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FLOOR DEBATE

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of concern about, and they are black people. And the specific ones are 70 in number among a sea of 1,843 white students. There is psychological damage that can be done to young children, especially young black children, who in their experiences outside of the school are insulted, discriminated against, and placed under circumstances that should never happen in a so-called democracy, but they do. So then, when the young people come to school, they run into a similar situation. I had talked about these clever young white kids at Westside. That's the school I'm talking about, where they have 1,843 white kids, versus 70 black kids. And to show their power, to show their intelligence and their wit, they decided to use Martin Luther King's birthday, the date that that birthday is celebrated on, to pass an insult. I have here a column that appeared in the World-Herald January 30. It was written by a young columnist named Rainbow Rowell. And I decided that since she's white, I would read it, and maybe people on this floor can relate to something said by a white person. Here's what she wrote. The headline: "Westside's King Day duo play sorry trick." I would say dirty trick, I would say reprehensible trick, except that "trick" is an understatement and cleans it up. She wrote: To argue that a white person from South Africa is an African-American is to be that irritating, quote, then-why-don't-you-marry-it, unquote, kid from the third grade. For example, "I love gym class." "Then why don't you marry it?" It is to be deliberately literal and more than a little immature. And I would say vicious. Every American knows what "African-American" means. We especially know what those two words mean on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. So how is it that, almost two weeks after a few Westside students started this semantic debate, people are still making the lame argument "if you're African and you're American, you're African-American"? Even saying that out loud is like admitting that you do not understand how language works. Oh, they understand all right. But this is what we as black people and other nonwhite people face when we're dealing with a racist, and they suddenly dummy up and don't understand language. In parentheses: Are these also the people who say "faggot" means a bundle of sticks? And that "gay" just means happy? Close parentheses. Words are more than the sum of their dictionary definitions. For those who are so married to their dictionaries that they cannot get past the