



EAGLE EYES

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STUDENTS EXPERIENCE THE EMOTIONS OF SEGREGATION ON MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., DAY

by Philbert Smith
Director of Students

How to create a situation that would allow young people to experience the emotions attached to segregation. How to honor MLK day as something more than just a day off. These were the challenges that Tim Phelps, Chef Instructor, and I faced as we considered what to do for Martin Luther King Day. What we considered was risky, but we wanted to reinforce the habits, values and spirit of Eagle Rock School.

Thus, on January 20, 1997, the students and staff woke up to a segregated campus. Reactions varied from thoughtful reflection to repugnance. We spent approximately nine and a half hours involved in an educational journey down a sad road in America's past. Incensed about injustice, students telephoned newspapers all over the state. An article was written in **The Denver Post** on Tuesday, January 21, 1997. The article inspired an editorial in **The Post** on Wednesday, January 22. The editorial, printed above, is used with permission.

COLOR THEM EQUAL

Students at Eagle Rock School in Estes Park observed Martin Luther King's birthday by taking a trip in a time machine. They didn't like it.

About half of the 63 students at the 3-year-old alternative school are members of minority groups. School officials disregarded their actual races and randomly selected a third of them to play the roles of black Americans in the 1960s. Identified with black arm bands, they encountered official segregation of the type that blighted the American South before passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

Some campus doorways were marked "for whites only," others for "coloreds only." Lunch tables, drinking fountains and bathrooms were also designated for one group or another.

As the students themselves admitted, this mild touch of racism was petty compared with the brutalities of the '60s, where torture and murder by the Klan and other racist organizations were backed by the official system of Jim Crow. But even so, the exercise demonstrated how the system of segregation not only stripped the dignity from those it oppressed but degraded the oppressors, as well.

Eagle Rock educators can be proud of their creative teaching techniques. By bringing history alive, they drove its lessons home to their students. Philosopher George Santayana wisely warned that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Conversely, it is to be hoped that a generation raised with an understanding of the past can begin to heal the wounds that still fester in our national psyche.

The Denver Post article and editorial suggest that the effects of the day were felt outside the Eagle Rock community. In addition to the **Post** coverage, an article appeared in the **Telegraph Gazette** of Colorado Springs; Lydia Frances Williams, a poetess, graced our campus with her presence; and we received a phone call from Charles Andrew Roth, who said that we were miseducating our students about segregation.

Later that week we discussed the event as a community. The discussion was very thoughtful and informative. Many students were able to see that time period through different eyes. I believe Martin Luther King, Jr., would have liked the way we chose to honor him and his ideas. I hope the lessons from that day will remain with this community for a long time.

JOHN OUBRE RETURNS TO EAGLE ROCK; L'TANYA JOINS STAFF

Students and staff alike were delighted when the news reached them that John Oubre was returning to Eagle Rock. Oubre arrived on campus in February and has

taken on the role of Assistant Director of Students with special focus on counseling and spirituality.

L'Tanya Perkins joined Eagle Rock staff about the same time, replacing Jenny Mayher who is leaving Eagle Rock to be married. L'Tanya hails from Ohio via Texas and takes over Jenny's duties in Admissions.

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TWO PIECES OF GLASS AND, VOILA, A TELESCOPE!

by Dick Herb, Director of Operations

What is a telescope? What do we have to make it do? What CAN we make it do? Where on campus should it be located? What's out there to see with it anyway? And how about a structure in which to permanently house it? How should we open the structure to the skies when we want to use the telescope? These are the questions various students enrolled in the Telescope Class have asked.

We started with no blueprints, no plans—just two pieces of round glass, each about 2 inches thick and 12 inches across. We're grinding and polishing our own mirror. We've calculated the curvature necessary to build an f5 to f6 instrument. We've checked, made mistakes, restarted, and gone a bit mindless stroking glass on glass with a little carborundum grit and water. Ours is a fifty-hour task—not counting the time correcting mistakes.

We knew we had to build in capacity for the telescope to track a variety of celestial objects across the sky. We knew our telescope had to be driven smoothly by motors. In order to track asteroids and comets moving across the sky at varying speeds and from varying directions, we knew the motors would need variable speed capability.

At this point in time, we're just worrying about the direction we need to orient the main axis so that the mirror will track east to west around that axis. We'll need to pour a concrete pedestal, ramped in the direction we want to orient that axis. How will we pour a few tons of concrete without our wooden forms floating or being knocked out of our carefully crafted alignment??!!

Thirty-four students have had their hands and minds involved in designing, presenting, sorting, and communicating ideas, problem solving, and grinding as well. Building a telescope? Yes, but minds are building, too, and that is the most important construction going on in this class.

Students "invented" two mounting ideas, for example, an equatorial mount and a fork mount. After they invented these two, I told them the official names for their inventions. They designed a roll-off roof—simple—and it will roll off on skateboard wheels. What else?

The advantage of reflecting telescopes is their light-gathering capacity for photography. Imagine the pupil of your eye being 12 inches across. And then add time-exposed photography, gathering light from a faint object over 10 or 20 minutes. Imagine coming up with a photograph of something you cannot see. Or, imagine camcording (which our telescope will do nicely) to a super VGA monitor! I can't wait for the first student who calculates the orbit of an asteroid he or she "finds" and learns from observation that that asteroid's orbit extends from Venus to Neptune, and it won't be back for 44.4 years (or something like that).

We're in the process, and process is what's most important. The telescope, its construction, and, eventually, its use are just tools.

SOGUERO STATE'S TOP EDUCATOR

*Editor's Note: This article is reprinted with permission from **The Trail-Gazette** which published it Wednesday, January 22, 1997.*

Michael Soguero, math and science instructional specialist at Eagle Rock School, has been selected as Colorado's "Educator of the Year" by the National High School Association. Soguero is the only Coloradan to be so honored, and he will join co-honorees from six other states Saturday in Portland, Ore. for an award ceremony at the NHSA's annual convention.

Soguero has been with Eagle Rock since its inception in 1993 when he was selected for the start-up faculty at the experimental, residential high school. The year-round, full-scholarship school is funded by the American Honda Education Corp. with a goal of enrolling students for whom success has been otherwise elusive.

Jennifer Fox, director of the Colorado Chapter of NHSA and principal of St. Mary's Academy High School, said Soguero was chosen by the organization's steering committee on the basis of his "dedication, energy and accomplishments in the effort of improving learning for students." Soguero was nominated for the prestigious award by Eagle Rock's Head of School Robert Burkhardt. Burkhardt described

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THE "PITFALLS" OF MATHEMATICS

by Jason Cushner, Intern

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling of my prison. It was some forty feet overhead, and constructed much as the side walls. In one of its panels a very singular figure riveted my whole attention. It was the painted picture of Time as he is commonly represented, save that in lieu of a scythe, he held what, at a casual glance, I supposed to be the pictured image of a huge pendulum such as we see on antique clocks. . . .

I now observed with what horror is needless to say—that its nether extremity was formed of a crescent of glittering steel, about a foot in length from horn to horn; the horns upward, and another edge evidently as keen as that of a razor. . . .

The vibration of the pendulum was at right angles to my length. I saw that the crescent was designed to cross the region of the heart. . . .

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact with my robe—and with this observation there suddenly came over my spirit all the keen, collected calmness of despair. . . .

They writhed upon my throat; their cold lips sought my own; I was half stifled by their thronging pressure; disgust, for which the world has no name, swelled in my bosom, and chilled, with heavy clamminess, my heart. Yet, one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over. . . .

The above is an excerpt from Edgar Allan Poe's story, "The Pit and the Pendulum," the basis for an ERS mathematics class. In the story, the "hero" has twelve back-and-forth swings left before the pendulum swinging above him will sever him. The "hero" also reckons he needs a minute to carry out his escape plan. Unsurprisingly, he barely escapes the pendulum. The question Science and Math Instructional Specialist Michael Soguero and I posed to our "Pit and Pendulum" class was this: "Does he really have enough time to escape?"

To find how long it would take the 30 foot pendulum in the story to make the twelve swings necessary the students experimented with pendulums. There were pendulums dangling from shelves, door jambs, even a 14-footer from the balcony of the Lodge. Students observed with wide eyes, open mouths, and quick fingers on the stopwatch. Later, they argued about what the data they had collected meant.

Part of the challenge was for the students to determine their own process for solving an open-ended question instead of following a predetermined path. The students had to design experiments to see which variables affected a pendulum (weight, starting height and length of string). Besides the critical thinking skills involved, the students worked with standard deviation and other measures of data spread.

Along the way, students struggled with the concept of how much "margin of error" is important. In one of the labs, we attempted to measure the time it

would take for the second hand of a clock to move five seconds with a stopwatch. Easy, right? Students found that at times they were off by a full second or more. This showed the need for a measure of data spread and some way of determining if their pendulum times were reasonable or rare. After a day of arguing about the best method, the class came to consensus and each group went on to develop a formula predicting "period" of a pendulum.

The students now had predictions for the period of twelve swings of the giant pendulum and whether "the hero" would live or die. Next students designed a pendulum to test their predictions. The pendulum consisted of a rock climbing rope attached to the rafters in the ceiling of the Human Performance Center and student Brian Pennington as the bob (weight at the base of the pendulum). Limited by the height of the HPC, the pendulum was 24 feet, 5 inches high, a few feet higher than the adjacent climbing wall. The students plugged that number into their formulas and made a poster of their predictions for the giant pendulum.

To start the pendulum, Brian was hauled up via a step ladder and, on a count of three, launched, hair blowing in the wind, for twelve periods of the giant pendulum. Most of the students stood there confidently as the many trials of the giant pendulum confirmed their predictions on the fate of "the hero." He lived. The students' question at the end of the day was, "Do you think Poe knew this when he wrote the story?"

HAIMANOT TESFAI, ERS STUDENT, HONORED IN "SALUTE TO WOMEN"

by Lois Easton, Director of Professional Development

Along with three Estes Park citizens, Eagle Rock student Haimanot Tesfai was honored with an American Association of University Women (AAUW) "Salute to Women Award" recently. In a **Trail-Gazette** article March 5, Haimanot was described as the "outstanding high school student." According to the article, "The award is given to a female student expected to excel in several areas: academics, activities, athletics, community ser-

vice, and student government and/or leadership."

Although unable to attend the awards ceremony because she was on an educational trip to Washington, D.C. called "Close-up," Haimanot was described as "a very hard worker. She's determined to be something in her life." A classmate described her as "very compassionate."

Linda Stennette of AAUW stated, "Since this young woman has been in Estes Park, she has engaged herself in service of many different types as an expression of her commitment to our community." The article mentioned Haimanot's volunteer work at Rocky Ridge Music Center, the history museum, a river cleanup project, the hospital, and

a homeless shelter.

Haimanot was described as a good role model for students and "a voice for good in the community." She "has a strong sense of good and acts upon it personally," according to Stennette. She "strives to grow academically and consistently puts out an incredible effort to achieve. She is never satisfied with just knowing the bare minimum. Instead, Tesfai keeps raising the bar by challenging herself with more problems to solve."

Stennette concluded, "It is remarkable that a young woman who came out of a war torn country, Eritrea in North-east Africa, can have the zest for learning and goodness. This is what makes her truly outstanding."

BUILDING A CULTURE OF QUALITY AT EAGLE ROCK

by Robert Burkhardt, Head of School

These sentences from Ron Berger's recent essay, **A Culture of Quality**, caught my eye and ignited my thinking:

Schools that strictly enforce and celebrate polite and kind behavior, that regularly use staff meetings to discuss behavioral issues, that actively use community meetings, peer mediation, peer tutoring, mentor programs, community service work, and community exhibitions of excellence, must take a lot of time planning things that aren't purely curricular. It is time well spent, because quality in one area supports quality throughout the system.

Our full staff has read Ron's provocative essay, and we are using his powerful ideas to stimulate our thinking and practice at Eagle Rock. How do **WE** build a "culture of quality?" How do we unite all members of our community in a relentless quest for excellence? How do we keep getting better at what we do? How do we make the time necessary to do this? After almost four years of operations, it seems an important time to report on the slow growth of a quality culture at Eagle Rock.

Some specifics suggest that we are moving in the right direction. Instructional Specialist Michael Soguero was recently named "Educator of the Year" in Colorado (see article in this newsletter). Student Haimanot Tesfai was recently named "Outstanding Female High School Student" in Estes Park (see article in this newsletter). Former intern Dan Condon was recently named one of America's "Twenty Young Visionaries" by WHO CARES? magazine. And **The Denver Post** recently wrote an editorial commending our Martin Luther King, Jr., observance (see article in this newsletter).

In May, the Town of Estes Park and the Estes Valley Improvement Association will plant two trees on Eagle Rock grounds to honor the many service projects ERS students have completed in this community. These recognitions are a source of pride for all connected with Eagle Rock, and we hope to be able to report similar occurrences in the future.

Additionally, there are internal indicators which support the assertion that staff and students share a common vision for the school. Students and staff regularly represent the school in public, and we invariably receive letters lauding the insights and energy of the presentations. The quality of Explore Week and Wilderness presentations in late February was consistently high: ER11 students (new students just returned

from their Wilderness trip) and veterans alike were creative, articulate, passionate and well-organized as they displayed blown glass, discussed AIDS, walked us through newly created web sites, shimmied to Middle Eastern music, or simply described the intense reflection possible on a high desert hill at sunset.

In our daily Gathering we have seen a wide variety of topics and activities well presented, accompanied by enthusiastic singing. Intramurals are a source of robust energy and passion, and we have witnessed ascending levels of sportsmanship. Life in Houses is more family-like with each passing month. Students have, quite literally, "raised the bar" of behavioral expectations for members of our community.

So, at the group and individual levels, there is much to be proud of at Eagle Rock. And we look forward to upcoming events to help us advance the culture even further: The first-ever alumni reunion in May; a student production of "The Wizard of Oz" this summer; many superbly qualified candidates for next year's intern positions; significant service projects in nearby communities; accreditation for the school within the next few years.

Yet, Eagle Rock is a voluntary association of individuals, all of whom are struggling to become more than they presently are. We may have accomplished much to date, but we are painfully aware of the journey ahead as we strive to attain that culture of quality so well described by Ron Berger. We know that issues will arise to beguile and challenge us. We regularly ask ourselves variations of the question, "How on earth did we enable students X & Y to think that behavior Z was acceptable at Eagle Rock?" We discuss the elements of a safe community. We seek a consensus on the meanings and implications of words like respect, commitment, and leadership. We labor to consolidate our fragile culture by enlisting all community members as stewards of a broader vision. We continually seek the patience and resolve necessary to move forward, and we persist in a dialogue on the necessity of compassion and empathy in a small community.

Two things are abundantly clear about Eagle Rock culture as we near the end of our fourth year: All victories are evanescent; this will be a long struggle. It's not unlike life.

TWO MORE GRADS MAKE IT 16

On Friday, April 11, the graduation of two more Eagle Rock students will bring the total number of ERS graduates to sixteen. Marion Blakeney from Texas (formerly from Estes Park) and Danny Thwaites from Delaware completed their graduation requirements and performed their final presentations of learning in order to graduate.

Eagle Rock School (Continued)

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Judy Gilbert

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Robyn Hamasaki

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Dick Herb

Director of Operations

Michelle Jacobs

Assistant Food Service Instructor

Jeff Lemon

Head Cook Assistant

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Career and Service Learning

Ted Long

Assistant Facilities

Jenny Mayher

Admissions Specialist

Mary McGuire

Arts, Music, Performance

John Oubre

Assistant Director of Students

L'Tanya Perkins

Admissions Associate

Tim Phelps

Chef, Instructor

Fred Quinonez

Society and Social Studies

Philbert Smith

Director of Students

Michael Soguero

Science and Math

Audrey Stevens

Administrative Assistant

Alison Trattner

Language and Literature

Bonnie Vavra

Business Assistant

Bob Van Der Wege

Learning Resources and Information

EAGLE ROCK TRIATHLON

by Meghan McGuire, ERS Student

Starting in January, ten Eagle Rock students began a rigorous training schedule in their third period class. All their hard work was in preparation for the first Eagle Rock Triathlon. At first, most of the students felt that the training would be too hard for them, but as they fell into a routine, the training got easier. Although most of the class time was spent working out, the students also learned a great deal about how to get and stay in shape. By keeping a journal of workouts, the students got to know their own bodies, and their strengths and weaknesses very well. A plethora of information about fitness training was acquired during the class, and the students even established their own personal target heart rates.

If you are not aware of what a triathlon is, you are missing out on one of the most intense and difficult kinds of races. In a triathlon there are three events. First, there is swimming, then biking, then running. Each might sound easy, but put together, they provide an intense workout.

To prepare for the triathlon, the students made good use of Eagle Rock's Human Performance Center, swimming regularly in the Olympic-sized pool, running around the gym, and doing circuit training on the plentiful equipment in the workout loft.

Each day was used to the fullest, with students pushing themselves to the limit. Close to the end of the six-week block, the training got more intense as the triathlon date neared. "It got extremely tiring," said Rachel Curran, an ER9 student. Everybody kept careful track of the weather, to see if it would be possible to ride bikes, which is very dangerous in icy conditions.

When the morning of the long-awaited triathlon finally came, students woke up to a partly cloudy sky, yet there was still snow on the ground. Colleen Graham, Human Performance Instructional Specialist and teacher of the Triathlon class, made the final decision to call off the biking event due to the ice on the road. The triathlon turned into a biathlon, with an additional running event.

Students started off by running 3.1 miles, then swam one half a mile (33 laps) in the pool, then ran to the gate (another 3 miles). All the students joyfully finished the race. David Magglio came in first, with Meghan McGuire second, followed closely by Rachel Curran, although it was agreed that everyone who completed the race won it!

When everybody had finished, there was a feeling of rejoicing and achievement. All the hard work has paid off. "It was an immense achievement for me," said Ericka Esrick, ERS student. "I never, in a million years, thought that I could do it."

A TRIP TO ISRAEL INSPIRES REFLECTIONS ON SAFETY

by Philbert Smith, Director of Students

Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from an e-mail Philbert sent to the Eagle Rock community about his trip to the East Coast and, from there, to Israel.

Dear Eagle Rock Community,

I touched down safely at Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday, the 16th. It was uneventful, which is exactly what you want a flight to Israel to be. It took us an hour plus to receive our luggage. We barely made it out of the airport before it was shut down by the military. King Hussein is visiting Israel today en route to the Airport (of course you guys know why he is visiting, being ERS students). The military is making sure nothing unusual will happen. What is normal to Israelis is a little unsettling and uncomfortable to the rest of us.

I want to briefly talk about my days since the Wednesday community meeting. I want to talk about the **security of love**. I love the safeness of our community. It is safe enough for me to learn and to challenge myself to explore any issue that I may be struggling with in life. I love that feeling.

I have experienced in a short period of time the **security of fear**. Let me explain.

▲ Security at DIA, pretty basic stuff. Pretty normal now, derived from fear.

▲ I spoke at Princeton to approximately 50 people. Felt safe.

▲ I went to Trenton High School on Friday. Security cameras in every hallway, nook and cranny. Security guards posted all over. No place is unwatched. Students and teachers do not relate to each other intimately. Fear abounds. Perhaps there are students here with a thirst for learning in their eyes; I did not see them. I also did not meet any teachers who were enthused about teaching. Perhaps there are some. The ones I met were worried about making it through the day. Everyone—students and faculty—looked battle fatigued. How can you learn properly in that environment?

▲ Suffolk County Correctional Facility. This is where I saw [a former student]. My first question: "What the hell are you doing here after being at ERS?" Boo [a former intern] and I had began this quest to see [student] at 3:00 pm. We did not get in to see him until 6:25 pm. Security and all. Because it was so late and I had to get to the airport, we could only spend a precious 20 minutes with him. In addi-

tion to the initial security checks, we had to have our shoes x-rayed. And we had to make sure that the only things we had on were our underwear, one layer of clothing (no jackets etc.), socks, pants without a belt, and a picture ID. That's it. This was heightened fear-based security.

▲ JFK Airport. It took 25 minutes of questions with El Al Airlines security before I could get to the ticket counter. Then my luggage had to be checked!

▲ Israel. Now I'm in a country where it is normal to have the military walk around armed. There is even a motion detector in my room. Again fear-based security.

If this is the "real world," then thank God we live at ERS. And living at ERS obligates us to abolish the things that make people live in fear whenever we can. It obligates us to continue to work on our school culture and to continue to be vigilant.

I hope everyone has a good Monday of learning in our real world of care, concern and love-based security. I will be thinking about you often. And I will be bragging about a place where you can feel safe spiritually, emotionally and physically. A place where you can grow and learn and learn to grow. Eagle Rock School.

Love,
Philbert

Soguero - continued

Soguero as having “unfailingly cheerful determination to achieve excellence in all aspects of life.”

Fox said she was impressed by Soguero as a tireless advocate for constructivism in the classroom. “You cause students to think, reflect, and learn,” Fox said. “For your efforts, you are respected, trusted and admired by the Eagle Rock community.” Fox con-

tinued, “Michael, how lucky your students are to have a teacher like you. Clearly, you indubitably deserve this honor.”

In his role at Eagle Rock, Soguero is responsible for the evolution of the math and science curriculum which he created when the school opened. He is a house parent to 16 students, in addition to raising his and wife

Cynthia’s own two sons, Andrew, 2, and Aiden, 6 months. Soguero also serves as a faculty advisor and staff coordinator, and he works closely with the professional development director and Eagle Rock’s director of curriculum. He has been described as a “man for all seasons” who has consistently earned the respect of his students and peers.

ERS DESIGNED AND BUILT NATURE CENTER TO ENHANCE EDUCATION FOR YOUTH, PRESENT AND FUTURE

by Alex Ortiz, Student

The purpose of the class “Designing the Nature Center” was to build a hands-on nature center for children of all ages, all over the nation, who visit Estes Park and McGregor Ranch, a National Historic Site. When we are older, we can show our kids what we have done during our years at Eagle Rock.

As soon as we started this class, we knew it would take a lot of patience. For one example, we took 6 weeks doing nothing but research on each of our animals—with some of us having up to 3 animals to research. Another example is when Eric, Manager of McGregor Ranch, came over to our school to see each of our ideas on how to build the nature center. He had different ideas for himself, which he shared with us at the end of our presentations.

When we were ready to start our exhibits, we had to find our own stuffed animal and pieces of fur, and we had to record the exact noises our animals make. Another time that we had to be patient was when we had to go out into the wilderness to find our own animal footprints. This took us a lot of time. We divided the class into two groups, Group A and Group B, so that half of our class could work on the center, which is very small, and the other half could hunt for animal tracks or work on “blurbs” for the exhibit. The groups trade off so everyone can do both things during the week.

Each of us had many goals in our minds when we started to build the nature center. The goals we had as a team were 1) to finish our exhibits on time; 2) to finish the nature center itself by the deadline we had agreed on; 3) to see the ribbon being cut on the opening day; and 4) to get credit in this class. We accomplished those goals by working as a good team.

The project wouldn’t have taken place without our instructors Garth Lewis, Career and Service Learning Instructional Specialist, Robyn Hamasaki, Environmental Science Instructional Specialist, and Shawna Hedlund, Instructional Intern.

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