

types of cancer are lung, colorectal, breast, and prostate. The lung cancer rate was down eight percent by 2004, mostly because so many people quit smoking. The colorectal cancer rate declined 26 percent between 1990 and 2004, largely because of better screening techniques. The breast cancer mortality rate fell 28 percent, generally because of mammography. And the death rate from prostate cancer plunged 31 percent because of early detection, hormone

therapy, and surgery.

America may finally be winning the war on cancer, Cutler says, but at heavy cost: \$15 billion in anti-cancer spending in 1972 became \$74 billion in 2005. Improved screening was the single most important change and one of the biggest bargains. Treatments, particularly new drugs, have also improved, but some of the new wonder pharmaceuticals sell for \$4,000 to \$100,000 per year. They

can extend the life of a cancer patient, but typically only for a few months, Cutler writes. Insurance generally covers efficacious drug therapies in the United States, regardless of cost, but in other countries cost sometimes trumps treatment. The United Kingdom's arbiters, for example, turned thumbs down on two \$50,000-to-\$100,000-a-year medications for colon cancer, simply ruling them "not cost-effective."

PRESS & MEDIA

Pressroom of Babel

THE SOURCE: "Memorandum to the President-Elect" by Mike McCurry, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Dec. 2008.

RICHARD M. NIXON WAS PRESIDENT when the White House Press Office was last revamped, and it is now suffering from hardening of the arteries. More Americans are interested in politics than ever, but an office that had specialized in communicating the president's daily message to major newspapers, magazines, and television networks must now deal with cable, websites, YouTube, comedy shows, and those 21st-century pamphleteers, the bloggers. The White House press

secretary needs a makeover, writes Mike McCurry, who held the job from 1995 to 1998 under President Bill Clinton. "But one person cannot adequately speak on behalf of the institutional

presidency."

Blow up the 35-year-old model of having one overexposed spokesperson be ground zero for every question, he says. Put articulate representatives from various parts of the government, from the new technology czar to the national security adviser, on camera to explain their own initiatives, straight. The recent press secretary arguably considered the

best of the lot—Marlin Fitzwater, who held the job under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush—honed his skills as an apolitical information officer in the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Treasury Department before moving to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Forget the single "line of the day," McCurry urges. It should give way to multiple information

EXCERPT

Enough, Already

The blogosphere, once a freshwater oasis of folksy self-expression and clever thought, has been flooded by a tsunami of paid bilge. Cut-rate journalists and underground marketing campaigns now drown out the authentic voices of amateur wordsmiths. It is almost impossible to get noticed, except by hecklers.

—PAUL BOUTIN, former *Wired* senior editor and correspondent for the Silicon Valley site *Valleywag*, in *Wired* (Nov. 2008)

streams of specialized news delivered clearly and factually. Move parts of the White House press operation into regional and local offices, even overseas. Hold presidential news conferences online, or in front of student newspaper editors, or even members of Congress. To prevent a disaggregated communications operation from sending out mixed messages, the president himself should use his position as communicator in chief to pull together themes and explain ideas as he attempts to bring the political change he promised.

Offer multiple televised messages to minimize the importance

of a daily briefing that has become a “silly theater of the absurd with all sides posturing for the cameras and the editors and employers watching.” Consider filming cabinet meetings or even some National Security Council sessions. “The more everything at the White House is televised, the less that any one thing becomes a focus for disproportionate coverage,” he says. The more Americans see of serious policy-making, the greater their respect for it will be. Trust the generation facile in Facebook and ubiquitous on YouTube, McCurry counsels, and run a spin-free exercise devoted to getting the public the information it needs.

PRESS & MEDIA

Congenitally Digital?

THE SOURCE: “Generational Myth” by Siva Vaidhyathan, in *The Chronicle Review*, Sept. 19, 2008.

IN THE WAKE OF THE GREATEST, the beat, the baby boom, and the millennial generations comes the “digital generation,” another empty formulation describing an amorphous group with a trait of the moment. Siva Vaidhyathan, a professor of media studies and law at the University of Virginia, says that a generation of “digital

EXCERPT

Stand Up for Integration

The Carolina Israelite was a remarkable solo act, a bold effort to liberate its southern white readers from the inertia of tradition, defying the odds that anyone producing a one-man newspaper in the mid-20th century was very likely to be a crank. . . .

The Vertical Negro Plan, which made [editor Harry] Golden's reputation, . . . was simple. Blacks and whites standing together—in grocery store lines, at bank tellers' windows, at drugstore counters—appeared to pose little challenge to regional mores. Only when blacks sat down—on buses, at dining counters, in theaters—did they seem not to know their place. So why not provide “only desks in all the public schools of our state—[and] no seats.” He commented that since pupils “are not learning to read, sitting down, anyway, perhaps standing up will help.”

—STEPHEN J. WHITFIELD, professor at Brandeis University, in *Southern Cultures* (Fall 2008)



The Carolina Israelite, written and edited by Harry Golden (right), influenced readers such as poet Carl Sandburg, author of “Chicago.”

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