

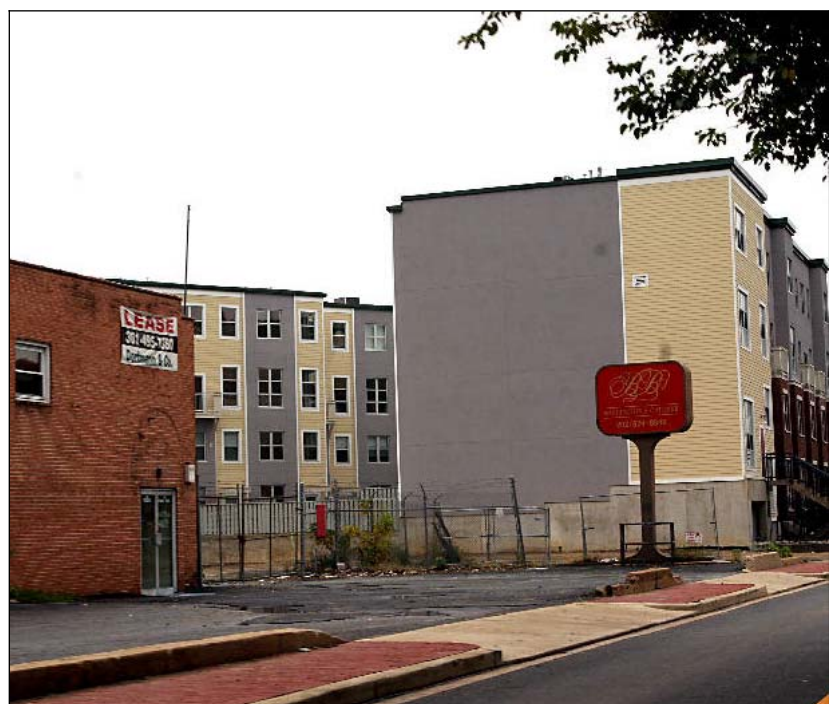
OUTLOOK

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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2005

DC MD VA R



BY LOIS RAIMONDO — THE WASHINGTON POST

Transformation: A condominium project on Blair Road in the District's Takoma neighborhood is just one example of the makeover taking place all over the city.

It's a Change, Not a Conspiracy

The City Is Gentrifying. Live With It

By DAVID NICHOLSON

Driving back from a Nationals game one night this summer with a friend who grew up in the District but hasn't lived here for years, I noticed him studying people on the street. Finally, he blurted, "You know, I just can't get used to seeing white people walking down North Carolina Avenue."

I knew what he meant. I've had moments myself when I marveled at what was happening to my city as I looked around at neighborhood meetings and saw that half the faces were white, or when driving through black working-class neighborhoods I remember from my childhood that seemed to have turned Hispanic overnight.

What my friend and I are observing, of course, is the change that's come with gentrification, as young, often well-to-do whites with their Starbucks coffee and Volvo station wagons move in, sometimes displacing black families. It's a trend some lament because of its potential to destroy black neighborhoods, but it's merely part of the inevitable process of change and renovation. And as hard as it is to accept for folks who celebrated Washington as "Chocolate City" in the '70s and '80s, it's been breathing new life into many neighborhoods for a while now.

Recent census estimates seem to bear out my friend's spur-of-the-moment observation. Whites now account for 30 percent of the city's population, up from 28 percent five years ago. Hispanics, some 7 percent five

years ago, are now approaching 10 percent of the population. And blacks, who now represent 57 percent of the population, were 61 percent in 2000 and 65 percent 10 years before that.

At the same time that the city's racial complexion is changing, many of its poorer residents are being displaced because they can't afford to live in the District. According to a recent report from the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute, the number of houses here valued at \$500,000 or more increased from 9,900 in 2000 to nearly 33,800 just four years later. Meanwhile, the District lost some 12,000 "affordable" houses and apartments last year — houses valued at \$150,000 or less and apartments renting for \$500 or less per month.

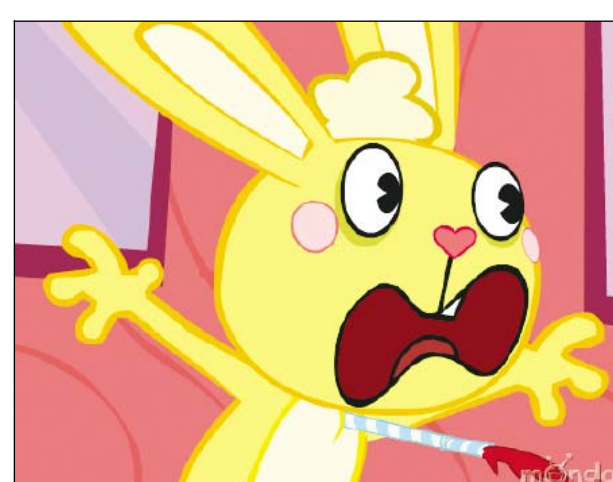
Numbers like those, prime evidence of gentrification, leave black Washingtonians grumbling in barbershops, beauty parlors and watering holes along Georgia Avenue and the Southwest waterfront about what they've long called "the Plan" — a secret scheme to evict blacks from the District so that whites can take over. There's no such conspiracy, of course, but there's no denying that the march of gentrification is unsettling. The changes rile black columnists (earlier this year, Colbert I. King of this newspaper accused journalists of providing "a superficial and misleading picture of gentrification" because they haven't lived through it and "don't spend nearly enough time in the community getting to know what they write about"). And they anger community activists, one of whom told the Washington Afro-American in August that young black men are dealing drugs to make

See GENTRIFY, B3, Col. 1

David Nicholson, a Washington writer, is a former editor and book reviewer for *The Washington Post*.

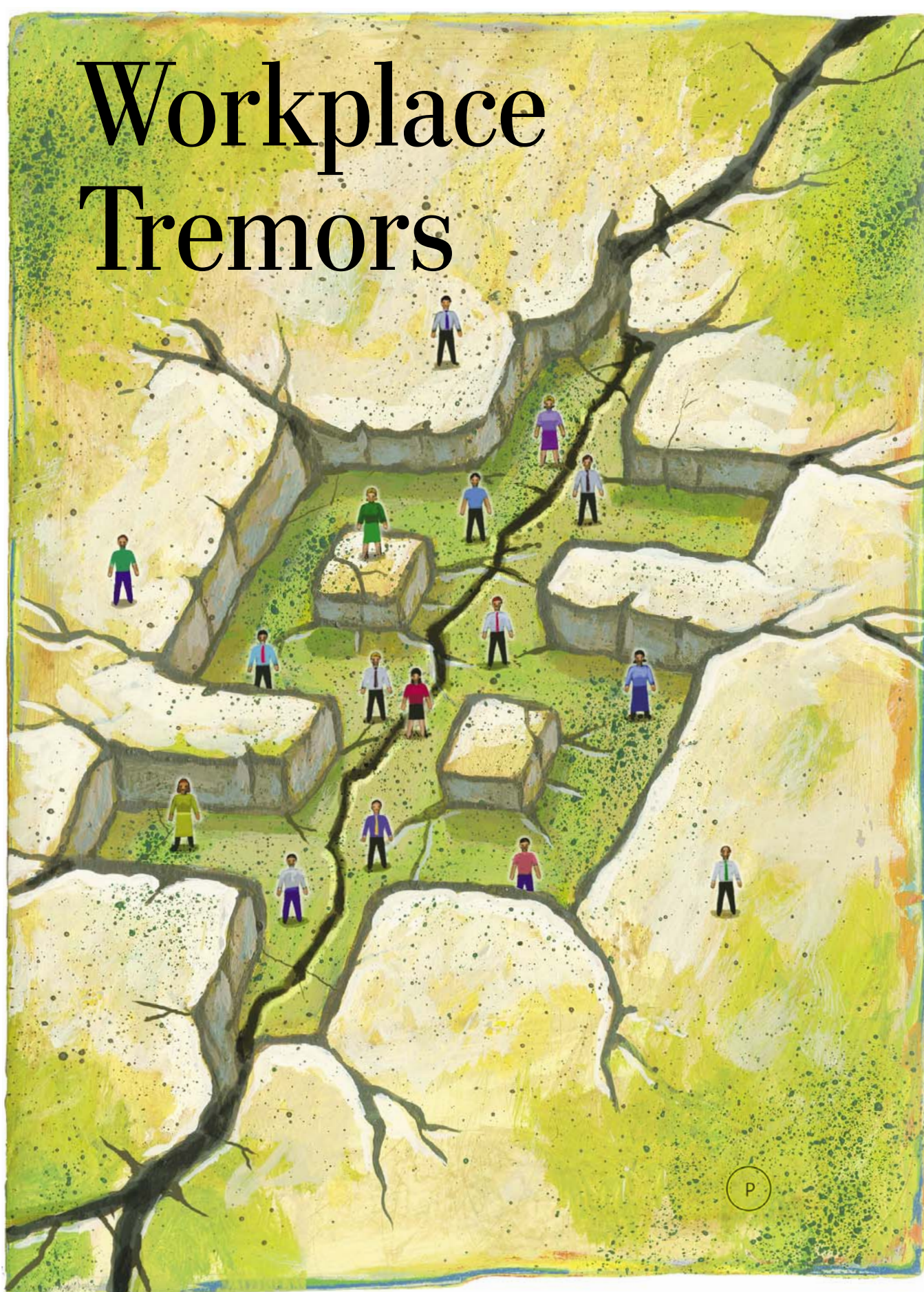
SOPHIA NELSON on finishing the job that Abraham Lincoln started. *Page 3*

THE WIZ on Playboy bunnies and how tough they're made out to be. *Page 5*



Yeeeaah! Internet cartoons like "Happy Tree Friends" offer children an unrestricted diet of cheery garroting and mindless maiming.

Katherine Ellison is a veteran reporter and the author, most recently, of "The Mommy Brain: How Motherhood Makes Us Smarter" (Basic Books).



BY PETER BENNETT FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

How Chapter 11 Is Demolishing Employee Expectations

By MARK REUTTER

The scene in Lower Manhattan was reminiscent of teenagers rushing to the front of a concert stage, only this time it was middle-aged lawyers and Wall Street bankers who pushed elbow to elbow into a federal courtroom no bigger than a gas station mini-mart.

The throng of pinstripe suits forced court aides to call in workers to pry open windows for ventilation, allowing U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Robert D. Drain to proceed with the Oct. 11 opening-day hearing regarding the "petition for relief" by Michigan auto parts maker Delphi Corp. under Chapter 11 of federal bankruptcy laws.

Once shunned by respectable companies and ignored by Wall Street, federal bankruptcy court has become the venue of choice for sophisticated financiers and corporate managers seeking to pull apart labor contracts and roll back health and welfare programs at troubled companies.

About 150 major corporations are now in some stage of bankruptcy reorganization, including four of the nation's leading airlines. As the prospect of other large enterprises taking a spin down Chapter 11 becomes more widely discussed in business circles ("maybes" on the list include such iconic names as General Motors

and Ford), the tactics used in bankruptcy courts are shaking the very foundations of the American workplace.

Whether an assembly-line worker or middle manager, an employee can no longer assume that promises made earlier — health benefits or fully funded pensions — will be there when he or she retires. The loss of security arising from Chapter 11 reorganizations has introduced a new element of anxiety into the lives of baby boomers who are approaching 60, not to mention younger workers just starting out in their careers.

The new bankruptcy law, which took effect last week, will have little effect on corporate bankruptcies. The legislation, approved by Congress and signed by President Bush in April, is aimed at curbing abuses in consumer bankruptcies. It tightens the rules for individual filings, making it more difficult for consumers to have their credit card and other debts wiped clean in court.

But except for barring certain bonus payouts, the new law keeps intact the legal system by which corporations can shed certain employee obligations, including pension costs that can be shifted to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. (PBGC), which Congress set up in 1974 to insure defined-benefit corporate pensions.

The PBGC is now struggling with \$23.3 billion in net deficits arising from the termination of pension plans from Chapter 11 bankruptcies in the steel and airline industries. Delphi's filing shifts the spotlight onto the pension problems of the auto sector, where a total shortfall ranges between \$45 billion and \$50 billion, according to the PBGC's estimates.

See CHAPTER 11, B4, Col. 1

Mark Reutter is an Illinois-based journalist and the author of "Making Steel: Sparrows Point and the Rise and Ruin of American Industrial Might" (University of Illinois Press). He writes about business issues at his Web site, Makingsteel.com.

■ **David Brunori** on why limiting the mortgage deduction is not a bad idea | *Page 4*

What's Up, Doc? A Bloody Outrage, That's What Watch That Internet. It's Getting Away With Cartoon Murder — and More

By KATHERINE ELLISON

The other day I found my 6-year-old son watching an Internet cartoon called "Happy Tree Friends."

Purple daisies danced, high-pitched voices sang and animals with heart-shaped noses waved cheerily. But then the music changed, and a previously merry green bear, wearing dog tags and camouflage, suffered an apparent psychotic breakdown.

Crrrrack!! went the neck of a purple badger, as the bear snapped off its head. Blood splashed and continued flowing as the bear gleefully garroted a hedgehog, then finished off a whimpering squirrel already impaled on metal spikes by placing a hand grenade in its paw.

Joshua turned to me with a sheepish grin. He clearly had a sense that I wasn't happy about his new friends, but he couldn't have known what I was really thinking. Which was this: I'm a longtime journalist who reveres the First Amendment, and I live in California's liberal bastion of Marin County. Yet I would readily skip my next yoga class to march with right-wing fundamentalists in a cultural war against "Happy Tree Friends."

Just when parents thought we knew who our electronic enemies were — the shoot-'em-up video games, the TVs hawking trans fats, the pedophile e-mail stalkers and teenage-boobs Web sites — here comes this new swamp-thing mass entertainment: the Internet "Flash cartoon," pared down to pure shock value. Its music and animation are tuned to the Teletubbies set — that's its "joke." Its faux warning, "Cartoon Violence: Not for Small Children or Big Babies" is pure come-on — for those who can read. And it's easy to watch over and over again, reinforcing its empathy-dulling impact. That makes it particularly harmful to young psyches, UCLA neuroscientist

See CARTOONS, B2, Col. 1