THE MINORITY ENROLLMENT, WHETHER HISPANIC OR BLACK.

REALLY, SINCE BUSH GOT RID OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND PUT THIS OTHER PLAN IN, IT REALLY HAS NOT HELPED AFRICAN-AMERICANS OR MINORITIES.

>> AND IF YOU'RE A LEGISLATOR AND YOU'RE A REPUBLICAN, ARE YOU GOING TO BE THE GUY WHO MISSES THE VOTE ON APOLOGIZING FOR SLAVERY?

ARE YOU GOING TO BE THE GUY TO STAND UP AND SAY, NO, WE SHOULDN'T DO IT?

IT'S A NO-BRAINER.

>> THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE MASSACRE.

THEY WOULD BE MASSACRED IN THE NEXT ELECTION.

>> AND YOU WOULD BE HANDED THE FLYER THAT GOES ON ALL THE BUMPER STICKERS.

>> I DON'T THINK THAT YOU CAN JUST DRIVE PAST THIS AND NOT APPRECIATE THAT TIME WAS TAKEN TO DO THIS.

THERE ARE A LOT OF ISSUES OUT THERE, A LOT OF CHALLENGES FACING THE STATE.

I THINK IT WAS HEARTFELT, YOU KNOW, GOVERNOR BUSH REMOVED THE CONFEDERATE FLAG FROM THE FLAGPOLES OF THE CAPITAL STATE OF FLORIDA, HE WAS NOT INSENSITIVE TO RACIAL ISSUES.

I THINK HE HAD A DIFFERENT WAY OF GETTING THERE AND WE CAN DEBATE WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS THE RIGHT WAY OR WRONG WAY OR WHETHER HIS POLICIES WORKED OR NOT.

BUT I THINK THIS IS AN IMPORTANT MOMENT IN FLORIDA HISTORY, AND IT'S CERTAINLY, AS I SAID EARLIER, IS NO PANACEA TO THE PROBLEMS THAT FACE US CULTURALLY IN THIS COMMUNITY OR IN THIS STATE.

BUT IT'S, NONETHELESS, THE RIGHT THING TO HAVE DONE.

I APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT THEY TOOK THE TIME TO DO IT.

IT'S A GOOD START.

>>> THE SENATE COMMITTEE THIS WEEK APPROVED A BILL THAT WOULD ALLOW WHAT SUPPORTERS CALL "SCIENCE BASED ALTERNATIVES TO EVOLUTION" IN FLORIDA'S CLASSROOMS.

THE FLORIDA ACLU SAYS IT OPENS THE DOOR TO TEACHING CREATIONISM AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

THE BILL KNOWN AS THE "EVOLUTION ACADEMIC FREEDOM ACT" IS

THE BRAINCHILD OF STATE SENATOR RONDA STORMS OF BRANDON.

DAVID, IS THERE A SCIENTIFIC CASE TO BE MADE THAT IN SCIENCE CLASSES, WE OUGHT TO BE ALLOWED -- WE OUGHT TO ALLOW CREATIONISM AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN TO BE TAUGHT?

>> BEFORE I ANSWER, I WANT TO ASK YOU A QUESTION.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DRAG US INTO THE CREATIONISM WAR?

[ LAUGHTER ]

YES, I THINK THERE IS.

I MAY BE A CONTRARIAN HERE TO THE VIEW OF MANY, BUT, YOU KNOW, THE CREATIONISTS INSIST THAT EVOLUTION IS ONLY A THEORY, TOO, AND THAT THERE IS NO LINK TO THE THEORY THAT WE EVOLVED -- FROM PRIMITIVE LIFE FORMS.

AND, THEREFORE, YOU KNOW, I THINK STUDENTS SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO BOTH POINTS OF VIEW.

OR IF THERE'S A THIRD ONE THAT I'M NOT AWARE OF -- NOT EVERY CRACKPOT ONE, BUT AT LEAST THOSE THAT HAVE SOME HISTORY, SOME -- THE MILLENNIA OF HUMAN BELIEF AS THE FAITH-BASED ONES HAVE.

>> WELL, ERIC, THAT REALLY IS THE QUESTION.

IS THE SCIENCE -- THE SO-CALLED SCIENCE THAT SUPPORTS CREATIONISM AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN, IS IT ON PAR WITH THE SCIENCE AND THE YEARS OF HISTORY THAT SUPPORT THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION?

>> WELL, YOU KNOW, AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL SURVIVOR --

[ LAUGHTER ]

LET ME SAY THAT I ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THIS ISSUE TO BE THAT YOU TEACH IN SCIENCE CLASS THE THINGS YOU CAN TEST WITH SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

CAN YOU CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS?

IS CAN YOU GET RESULTS?

CAN YOU REPLICATE THOSE RESULTS?

BY DIFFERENT PEOPLE USING THE SAME CONDITIONS.

THE PROBLEM WITH CREATIONISM IS THAT YOU CAN'T SCIENTIFICALLY TEST IT BECAUSE THE CORE OF THAT BELIEF IS THAT GOD MADE THESE THINGS HAPPEN.

AND THE PROOF -- YOU DON'T GET SCIENTIFIC PROOF OF THAT.

THAT IS FAITH.

THAT'S WHAT FAITH MEANS.

AND FAITH IS A PHILOSOPHY.

SO YOU TEACH THAT IN PHILOSOPHY CLASS.

YOU TEACH THAT IN FAITH CLASS.

>> YOU CAN TEACH CREATIONISM, INTELLIGENT DESIGN, JUST DON'T TEACH IT IN SCIENCE CLASS.

>> BECAUSE IT'S NOT A PART OF THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD.

JUST LIKE YOU WOULDN'T TEACH LIBERTARIANISM IN THE SCIENCE CLASS.

YOU MIGHT TEACH HOW LIBERTARIANISM AFFECTED SCIENTIFIC PROCESS OR SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT OR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE, BUT YOU WOULDN'T TEACH THAT PHILOSOPHY IN SCIENCE CLASS.

YOU WOULD TEACH IT IN SOCIAL STUDIES.

>> RIGHT.

AND AS A PRODUCT OF THE JESUIT EDUCATION MYSELF, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE JESUITS TOLD US THE SAME THING.

THIS IS SOMETHING I FEEL THAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN CHURCH AS A RELIGION, WHETHER YOU'RE JEWISH, CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, WHATEVER, THESE ARE THEORIES THAT I THINK IF YOU BELIEVE IN A SUPERIOR BEING -- AND ALSO, WE ARE THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE, WHETHER WE LIKE IT OR NOT, WHO ARE ATHEISTS WHO DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD.

I BELIEVE THE THEORIES THAT ARE SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN THAT WE HAVE SO FAR, THOSE SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN CLASS.

AND ANY OTHER THEORY YOU MAY HAVE, WHETHER THERE IS ANOTHER BEING THAT CREATED ALL THIS, IS SOMETHING THAT SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN CHURCH.

>> TOM, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

>> I THINK THOSE ARE REASONABLE POINTS.

I THINK ERIC IS VERY ARTICULATE IN HIS FRAMING THIS ISSUE UP.

YOU KNOW, I THINK THE POINT THAT YOU HAVE TO MAKE ABOUT THIS LEGISLATION IS IT'S MERELY PERMISSIVE.

IT DOESN'T MANDATE ANYTHING.

IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE TEACHING OF EVOLUTION AS A THEORY.

IT JUST DOESN'T PRECLUDE THE INCLUSION OF ANOTHER THEORY IN A PLACE WHERE THAT MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE, PARTICULAR SCHOOL

DISTRICT.

AND ONE SIZE DOESN'T ALWAYS FIT ALL IN A STATE AS DIVERSE AS THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

YOU KNOW, SCIENCE IS EVOLVING, TOO.

THERE WAS A TIME WHEN WE ALL THOUGHT THE EARTH WAS FLAT.

I DON'T THINK IT'S ENTIRELY UNREALISTIC THAT SOME DAY IN THE FUTURE WE MIGHT BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE THEORIES OF INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND EVOLUTION.

BUT, YOU KNOW, HAD THIS BILL BEEN A MANDATE, AN EDUCATION, IT PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN UNCONSTITUTIONAL ON ITS FACE, AND NOTWITHSTANDING THAT FACT, IT'S LIKELY TO GET CHALLENGED ANYHOW SHOULD IT PASS THE LEGISLATURE.

>> ALL RIGHT.

NO CHARGES WILL BE FILED AGAINST THE TAMPA CAR DEALER WHO ASKED HIS EMPLOYEES TO DONATE TO A CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATE LAST YEAR AND THEN REIMBURSED THEM.

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT INVESTIGATED JASON KUHN, OWNER OF KUHN HONDA VOLKSWAGEN ON CHARGES THAT HE ASKED EMPLOYEES TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE 2007 CITY COUNCIL RACE. THE INQUIRY CONFIRMED KUHN HAD REPAID 32 EMPLOYEES.

THE HILLSBOROUGH STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE CHOSE NOT TO FILE CHARGES BECAUSE IT SAID THE INTEREST OF JUSTICE DO NOT INDICATE THAT CRIMINAL CHARGES SHOULD BE FILED.

STATE LAW FORBIDS PEOPLE FROM MAKING A CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION THROUGH OR IN THE NAME OF ANOTHER, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY.

WELL, THE STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, VIC, SEEMS TO SAY, YOU KNOW, IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE LAW AND YOU HAD NO INTENT TO BREAK IT, IT'S NOT A CRIME.

>> I'M CLIPPING OUT ALL THESE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES BECAUSE NOW IGNORANCE IS AN EXCUSE.

WHEN I GO TO COURT, I CAN RUN THE RED LIGHTS, BLOW THROUGH THE SIGNS, AND THIS IS A PERFECT -- OF ALL THE GUYS AT THIS TABLE, I DO THIS FOR A LIVING EVERY DAY.

WHEN YOU SIGN UP TO RUN FOR OFFICE, YOU HAVE TO SIGN AN OATH.

THAT OATH SAYS I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ELECTION LAWS OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA.

PEOPLE HIRE ME THAT GIVE ADVICE, YOU CAN'T DO THIS, CAN'T DO THAT.

ONE OF THE THINGS YOU CAN'T DO IS TAKE 20,000 BUCKS OUT OF THE CASH ACCOUNT AND START PAYING OFF YOUR EMPLOYEES IN \$500 INCREMENTS TO MAKE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.

IT'S SO BLATANTLY ILLEGAL, YOU HAVE TO BE BLIND NOT TO SEE THAT LAW.

WHY THE STATE ATTORNEY CHOSE NOT TO PROSECUTE THIS CASE IS -- I'M JUST FLABBERGASTED WHEN I SAW THIS.

>> UNFORTUNATELY, THAT'S THE LAST WORD ON THAT.

FINALLY, EACH WEEK, WE ASK OUR PANEL ABOUT ANOTHER STORY ON THE WEEK OR THE HORIZON THAT AFFECTS PEOPLE IN WEST CENTRAL FLORIDA.

VICTOR, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, AS YOU KNOW, MY LAWSUIT, I WANT TO CLARIFY THIS FOR THE RECORD.

WE ARE NOT -- WE WENT TO ATLANTA A WEEK AGO.

WE GOT DISMISSED ONLY TO BE REMANDED BACK TO THE COURT HERE IN TAMPA.

MY LAWSUIT TO GET THE DELEGATES SEATED TO THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE.

IT'S STILL VERY MUCH WELL.

WE ARE WAITING FOR OUR PAPERS FROM ATLANTA.

WE'LL REFILE THE CASE BACK IN TAMPA.

WE CHANGED ALL OUR PLEADINGS.

WE HAVE A BRAND-NEW CASE.

I THINK THIS TIME WILL BE THE WINNER.

>> HOW SOON WILL YOU REFILE?

>> WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE PAPERS TO GO BACK TO JUDGE LAZZARA'S COURT HERE IN TAMPA, AND THEN ALL EYES WILL BE ON THE TAMPA COURTROOM TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS THERE TO SEE IF FLORIDA WILL GET A DELEGATE TO THE NATIONAL CONVENTION.

>> ALL RIGHT.

WE'LL PAY ATTENTION.

ERIC, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, ONE OF THE THINGS THAT STRUCK ME WAS THAT HILLARY CLINTON KIND OF GOT CAUGHT ON HER OWN MISSTATEMENT THIS WEEK SAYING THAT SHE WAS DODGING BULLETS IN BOSNIA AND THEN IT

URNS OUT THAT IT WAS A VERY PEACEFUL VISIT.

THE REASON WE KNOW IT'S A PEACEFUL VISIT IS BECAUSE THERE WAS TV NETWORK FOOTAGE OF IT.

BUT THE REPORTERS DIDN'T THINK TO CHECK THAT FOOTAGE UNTIL THE COMEDIAN SINBAD STARTED TALKING TO THE PRESS SAYING, YOU KNOW, I WAS THERE AND I DON'T REMEMBER ANY BULLETS FLYING AROUND.

CORRESPONDENTS FROM NBC, CBS AND OTHER NEWS AGENCIES WERE THERE IN 1996.

THERE WERE NO STORIES ABOUT THE FIRST LADY DODGING BULLETS. YOU WOULD THINK THAT SOMEBODY WOULD HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT THAT WHEN IT HAPPENED.

I THINK IT'S KIND OF FUNNY THAT IT TOOK SINBAD TO BLOW THE WHISTLE ON A MISSTATEMENT BY HILLARY CLINTON.

>> DAVID, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> MY STORY IS FROM SOUTH MANATEE COUNTY, BUT IT REFLECTS ON THE STATE COMPETENCY AT A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL.

THERE'S A SMALL, MOSTLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN TOWN CALLED TALLEVAST THAT'S BEEN UNDER A PLUME OF POISONS, CHEMICALS FOR THE FEW YEARS WE HAVE KNOWN ABOUT IT.

THIS WEEK, THE STATE HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELEASED ITS FINDINGS OF THE LAST THREE YEARS OF A HEALTH STUDY, THEY FOUND ONLY FOUR CANCER-RELATED CASES IN TALLEVAST.

THE CITIZENS AT THE SAME TIME RELEASED THEIR SURVEY OF THE CANCER INCIDENT THAT THEY HAD CONDUCTED -- THEY PUT TOGETHER

BY GOING DOOR TO DOOR.

THEY FOUND 86 CASES IN THREE YEARS.

YET THE DIFFERENCE WAS THAT THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT DID NOT HAVE THE RIGHT ZIP CODE.

>> BIG DISPARITY.

TOM, YOUR OTHER BIG STORY?

>> WELL, WE'RE HEARING A LOT ABOUT THE TAX AND BUDGET REFORM COMMISSION.

SENATOR MCKAY APPEARS TO HAVE A PROPOSAL HEADED TO THE BALLOT.

IT HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS CASE MODEL IN PERSEVERANCE ON HIS PART TO SWAP OUT A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF PROPERTY TAX FOR AN INCREASE IN SALES TAX.

THE IRONY HERE IS THAT THE LEGISLATURE IS COUGHING UP A HAIRBALL OVER HOW THEY ARE GOING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO --

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