



Intriguing people for January 21, 2010

By Jay Kernis, CNN

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

Cindy McCain and her daughter assist same-sex marriage campaign

Engineering student laments lack of building standards in his home country, Haiti

Teen who converted from Islam will go to counseling with parents

RELATED TOPICS

[Cindy McCain](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Haiti](#)

[Islam](#)

Editor's note: Every weekday, CNN focuses on a handful of people in the news. This is a chance to find out more about what they've done -- good or bad -- what they've said or what they believe, and why we think they're intriguing.

(CNN) -- Cindy McCain

The wife of 2008 Republican presidential nominee John McCain has posed for photos on a Web site that supports same-sex marriage. Their daughter, Meghan, has joined her in the effort.

In the picture on the site, Cindy McCain's mouth is covered by silver duct tape and "NO H8" is written on one cheek, a reference to the highly-contested Prop 8 ballot measure which bans same-sex marriage in California.

The NOH8 Web site says that Cindy McCain contacted them and offered to pose. Text on the site reads, "Aligning yourself with the platform of gay marriage as a Republican still tends to be very stigmatic, but Cindy McCain wanted to participate in the campaign to show people that party doesn't matter -- marriage equality isn't a Republican issue any more than it is a Democratic issue." During the presidential campaign, John McCain said that he believed the institution of marriage is a union between one man and one woman.

[NOH8 Campaign: Redefining Republican](#)

Pierre Fouche

The doctoral student in structural engineering at the University at Buffalo in upstate New York had a pretty good idea of what would happen if a big earthquake were to strike his native country, Haiti. Funded by a Fulbright scholarship, Fouche began studying for engineering degrees at the university in 2006.

He told The Spectrum, the student newspaper at the university, that at some point during the '70s and '80s, Haitian government officials talked about following building safety guidelines, but they were never enforced and were eventually abandoned. Fouche said he thinks he may be Haiti's only earthquake engineer. In an NPR interview, he said that when he was studying engineering in Haiti, "his professors told him that at least one building there would survive an earthquake -- the presidential residence known as the National Palace." That building was ruined by the January 12 quake.

In a new essay for CNN.com, Fouche writes, "The rubble that blankets much of Port-au-Prince delivers the deadly verdict on decades of inadequate construction in my home nation. My siblings were spared; their house was not destroyed, but my apartment back home collapsed. The destruction is of stupefying proportion; my heart cries out to my Haitian brothers and sisters who are enduring so much. As a Haitian and an earthquake engineer, I know that it is critical that my country now examine what steps ought to be taken to prevent such massive loss of life in the future. This is my humble contribution to this process." He goes on to propose new building codes and other changes in his homeland.

[CNN.com: A plan to reconstruct my country](#)

[NPR: Haiti's buildings not fit to withstand quakes](#)

[The Spectrum: Devastation hits close to home](#)

Junior Florestal

The 33-year-old Army staff sergeant, a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, is now in Haiti, bringing food, water and supplies to earthquake victims and serving as a translator for officers. The usnavyseals.com blog reports that Haitians are surprised to hear him speak Creole. But Florestal says, "They feel good that there are Haitians in the U.S. Army."

Florestal, who is one of at least three Haiti-Americans in the 82nd, left his native country some 20 years ago, and still has relatives in Port-au-Prince and nearby villages. According to the blog, Florestal has been using his free time to inquire about family members. He eventually met a cousin who told him that most of his family had survived. CNN affiliate WRAL reports that some 1,000 members of the 82nd are already serving in Haiti, running a supply distribution point in the capital where more than 50,000 people now live in a "survivor's camp." As of Wednesday, at least 11,000 U.S. troops are now in Haiti or on ships nearby.

[usnavyseals.com: Haitian-American soldier returns to his homeland](#)

[WRAL: More troops, aid go to Haiti, but hunger persists](#)

Scott Nagy

On Saturday, the South Dakota State basketball coach will be barefoot courtside as his team faces Oakland University. Freep.com, the Web site of the Detroit Free Press, reports that Nagy hopes to raise awareness for Samaritan's Feet, a nonprofit organization with the goal of providing shoes to 10 million people around the world.

Nagy adopted a 6-year-old daughter, Naika, from Haiti and says that he hasn't been able to contact her birth mother since the devastating earthquake there. Now, Nagy wants to raise \$30,000 and collect 2,000 pairs of shoes to help earthquake victims. He told the Free Press that going barefoot is likely to have an impact on his coaching this weekend. "I like to stomp," he said.

[Detroit Free Press: Coach goes shoeless for Haiti relief](#)

Rifqa Bary

Last July, the 17-year-old ran away from her home in Ohio and stayed for three months with a married pastor couple in Orlando, Florida, whom she had met on Facebook. She had accused her father of threatening to kill her because she had converted from Islam to Christianity.

The Columbus Dispatch reports Rifqa and her parents, Mohamed and Aysha Bary, reached a settlement this week in court that she would not return home, and will likely stay in foster care until she turns 18 in August. Then, as an adult, she will be free to live wherever she likes. The newspaper also reports that Ohio and Florida authorities found no credible threats to her safety. The plan for Rifqa and her parents prescribes talking about their respective religions, in addition to regular visits.

[Columbus Dispatch: Counseling next for Rifqa, family](#)

What makes a person intriguing?

There are people who enter the news cycle every day because their actions or decisions are new, important or different. Others are in the news because they are the ones those decisions affect. And there are a number of people who are so famous or controversial that anything they say or do becomes news.

Some of these people do what we expect of them: They run for office, pass legislation, start a business, get hired or fired, commit a crime, make an arrest, get in accidents, hit a home run, overthrow a government, fight wars, sue an opponent, put out fires, prepare for hurricanes and cavort with people other than their spouses. They do make news, but the action is usually more important than who is involved in the story.

But every day, there are a number of people who become fascinating to us -- by virtue of their character, how they reached their decision, how they behaved under pressure or because of the remarkable circumstances surrounding the event they are involved in.

They arouse our curiosity. We hear about them and want to know more. What they have done or said stimulates conversations across the country. At times, there is even a mystery about them. What they have done may be unique, heroic, cowardly or ghastly, but they capture our imaginations. We want to know what makes them tick, why they believe what they do, and why they did what they did. They intrigue us.

Links referenced within this article

Cindy McCain

http://topics.edition.cnn.com/topics/Cindy_McCain

Engineering

<http://topics.edition.cnn.com/topics/Engineering>

Haiti

<http://topics.edition.cnn.com/topics/Haiti>

Islam

<http://topics.edition.cnn.com/topics/Islam>

NOH8 Campaign: Redefining Republican

<http://www.noh8campaign.com/>

CNN.com: A plan to reconstruct my country

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/OPINION/01/19/fouche.haiti.earthquake.engineer.rebuilding/index.html>

NPR: Haiti's buildings not fit to withstand quakes

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=122547242>

The Spectrum: Devastation hits close to home

<http://www.ubspectrum.com/article/41052>

usnavyseals.com: Haitian-American soldier returns to his homeland

<http://blog.usnavyseals.com/2010/01/haitian-american-soldier-returns-to-the-land-of-his-birth.html>

WRAL: More troops, aid go to Haiti, but hunger persists

http://www.wral.com/news/national_world/world/haiti/story/6831722/

Detroit Free Press: Coach goes shoeless for Haiti relief

<http://www.freep.com/article/20100120/SPORTS18/1200366/1056/Sports08/IUPI-coach-Ron-Hunter-shoeless-for-Haiti-relief>

Columbus Dispatch: Counseling next for Rifqa, family

http://www.dispatch.com/live/content/local_news/stories/2010/01/20/rifqa20.ART_ART_01-20-10_B1_1SGBSUE.html?sid=101

Find this article at:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2010/US/01/21/mip.thursday/index.html>

Uncheck the box to remove the list of links referenced in the article.

© 2008 Cable News Network.