

Voices

"We are trying to find a replacement for Sajani."

Dipak Pandey, a Nepali government official, on retiring 11-year-old "living goddess" Sajani Shakya. Sajani is stepping down at her family's request, as her duties under the Buddhist and Hindu tradition interfere with her living a normal life.

Talk about silly

The Huntington, N.Y., Town Council is set to vote on whether to ban the use of Silly String during parades and other public events. The resolution was proposed because the town claims the aerosol product mars the finish on fire trucks.



Time to invest in women

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There's no doubt about it — Flora Mtuwana is an extraordinary woman. This mother of two from Malawi spent most of her life in a daily struggle to meet the basic needs of her family — fetching water, farming, taking care of sanitation. Like most countries in the developing world, these tasks are "women's work" in Malawi. As second-class citizens, women such as Flora are confined to a life of drudgery, using the same tools that their great-grandmothers used day in and day out, receiving no education, barely able to sustain their own and their family's survival.

The good news is that Flora's struggle has subsided. The catalyst that enabled her to transform her life was an investment of less than \$100. About half of this investment came in the form of literacy and numeracy training. The other half was a loan that let her establish a sustainable income-generating activity. Now, Flora is a successful businesswoman who exceeds rather than barely meets her family's needs. She owns and manages a bank with other women. She's become an investor. "I invest in the future of my village," she says. "I opened, with my own money, a nursery school for 34 orphans. At school these little ones learn, are loved and eat a nutritious breakfast and lunch each day."

"Investing in women can make a world of difference."

Not only is Flora's story inspiring, it's also particularly fitting to share as we approach International Women's Day on March 6. IWD's roots lie in the burgeoning women's rights and suffrage movement of the early 20th century. Since then, IWD has evolved into a day to celebrate women's achievements and to take action toward ending the subjugation and discrimination that women throughout the world still suffer. It is critical to shine a spotlight on success stories like Flora's. It is also imperative to understand that, to end hunger and poverty in our world, investment in women like Flora must increase dramatically. This fact explains why the United Nations theme for this year's IWD is "Investing in women and girls."

Their empowerment uplifts all of society. Research has shown that investing in women yields faster economic growth, increased agricultural production, improved children's health, less malnutrition and better schooling. Investing in women can make a world of difference — for the women themselves, for their families and for their communities. Just ask Flora.

Jill Lester is the president and CEO of The Hunger Project, which is convening an IWD event March 6 at 7:00 p.m. at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue between 50th and 51st streets. See womensdaynyc.org for details.

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Letters

His agenda isn't to make trouble

MANHATTAN. Nader's candidacy is about the same reason as it was in 1996, 2000 and 2004: representative democracy. Right now, we are limited to the Democrats and the Republicans whom are each in their own words saying what the country wants them to say: lies. Everyone will get health care with either tax breaks or some other concoction, and we will win the war or will get out of it! Neither of these things will happen and most everyone knows it, yet "third" voices are spoilers and even egomaniacs.

Sadly, Ralph Nader has failed to notice that most people prefer the two-party system to the messier democratic alternative of multi-party with popular vote — rather than [super] delegates and Electoral College.

SUZY SANDOR

Her experience trumps his

NEW YORK. I am tired of Obama supporters trying to push Hillary out of the race. Obama is now the front-runner, but when he was the underdog he said that he would pursue the nomination until the convention.

Obama may have won 11 primaries in a row, but most of his wins are in red states that will never vote for a Democrat in the gen-

"Hillary has been in Washington for 16 years. Obama is not fit to carry her handbag."

Shimansky

eral election. Hillary's wins have come in big states where there are a lot of democrats. If Obama is nominated, he will be the first Democrat to get the nomination without winning either New York or California. Hillary represents the Democratic wing of the Democratic party, while Obama's delegates are mainly interlopers who are not registered democrats.

Obama has served in the Senate for just 3 years. In contrast, Hillary has been in Washington for 16 years and during the eight years of her husband's administration she was the second most powerful person in Washington. Obama is not fit to carry her handbag.

I trust Hillary will know when it is the right time to withdraw from the race, and she does not need to be pressured by Obama shills like Shawn Durham.

REBA SHIMANSKY

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Today's debate

What 'banana peels' are out there for Obama's candidacy?

Matt Leblanc
28, lab technician
Midtown
"If he managed to say anything to offend women."

Tom Bustamante
38, businessman
Washington
Heights
"At this point there aren't any. Momentum is too strong. Maybe taxes."

Melissa Wisherath
25, nonprofit
project associate
Nutley, N.J.
"If he gets into playing the politics game and gets off the high road."



Compete with Metro!



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Write a caption to this image!

The Metro cartoon Hutch Owen

by Tom Hart

