



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**America's Capital
Dignitaries and Demonstrations**

Dignitaries and Demonstrations (I) Report One

April 20, 2006

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, reporting once again from our nation's capital.

Visiting dignitaries are a common sight in Washington, DC. During my stay here, I have attended several White House lawn ceremonies that were setup to welcome famous people. In the early (1970s) days of my residency in Northern Virginia, gaining a tourist pass for the White House grounds to attend a dignitary ceremony was an easy task; simply call a White House office for permission to attend. No security check; no vetting; simply show up with a driver's license in hand. I have not attempted to attend a White House lawn reception for a while, but I suspect it is not so easy nowadays to gain a pass.

On one occasion I attended a welcoming ceremony for West Germany's Willie Brandt. President Nixon was the host, and it was a festive occasion---an enjoyable couple of hours. The famed Fort Myer Old Guard band was in attendance, a group I hope someday you will be able to see and hear. Figure 1(a) shows this band. Figure 1(b) shows Brandt and Nixon participating in the ceremonies. I made these photos by simply stepping out of the crowd and snapping them. Today, if I made such a move, I would be either shot or assaulted by security people.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. White House ceremonies.

Yang and Anti-Ying; Ying and Anti-Yang...Not to Mention Anti-Hu

The number of DC dignitary visits and ceremonies is rivaled only by an equal number of anti-dignitary demonstrations. For every visit from a Ying, there is an anti-Ying rally. For every ceremony for a Yang, there is an anti-Yang protest. One goes with the other.

Recently, I filed a report on John Negroponte's speech at the National Press Club. During the drive from Virginia to the Club to hear his speech, I encountered more DC traffic than usual for a Thursday morning. I had forgotten Chinese President Hu Jintao was in town and a guest at the White House, a few blocks from the National Press Club.

The streets were congested because anti-Hu protesters were at every street corner around the White House. I saw a few pro-Hu signs and pro-Hu demonstrators. But the day and much of the television coverage belonged to the anti-Hu bloc. As I left the National Press Club, I snapped photos of the demonstrations (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Another demonstration in the nation's capital.

The anti-Hu rally centered on the Falun Gong, a organization consisting of individuals who, "(are) interested in promoting good health and individual powers through exercise and exemplary personal habits."¹ The source also states the group is not politically motivated. But according to a newspaper article, the Chinese interpretation of the words *Falun Gong* is, "Practice of the Wheel of Law."² If that is not political, I don't know what is. Laws are the results of legislation, crafted and approved by a legislature, such as Congress, which is a political body.

Couching Tiger, Flying Human

Anyway, the Falun Gong appears to be a political organization, but with a few funky distinctions. The newspaper article makes this observation about the Falun Gong:³

[The] group blends meditation and martial arts with a cosmology involving aliens and flying humans.

I think the China government would be better-off if they ignored an organization that spends time being quiet and doing meditation. Not to mention folks who spend their non-silent time on judo, karate, extraterrestrial beings, and flying humans. If left alone, these types of people tend to self-destruct. Just witness the Greek guy who flew too close to the sun and his wings melted.

¹ "Falun Gong." *Microsoft Encarta*, Microsoft Corporation, 2006.

² Karlyn Barker and Lena H. Sun, "Falun Gong Activist Defiant After Arrest," *The Washington Post*, April 22, 2006, A5.

³ *Ibid.*

The Hu Jintao ceremony at the White House was interrupted by a protester, who was admitted by virtue of being a credentialed journalist for a Falun Gong newspaper. She made a row, shouting threats such as, "Stop oppressing the Falun Gong!" "Your time is running out!" "Anything you have done will come back to you in this lifetime!" "President Bush, stop him from killing! President Bush, stop him from persecuting Falun Gong!"

Of course, humans being what they are---some Ying, others Yang---had different reactions to the protester's remarks. Some folks, such as the Falun Gong members, her attorney, and her soon-to-be publisher, thought her comments were accurate and effective. Others, including Presidents Hu and Bush didn't care for them.

The protester, Wenyi Wang, was "escorted" off the lawn to the U.S. District Court by Secret Service agents. Based on my experience with last year's Presidential Inauguration and VP Cheney's speech at the National Press Club, I would have guessed Wenyi Wang might have gotten through, "Stop oppressing..." before several thousand agents swooped down on her. What good are our tax dollars doing?

The Credentials of the Protester

Wenyi Wang has a medical degree and a doctorate from the University of Chicago. The newspaper sponsoring Wang was apologetic about the incident and stated it did not know she planned to make the protest, "Wang helped research the recent *Epoch Time* articles on organ harvesting and was 'very overstressed.'"⁴

You bet. And I can also understand Dr. Wang's becoming anxious and overstressed in her roles as a medical person and a Falun Gong person. After all, efforts to attach wings to humans, or alternately, attempts to devise levitation capabilities in a harvested organ can be a stressful exercise. Even more, from a medical standpoint, dealing with aliens must be nerve-wracking.

As an aside, how would you like Dr. Wang to be your physician?

Civil and Uncivil Disobedience

I am a proponent of civil disobedience because it is a proven way to change the behavior of governments. I admire Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, not just for their practice of civil disobedience, but for their intelligent execution of the practice. Dr. Wang is an example of the unintelligent execution of political petition.

On this occasion, with a few exceptions, I'll wager the only people she impressed or persuaded about her philosophy were people who were already impressed and persuaded by her philosophy. Here's a hypothetical dialogue to remedy this situation:

- Reporter, "Dr. Wang, It might come as a surprise to single issue groups and their members that on occasion it is in their interest to let *other* issues come to the surface and be addressed by those in power."
- Dr. Wang, "Other issues! You mean to say there are *other* issues? Ha! There is nothing more important than *my* issue."

⁴ Barker and Sun, "Falun Gong Activist Defiant After Arrest," 2006, A5.

- Reporter, "Think not? Consider this: The interests of the Chinese rest to a great extent on America's propensity to buy cheap stuff, much of which is made in China. If the ongoing dialogues you witnessed on the White House lawn go away, your Falun Gong will have a snowball's chance in Hell of being a successful movement in China. The only leverage you and Falun Gong have against your government is the fact that your government wants to keep an even keel with the U.S.
- "For a few isolated occasions---like a ceremony inside the gates of the White House---cool it."

Your on the Street Reporter

Dignitaries and Demonstrations (I) Report Two

April 24, 2006

Today, Reporterette and Reporter visited Massachusetts Avenue---also called Embassy Row. It is a street bedecked with scores of embassies and consulates. On Embassy row, you will encounter many grand and stately houses that serve as a home-away-from-home to foreign dignitaries and their staffs.

My suggestion is to start your tour around Dupont Circle, as shown in Figure 1. Then, head northwest (the red arrow) until you reach Wisconsin Avenue. Take some of the side streets off Mass. Ave, such as Kalorama or 34th Street. The houses on these streets are lovely, as is the landscaping. These embassies and consulates---some representing countries you've likely never heard of---occupy many former residences.

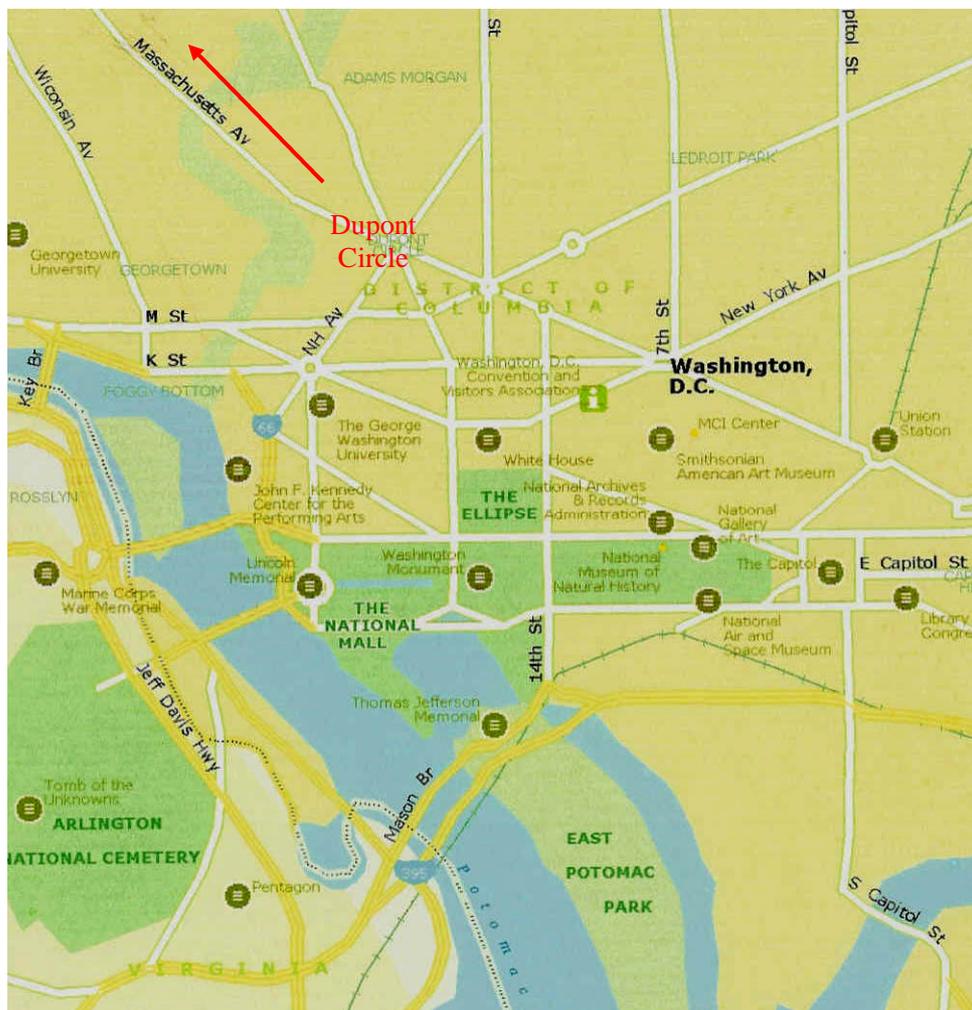


Figure 1. Taking a fine drive on Embassy Row.

A word of caution: Be prepared for unexpected traffic delays along Embassy Row. At any moment, an ambassador or some other high-level official may emerge from a building and enter a car, resulting in the DC police blocking traffic for his or her departure. At times, the police will hold-up traffic on Massachusetts Avenue to allow an entourage to enter the street in a continuous line of cars. I saw one incident, depicted in Figure 2, in which the person to be given this royal treatment hung around the front of the embassy for a long time---perhaps talking to others about matters of monumental importance; or perhaps puzzling over the queue of cars idling behind the police car in the middle of the street. In the meantime, the drivers of these cars were honking and shouting, "He's not in his G-- D--- car! Open the lanes!" Tranquil Massachusetts Avenue sometimes morphs into a New York City street.



Figure 2. A common sight: DC Police managing dignitaries and irate motorists (Red arrow points to subject of motorists' ire).

Another Demonstration

In the first segment of this report, I mention that Washington, DC is a city of visiting dignitaries and associated demonstrations. However, a dignitary's attendance is not a requirement for a demonstration. Demonstrators frequently picket the Capitol, the Supreme Court, the Department of Agriculture, the FBI, etc. Pick a day in Washington, and I'll bet you can find a demonstration protesting something.

The demonstration may consist of one person, as I witnessed today while on Massachusetts Avenue. The solitary protester was standing in front of the Turkish Embassy, holding a sign claiming, "Turkey Guilty of Genocide." (See Figure 3.) This accusation was a new one to me, at least as I reflected back on the past several decades. No question, the rulers of the Ottoman Empire and later, the Young Turks, laid waste to a bunch of people. But since World War II, I had not read about any large-scale killing campaign in or around Turkey.

Genocide: The irradiation of an ethnic, religious group, because of their ethnicity or religiousness. This sign surprised me. Being a continually confused reporter about the nature of human nature, I decided to investigate his claim (The following conversation is paraphrased. I took notes during the interview):

- Reporter, "Hello. What's going on? Why the sign?"
- Demonstrator, "Because of the genocide Turkey committed against the Armenians."
- Reporter, "I don't recall reading about it. When?"
- Demonstrator, "During World War I."
- Reporter, "WW I? That's almost a century ago. What's the point of protesting now? Assuming your sign is accurate, the people who committed those deeds have long since died."
- Demonstrator, "But the Turkish government has never admitted to the genocide.⁵ No apologies for killing thousands of people. And some of them were my ancestors. My great grandparents were victims. I personally want closure."



Figure 3. Protesting.

Reader, what do you think? Should present governments atone for the sins of past governments? Is a government responsible for providing "closure" to aggrieved parties? Let's consider the issue on a personal level. If, say, my great grandfather murdered someone, should I be responsible and offer apologies to the victim's great grandson? Must a government (Turkey) assume responsibility of a past event over which, in the present time, it had no control? I believe it makes no moral sense for anyone to assume responsibility for the sins of someone else.

However, from a practical standpoint, it also seems to me that it is better for a government to acknowledge the wrongdoings of a predecessor regime, and move on to address *present* problems. If the regime does not at least acknowledge them, people such as this protester will not go away. It seems, however illogical, to be the only way for these protesters to *stop dwelling on the past*. As one example, Germany has dealt with Hitler's genocides and the subject is no longer a major issue in that

You might question this last statement, but compare Germany's situation to that of Japan. Japan has not accepted or acknowledged its country's role in the mass murders and other atrocities in China prior to and during World War II. This policy is proving to be a mistake, which is a huge impediment to the ongoing relations between the two countries. I spent a week in Peking a few years ago and had occasions to talk about politics. My guide stated the Chinese had contempt for the Japanese because of Japan's barbarity against the Chinese people prior and during World War II. She was especially angry that the Japanese continued to deny these atrocities.

I asked the demonstrator if I could take a picture of him and his sign. He was not only a willing photo subject, but an eager one. He even setup the shot by placing the Turkish flag behind him, again as seen in Figure 3.

I wonder if the protester would have acknowledged another aspect of early 20th century Turkey-- the fact that the *modern Turkey state had not yet been created when the Armenians were being killed*. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938) founded the republic of Turkey and was its first

⁵ "Armenia," *Microsoft's Encarta*. "...the Turkish government today denies the Ottoman government organized the massacres and disputes their characterization as genocide."

president during 1923-1938---almost a decade after the Armenian incidents described to me by the protester. It is one thing to demand acknowledgment from a state that has definite ties to a past, but it's quite another to blame a state for atrocities committed when that very state was a different type of political entity. It is equivalent to saying, "The current Russian Putin Regime is responsible for the 1940 murder of Trotsky during Stalin's reign."

I wish this man well, but I'm not certain his grievances are being aired against the correct guilty party.

Before we leave the Turkish Embassy, let's spend some time with the Turkish patriot, Atatürk. The name Atatürk (Father Turk) was bestowed upon this man in 1934 by the Grand National Assembly as a tribute for his service to the Turkish nation. The History Channel recently aired a program about Atatürk's role in saving the lives of thousands of Jews from Hitler's pogroms. From this program, I gathered he was Turkey's Oskar Schindler. I wonder if the protester might have taken into account this aspect of past Turkish governments? No, that would require a multi-issue perspective.

From my limited knowledge of Atatürk, I can see why he is revered by his countrymen. I snapped a photo of his statue in Figure 4, which can be seen in front of the Turkey Embassy.



Figure 4. The Turkey patriot, Atatürk.

That's it for now from Embassy Row. Later, I will have more reports on dignitaries and demonstrations.

Your on the Street Reporter

Dignitaries and Demonstrations (II)

May 1, 2006

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Yesterday, I attended another demonstration---perhaps rally is a better word---at America's capital. The reason for the assemblage was Darfur, a region in North Africa. I won't repeat the news accounts of the situation in Darfur, as you can read about them on the front pages of newspapers and screens of many blogs.

Most large demonstrations in Washington, DC are attended by people of like kind. Anti-war rallies are attended by liberals and people who don't own stocks in the armament industry. Pro-farmer demonstrations are attended by sod busters, country music singers, and John Deere salesmen.

This "Darfur" crowd was different; it was a mixed group. I spoke with a variety of people. Liberals, conservatives, white, black, brown, Jews, Christians, and Muslims made up the assemblage.

But what should we expect at a gathering to protest mass murdering? Genocide is genocide. Unlike most human affairs, genocide cuts across politics, race, and religion. With the exception of the killers, all of us are repelled by the actions in Darfur.

Except Osama bin Laden. Last week, he, "...urged his followers to go to Sudan to fight a proposed U.N. peacekeeping presence."¹ A presence that would surely lead to lives saved in Darfur as well as neighboring Chad. If Osama bin Laden were not so dangerous, I would pity this malevolent, misguided man.

Figure 1 provides some shots I took at the rally. As I walked around the crowd, I listened to country songs, folk music, and speeches of the dignitaries coming from the stage (bottom photo in Figure 1). I listened to the conversations and debates of the demonstration participants. One that held my interest centered on two U.S. soldiers, who were involved in their own personal campaign to garner more enlistments for the Army. They are shown in Figure 2.

Below are samples of the dialogues that took place between them and other attendees.

- The U.S. does not have enough troops to support another Iraq-like war, as well as operations in Darfur.
- It will take several divisions to take out Iran's nukes.
- Darfur will require a couple divisions to secure.
- Who's to say that with more divisions, they will be used in a Darfur? The soldiers might just find themselves in North Korea or Iran.
- If we don't have sufficient troops, we will never know.

¹ Bashir Adigun, "Sudanese Rebels Reject Peace Offer," *The Washington Post*, May 1, 2006, A9.



Figure 1. The Darfur demonstration.



Figure 2. Private recruiters.

A Jewish Presence

If I could detect a prominent group at this rally----besides the celebrities on the stage, it was the presence of Jews. They carried signs proclaiming their affiliations and their home towns. I listened to their conversations about Darfur, and I asked some questions.

- Reporter, "All the way from New York? Why take the long trip? Is this your fight?"

- Jewish person, "It's everyone's fight. We just happen to know about it personally. The more people who become involved, the more likely our government will act."

I listened to a discussion comparing the Darfur deaths to those in the 1940s Europe. Estimates vary on how many people have been killed in the Sudan area; some people think it is in the tens of thousands. I heard six-number figures as well. Most of the deaths have been attributed to murder, dehydration, or starvation, not to mention conventional warfare casualties.

And there I was, standing in a cool, pleasant park in Washington, DC. I was safe, happy, and content. My stomach was full. I had a bottle of water in my hand. In spite of the folk music, I had shoes on my feet. I was ever so thankful I was a citizen of America and not of Sudan.

It is difficult to explain to some people living in this country that our way of life, our affluence and security is not the norm. It's the exception. Over the past two centuries, our physical distance from the dismal regions on earth---separated by two wide oceans---have often kept us emotionally distant as well. It was good to witness this large rally. It was good to see so many young people in attendance.

To Happier Subjects

I was ready to head home. I headed for the Metro station. On my way out, I spotted several U.S. Park Police on their horses. Good, a refreshing change of pace, non-controversial.

One horse had an unusual coloration, as shown in Figure 3. I asked the Park Policewoman about her job and the horse (The conversation is paraphrased and taken from my notes).



Figure 3. Two fine looking officers.

- Reporter, "Good looking horse. Where do you get your horses?"
- Policewoman, "They're all donations. We take them through a training program to see if they will fit in. This one did."
- Reporter, "A beauty. How do you like patrolling these rallies?"
- Policewoman, "I like the crowds, and the people really like the horses. Some kids have never seen a live horse. They want to touch her."
- Reporter, "That's OK?"
- Policewoman, "Sure. I tell them not to walk behind her and not to touch her face. Otherwise, no problem."
- Reporter, "You ride other horses?"
- Policewoman, "Other horses? No! This is my partner. We're fellow officers."
- Reporter, "Do you ride other officers? Ha! Just joking."
- Policewoman smiles a bit, "That's pretty good. No, usually not."
- Reporter, "How many horses...sorry, officers...are on the force?"
- For the first time, the policewoman was not forthcoming, "Eh. Well. We have several stables...I'm not really sure."
- Reporter, "Sorry. I guess I was asking a security question when I was only curious."
- Policewoman, "Got to go. Bye."

You never know. In these terrorist-laden times, Osama might be planning an attack on DC's equine officers. Can't be too careful.

Your on the Street Reporter