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# Letters to the Editor

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## Donations Sought

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The construction of our new library was completed recently. The objective of the library is to provide reading materials for advanced learning and research in various disciplines.

And as a non-profit-making body we are also trying to develop various disciplines for the development of mankind.

In order to achieve our aim, books, periodicals and other materials are needed to equip and maintain the new library.

We are, therefore, soliciting for donation of books, periodicals and other materials for the library. Please help us in developing mankind and relevant disciplines through the donation of materials.

Your cooperation will be highly appreciated.

R. Sunmoun  
Librarian, Supreme Library  
P.O. Box 2973, Akure  
Ondo State, Nigeria

## Predicting Presidential Elections

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In 1960 I started a hobby of predicting which presidential candidate would carry each county, election district (as in Alaska) or city (as votes are counted in Virginia in addition to cities). I have continued this hobby each presidential election year since and then verified results from the following year's *World Almanac* or the offices of the Secretaries of State of New England states and Alaska. My accuracy has varied from 64.3 percent correct in 1964 to 94.0 percent in 1984.

I have often wondered whether there is

anyone else in the United States who has this hobby. And, if so, what degree of accuracy such persons are able to achieve. It seemed most likely that if there is anyone, it would be people in the political science departments of universities. I certainly do not have the financial resources or time to send individual inquiries to the hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States.

It seems probable that you send out mailings periodically to your membership. Would it be at all possible for you to include a few sentences in a mailing asking anyone who also predicts presidential elections by counties to contact me if they care to? My address and phone number are listed below.

Ed Orr  
Route 1, Box 960, Space 10  
Bandon, OR 97411

## Capitalization

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If I can take a moment of your time, I am writing to ascertain why your publication, like most others, does not capitalize the word "Black" when the term is used as an adjective or noun synonymously with African-American.

For more than a century the word "Negro" was similarly consigned to an offensive lower case spelling. So we had "negro" and "negress" (and sometimes even "jew" and "jewess"). It was not until the late 1940s that the *New York Times* finally caved in and announced in an editorial that from then on it would capitalize "Negro." Today, however, "Black" is still deemed unworthy of upper case spelling. Thus we are treated to sentences that might begin: "The Irish, Jewish, black, and Italian voters. . . ." How would it strike us

if we read: "The Irish, Jewish, Black, and Italian voters. . . .?"

When I speak to publishers and editors about this, they seem to agree, but they say they are bound by style books put out by Chicago University, or the *New York Times*, or whomever. It is not at all clear why they must submit to such books. For years style books used sexist terminology which has since been avoided by publishers and editors. Why should not the same care be taken to avoid racist spelling?

It is argued that "black," like "white," refers to a race rather than to a specific group; therefore neither is deserving of capitalization. This is an equally lame argument. First of all, some racial designations have long been capitalized; thus we write of "Caucasians" and "Asians," the latter a blanket term for Japanese, Chinese, Koreans, and other specific groups. Second, we always used to capitalize "white" when it designated a particular group, as in "White Protestant" or "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant"—some people still do.

Third, "Black" refers to a specific group in America, with a unique and remarkable history. The term is used not solely in relation to "white" but in conjunction with other specific ethnic and racial groups—all of whom are accorded capitalized proper names.

The question arises, should we not also capitalize "white"? I do, mostly because Whites are rather insistent about it. Indeed, the indignation expressed by some of them at the thought of a "reverse discriminatory" spelling is instructive. It would be nice if they could show the same sensitivity toward the failure to give "Black" an upper case spelling, while capitalizing every other ethnic, racial, and religious proper name.

If you wish to publish this letter in order to open up the question with your readers, please do so.

Thank you for giving the matter your consideration.

Michael Parenti  
Washington, D.C.