



CORALIE DAPICE | BDN

It's not 'nothing'

BY SAMUEL JAMES
SPECIAL TO THE BDN

Imagine living in a house full of passive-aggressive teenagers as your roommates. They are both ignorant and condescending. Every time you turn around, they're right there, staring at you and whispering to each other. They make the odd snide comment here and there. You try everything just to get along. You try being polite. You try ignoring them. You curse them out.

"What's that supposed to mean?" you ask repeatedly.

"Nothing," they say. But you know it's not "nothing." Then it gets super weird because they ask to touch your hair. You're about to lose your mind, but what can you do? These are your roommates — and your lease isn't up for the rest of your life.

That is usually what it's like to deal with racism as a person of color in America. Most of the time, it's not very dramatic. We're not usually running from skinheads or the Klan

What dealing with racism is really like for a person of color in Maine

or cops, even though we still have plenty of reasons to fear those groups.

The racism we deal with comes in the form of vocal tones, comments and judgments that amount to, "Well, you know how they are."

Day to day it usually doesn't go much further than that, because racists are still people, and people mostly behave themselves, at least to a certain degree. Most racists aren't going to call me a nigger to my face. They're going to be more subtle than that — though not by much.

But the long-term effects of subtle racism on black people have arguably been more harmful than the other types of direct, or even physical, racism. The Klan and other white power groups have unsuccessfully

tried to kill us off since abolition. But the subtler racism permeates our institutions, some of which are allowed to torment and kill us.

In America, the story goes, you can be successful if you're smart and work hard. This has generally been true for white men. It has generally not been true for minorities.

That's not only because of personal prejudice involved in hiring but also because of institutional bigotry. The U.S. government has created program after program — such as the Social Security Act and the housing components of the GI Bill — that excluded minorities and helped white men get education and jobs, which led to property ownership. That property then gets passed down generation to generation, eventually helping

to create a racial wealth gap, which is further widened by acts like redlining — declining services and home loans to people who live in black neighborhoods — and voter suppression.

Our inheritance is passive-aggression, insults and disproportionate unemployment, poverty and incarceration rates. And because it's mostly the poor who are policed, we are also left with a difficult and often deadly relationship with law enforcement. That's not even getting into the personal prejudices of some law enforcement officials.

And yet, some still regard destitute black men with, "well, you know how they are."

This attitude can be even more dangerous when it's coming from our leaders.

When integration began in the 1960s, a lot of white southerners viewed equality as their loss. The white voters in Alabama in particular had a very difficult time with this. So much so that in 1963 former judge and newly elected Gov. George See *Racism, Page D3*

Don't save the IRS, fix the tax code

"Save the IRS!" cried the Bangor Daily News Editorial Board on Feb. 3, calling for more spending on enforcement and service personnel and blaming the GOP for the lack thereof. Because tax compliance is the most pressing problem facing our nation, right?

I kid my editorial overlords, of course. They have a point; public-facing government agencies, including tax collectors and permit processors, should have robust customer service functions to help the citizenry who seek to comply with the law.

But an agency that needs 14,000 employees devoted to assisting people in following the law indicates a different problem. Specifically, an overly complicated tax system. The IRS itself, in its 2008 report to Congress, named the byzantine code the "Most Serious Problem" facing taxpayers. That has been exacerbated with the Affordable Care Act; compliance with "ObamaCare" is administered through the tax code.

Meanwhile, our legislature looks like it may add to that complexity by forcing businesses to carry two different sets of books, one for federal tax purposes and another for Maine taxes. The advocates who oppose parts of these federal expensing provisions make some valid policy points. They, including my aforesaid editorial overlords, extrapolate those points into an argument on why Maine should not follow suit.

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MICHAEL CIANCHETTE

Police slowly starting to carry OD antidote

Maine lags behind other states in equipping officers with naloxone

BY CHRISTOPHER BURNS
BDN STAFF

The opioid epidemic showed no signs of slowing down in Maine last year. In the first nine months of 2015, 174 Mainers died from drug overdoses, putting the state on track to record 230 to 250 total overdose deaths for the year.

Often, and particularly in rural areas, law enforcement are the first on scene to deal with overdoses. So more and more police departments across the country have started equipping their officers with the overdose antidote naloxone to reduce overdose deaths.

In Maine, the Legislature passed the first in a series of bills in 2014 to make naloxone more accessible to law enforcement, other first responders and the family members of people at risk of an overdose. But nearly two years later, only a handful of police departments across the state have opted to equip officers with the overdose antidote.

Maine has fewer police departments equipped with naloxone than most other New England states.



THE FORECASTER FILE

Narcan, used to restore respiratory functions after a heroin overdose, can be administered intravenously or by inhaler.

In February 2015, the Kennebec County Sheriff's Office became the first law enforcement agency to provide its deputies with naloxone kits to prevent overdoses.

The York Police Department is the only other department that equips officers with the medication. It started its naloxone program in May 2015.

Elsewhere across New England, it's more common for police departments to equip officers with naloxone. Officers from 44 agencies in Massachusetts, eight in Connecticut, eight in Rhode Island, two in Vermont and one in New Hampshire carry naloxone with them,

according to the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition, an advocate of national access to naloxone.

Why do so few departments use naloxone?

Naloxone, known commonly by its brand name Narcan, has been used in emergency rooms for decades, but its use outside hospitals has long been limited to paramedics. And this hasn't changed much — even in recent years, as the number of overdose deaths has increased.

Paramedics across the state last year administered more than 1,500 doses of naloxone to reverse overdoses in 1,133 patients, according to data from Maine Emergency Medical Services, a unit of the Department of Public Safety. The number of doses paramedics have administered has steadily climbed in recent years, from 659 in 2012 to 1,128 in 2014.

Many police departments located in municipalities with full-time fire and ambulance crews choose not to use naloxone because paramedics often arrive at the scene of an overdose sooner than police, according to Robert Schwartz, executive director of the Maine Chiefs of Police Association.

While more populated parts of the state can rely on the quick response of paramedics to prevent an overdose death, law enforcement — often a sheriff's deputy or a state police trooper — often reach the scene first in a See *Naloxone, Page D3*

To control school spending, look to the right data first



BDN FILE

Students board the bus after the first day of school at Vine Street School in Bangor in September 2014.

It is still a popular claim that high administrative costs, particularly school superintendent expenses, are the primary factor responsible for increasing K-12 education spending in Maine. There are compelling data, from a variety of reputable sources, that clearly show this to not be the case.

According to figures from the Maine Department of Education website, system administration (central office) expenditures have dropped by 7.7 percent in the last 10 years. Maine law requires every local

entity to have a superintendent even if the town or entity has no students. We have 136 superintendents, some of whom represent the unique needs of small towns and townships on a part-time basis for a nominal stipend.

In 2014, Maine's 136 superintendents earned \$12,230,712, for an average salary of \$89,932. The average salary of the bottom 25 earners was \$24,077. If we were to eliminate the lowest paid 25 superintendents in the state, or 18 percent of superintendents, we would save a whopping \$601,946 out of a \$1 billion state education budget. Even with Maine's decline in student population, there are more students per administrator today than there were 10 years ago. See *Schools, Page D3*



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