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01/31/2009

Choice

Claiborne Barksdale, Director of the [Barksdale Reading Institute](#), spoke to the first-years today. ♦ In this excerpt, Mr. Barksdale talks about the importance of early childhood education:



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01/30/2009

Fest

The [Oxford Film ♦ Festival](#), ♦ February ♦ 5th thru the 8th, 2009:



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01/29/2009

Posts



Photo Taken by Molly Goldwasser

Here are some excerpts of outstanding recent posts by various MTCers (you may need to join Vox and "friend" the person to read the post):

Molly describes, in words and pictures, her community.**Emily's typical day starts at 4:12 AM:**

3:40 - school is done, and i'm packing up, out the door by 3:50. i don't take stuff home to grade. i try not to take any of my work home. it's a little easier at my school since all of our copies, tests, and worksheets have to be turned in a week or so ahead, so i'm usually planned out pretty thoroughly.

4:00 - snack time. necessary. then back out to avoid the house for as long as possible.

sushi, swimming, coffee, bookstore, church events, dinner with friends, drinks with co-workers, sports events, checking out local shops, walking/talking, reading in random locations and general tomfoolery follows my departure from work until about 6 or 7.

i come home, get into some jammers, and bum out to some arrested development, simpsons, lipstick jungle (thanks brah), grey's, or desperate housewives. when i start to knock out (usuall around 8:15), i pick up a book, read for a while, then turn off the light and play a couple games of bubble breaker or solitaire on my phone.

that means i'm out hard-core by 9.30. and that's my life.

sooooo, i've got that going for me.

Karl visits East St. Louis:

I've been to haunted places before and seen fallen glory in many different forms. Some areas, like the Mississippi Delta, beg the question: is it really fallen glory when there never was much glory in the first place?

There is also East St. Louis, the city chosen by Jonathan Kozol as the first in his litany of Savage Inequalities.

In my last years in the Air Force one of my troops was Sarah, a young woman from East St. Louis. She was two levels below me, but I was the first commissioned officer in Sarah's chain of command.

Sarah was an enigma to me. While other young enlisted women in the unit were in trouble for things like drunken date rape, adultery, or being a suspected lesbian and a lot too much overweight, Sarah was simply late: five minutes in the morning without excuse, ten minutes coming back from lunch saying she had been at church and it ran over.

The thing is, Sarah did this crap all the time, and no punishment seemed to make it stop. As time went on and her discipline file grew, each new situation, no matter how small, made it seem like Sarah fundamentally disrespected military authority. Her immediate boss and I used the prescribed counseling and disciplinary procedures, culminating one sad day with Sarah standing at attention while I read her a formal letter of reprimand.

Despite the continuing connection between church activities and Sarah's habitual tardiness, I never thought to call her minister. In fact, I remember wondering how anyone could possibly have such need to spend so much time in church and how spending so much time in church could fail to cure a small thing like tardiness. Instead of trying to put myself in Sarah's shoes and consider what it might have been like to be the only person from a background like East St. Louis in a unit full of people from happier places, I thought, "Doesn't she have a fucking watch?"

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01/28/2009

Basketball

One of my favorite "MTC Pics" of all time, by Class of 2005er [Ruth Kuhnau](#):



Basketball Player

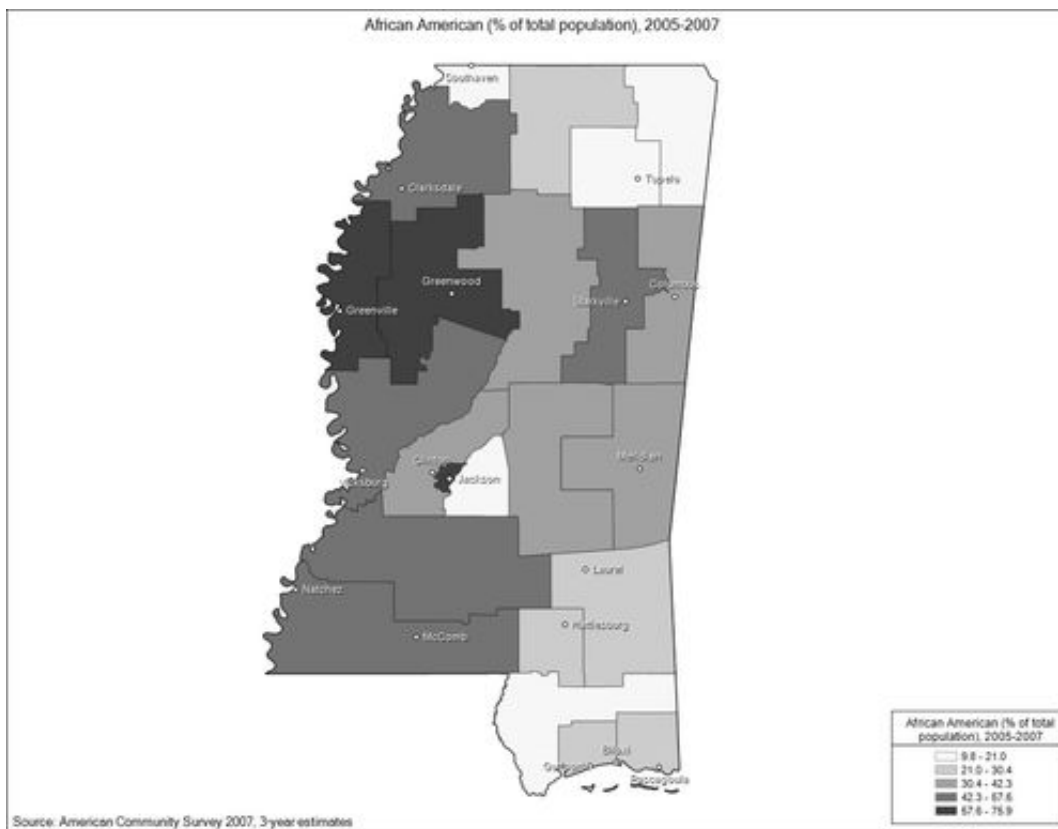
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01/27/2009

Maps

Following up on the previous [post](#), [here](#) is a great map application from the [Measure of America](#) website which published the HDI report, titled "[A Portrait of Mississippi](#)." The [map application](#) allows you to easily show a lot of data. Simple to use. With a color printer and some transparencies you can create some fantastic overlays. Here are two examples:



African-American Population, Mississippi

complete high school and three times more likely to complete college, and earns over \$12,000 more than those who live in Panola or Coahoma counties, a new study shows.

Mississippians living in those poorer counties have a human development level similar to that of the average American in 1975, more than 30 years ago.

Those are among the findings in "A Portrait of Mississippi: the Mississippi Human Development Report 2009," a statewide, county-by-county assessment set to be released Monday, broken down by race, of such indicators as lifespan, earnings, incidence of diabetes, high school completion, crime and birth weight.

...

Overall, the earnings for white Mississippians spans from \$22,000 to \$38,000, compared to \$13,000 to \$25,000 for black Mississippians.

In other words, white Mississippians worst off in income are still better off than the majority of African Americans, said Sarah Burd-Sharps of the American Human Development Project, one of the authors of the report.

...

Overall, black Mississippians are worse off than other black Americans, ranking second to last on the health and income index (ahead of Louisiana) but dead last in education. On average, an African American living in Maryland lives four years longer, earns twice as much and is twice as likely to have a college degree.

...

The report shows how many people are still struggling in Mississippi with shorter lives, lower incomes and limited access to education, he said.

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01/26/2009

KIPP

Nice [article](#) about Jason Singer, an MTC alumnus who has started several [KIPP schools](#) in the Bay Area (recent MTCer Joel Harris is currently in the process of starting a KIPP school in San Antonio):

As a school principal, Jason Singer is confident that 100 percent of his students will go to college.

Singer's passion for education was sparked while he was serving in the Teacher Corps in Greenwood, Miss. Teaching at a high school in a rural, predominantly black community, Singer experienced the disparities in the public school system firsthand. The school had high dropout and absenteeism rates.

In 1995, he returned to the Bay Area determined to start his own school, where every student would have a chance to achieve. Using funds from a Fisher Fellowship, in 2003 he opened KIPP Summit Academy, a middle school in San Lorenzo. KIPP, which stands for Knowledge Is Power Program, is part of a national network of public charter schools that stresses high academic performance and is dedicated to closing the educational achievement gap between high- and low-income students.

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01/25/2009

Blog

Firing up my [personal blog](#) again. First [post](#) is on the best and worst films of 2008.

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01/24/2009

Jeremy

Read MTC alumnus (and Mullins Award winner [the Mullins Award is a class award with the criteria being the person who best represents the values and ideals of the Mississippi Teacher Corps]) [Jeremy Fiel's account](#) of his JV Basketball team's perfect season. Here is an excerpt (you will have to join Vox and "friend" Jeremy to read the entire post):

My B-team just completed the first perfect season in memory at my school. We went 10-0 and beat some good teams. There were a couple of teams that I remember thinking: If we were playing pickup games, only 2 of my guys might get picked in the top 10. Every team we played was taller than we were, most were stronger than we were, and many of them had players with better shooting and ball-handling skills. None of them played harder, and none of them could handle our press or run the floor with us.

I've always wanted to believe that hard work pays off, and I've always believed in man-to-man pressure defense and been ashamed to play a zone. This season vindicated those beliefs. We played the way I believe that basketball should be played. We matched up man-to-man all 94 feet for the entire game, and we trapped every chance we got...

There were times when we looked like chickens with our heads cut off. Mike Anderson, who coaches Missouri now and has adopted Nolan Richardson's "40 minutes of Hell" philosophy, said a couple of years ago that it was about 25 minutes of Hell, and 15 minutes of what the Hell are we doing. That's how we were at times. We were behind double digits more than once, but we always made the big runs when it counted. In one of our toughest games, we scored 33 points in the second quarter. Against our best opponent, we scored 13 points in a 3 minute overtime period to win by 2.

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Care

Great [article](#) about universal health care in this week's New Yorker And, you might ask, what is the connection between education and health care, specifically in the Mississippi Delta? More than you think. Children growing up in poverty in Mississippi have limited (at best) access to quality health care. Our teachers teach kids who sit in the front row because they don't have glasses, who sit in the back row and can't concentrate because they have an impacted tooth and no money for a dentist, kids with diabetes, obesity, lupus. Kids who were low birth weight babies born to teen mothers. Et cetera, et cetera.

Here are some quotes from the article, written by a physician from Massachusetts, the first state in the nation to institute universal health care:

I once took care of a nineteen-year-old college student who had maxed out her insurance coverage. She had a treatable but metastatic cancer. But neither she nor her parents could afford the radiation therapy that she required. I made calls to find state programs, charities—anything that could help her—to no avail. She put off the treatment for almost a year because she didn't want to force her parents to take out a second mortgage on their home. But eventually they had to choose between their daughter and their life's savings.

For the past year, I haven't had a single Massachusetts patient who has had to ask how much the necessary tests will cost; not one who has told me he needed to put off his cancer operation until he found a job that provided insurance coverage. And that's a remarkable change: a glimpse of American health care without the routine cruelty.

...

Today, Sécurité Sociale provides payroll-tax-financed insurance to all French residents, primarily through a hundred and forty-four independent, not-for-profit, local insurance funds. The French health-care system has among the highest public-satisfaction levels of any major Western country; and, compared with Americans, the French have a higher life

expectancy, lower infant mortality, more physicians, and lower costs. In 2000, the World Health Organization ranked it the best health-care system in the world. (The United States was ranked thirty-seventh.)

...

Every industrialized nation in the world except the United States has a national system that guarantees affordable health care for all its citizens.

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