

# Racism Alive and Well In America

Lately the topic of race relations has become an ever-growing issue in magazine articles, news, and of course, our beloved talk shows. This subject isn't new and it's not being rehashed in observance of the recent Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday. The issue of race, with all its controversy, has always been with us from the moment east met west and north met south.

I'm hoping I will live long enough to see the end of this issue, but I'm afraid Mr. King's dream of true equality, not just the kind on paper, will never become a reality. All around me I see the continuing tension between blacks and whites. Now before you call the Political Correctness Police, I have to warn you: I don't prescribe to the notion that if we give each other nice pretty labels, and tip-toe around each other pretending we're all one big, happy family, then everything will work itself out eventually. Why don't we confront these issues? Let's find out why we don't get along. Let's talk to each other, and, even more importantly, listen to each other.

**VISIONS**

**SHIFON FOSTER**

Let's find out just where the fear comes from.

Of course these problems are by no means exclusive to just blacks and whites. It is this relationship that often threatens peace in today's society. Even

on this campus of apparent racial harmony, I see the signs all around us. Yes, us. You too! No one is immune. Even when you think your in the safety of so-called friends. A perfect example of this happened to me just last week.

I was approached outside the student union by a young, black Muslim who was handing out *The Final Call*, a Muslim newspaper. Being curious, I gave him the dollar donation and took the paper.

It began normal enough, commenting on the world as newspapers do. The further I read, however, the more biased it became, often stating opinions as facts.

Buried on the back page was a list of requirements that one had to believe in to be a true Muslim. The first eight or so were your basic "be true to yourself" and Allah stuff, but the last five or so were truly offensive.

Last on the list was a statement that America should be divided into a black nation and an equal but separate white nation. As a former American soldier and a true believer in the ideology that America was founded on, i.e., freedom; I am disheartened to know that a religion in these United States is preaching such beliefs on an integrated campus of higher learning.

Giving equal time, however, the story does not end here. I showed this paper to some friends of mine (three white guys) in hope that they would be offended too. When I told them about the Muslim's desire to divide America, one guy's response was, "Sounds good to me." I was appalled. I couldn't believe my ears. Obviously, this ignoramus didn't know my father is black and my mother is white.

He displayed to me the purist kind of racism. He thought that he was safe from minority ears and, therefore, free to voice his real opinion. This kind of hidden discourse frightens me. I'm not advising everyone to go around bashing other races openly. All I'm asking is for people to have a well-informed, intelligent opinion of oth-

er races and cultures. I'm not going to rationalize that this person realistically wanted to divide America. I think he was just expressing discontent with what's happening in America.

Racism. Look around. It's there. In your everyday life whether you want to admit it or not. The next time you go into the Moyer Student Union at lunch time, look and really see what is going on. Everyone is separate. I like to call them "little racial pockets." These clusters of today are tomorrow's communities. Ask yourself, how are you a part of the problem? And please spare me the remark of "some of my best friends are..." When was the last time they ate dinner at your house?

My point here is that we are the next generation. The generation born out of the civil rights movement. Our grandparents started the job. Now we must finish it. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream. Now it's our turn to work and make it come true.

—Shifon Foster is an opinion columnist at The Rebel Yell.

## If Government is to be Reformed, Campaign Funding Must Also

No matter how much I hear all these new "leaders" of government talk about reform for the masses, I can't help becoming cynical. The fact is that our system is set to where the supposed representatives of the people are beholden to the rich, corporate world. This is by design and very legal.

Now, don't go blaming any particular party or demographic. Democrat or Republican, man or woman, white or black, they all play the game.

Why? Simple. Politics win elections. To win an election these days one must amass a war chest of contributions to compete. Most of the time, the one with the most money for advertising, etc., wins.

Unlike what some idealists believe, most campaign funds are not in small increments from little old ladies with several cats. Most of the money comes from PAC (Political Action Committees) funding that is supplied by big business, or other donations to state committees that can be best described as legal bribery.

A good representation of this process is depicted in Eddie Murphy's film, *Distinguished Gentlemen*. In it, Murphy's character, a recently elected congressman, is offered money by a lobbying representative for his campaign war chest by voting certain ways on certain bills. The joke is that either way he votes, he will receive money. He chooses to vote whereupon he receives the most PAC money.

In a movie; funny. In reality; dangerous and corruption friendly.

Let's remember that the can-

**Moderately Speaking**

**DAVID KANAAN**

didate with the most money wins. And to get the most money (for some reason PAC funding is limited to \$5,000, where individuals are limited to \$1,000, not to mention who has

more money to throw into campaigns), one must pander to big business and special interest groups. Often the candidate must mask these tendencies with polished rhetoric to fool the general public into believing they are catering to their constituents.

Locally, we see evidence of this in many ways. Governor Miller of Nevada had to outspend his opponent nearly three to one with most of his money coming from the gaming, mining and health care industries. This is true of several other races in the last election.

And to add insult to injury to the American people, candidates can set up state committees where they usually have little or no limits (Nevada currently allows only \$20,000 contributions from corporations and \$10,000 from individuals). These are more common in larger elections, and can be manipulated several ways in that corporations can bundle several donations under different entities. Nevada's legislature is currently working on a bill that will further limit contributions to \$5,000, but again, this will be easy to get around.

To see how these special interests can overrule public opinion, one can look at the Reagan years.

In 1982, NBC ran a poll asking the American people if they thought Reagan's economic policies would help them or hurt them. 67% thought his policies would help the wealthy, and 53% thought it would hurt the middle



class. Of course, most of Reaganomics passed as written, even though congressional majority was Democratic.

In 1976 the wealthiest one-half percent owned and controlled 14% of America. By 1987 that figure doubled. During Reagan's two terms, the number of

billionaires more than tripled, and the average middle class income fell.

The people were right in 1982, yet they were not listened to because our system doesn't represent them.

I say take away business from the campaign funding process. They have enough power in land, money and people to fend for themselves without buying out government. Our government is for the people and should be beholden to them only.

We should limit individual contributions to something reason-

able (under \$1,000), and eliminate state committees. This would reduce the total amount of spending on campaigns (I know we were all sick of those endless commercials and ugly sea of billboards) and truly be a popular election.

The easy part is the regulation of something like this, despite cries to the contrary. The hard part is pulling greedy hands out of a giant, familiar cookie jar.

—David Kanaan is an opinion columnist at The Rebel Yell.

### Letters to the Editor

A little extra isn't too much to ask for more

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to last weeks "Straight From the Gully" column by Scott Gulbransen.

Mr. Gulbransen stated that he supported the proposed \$30 per year parking fee for UNLV. He said that it is long overdue.

I agree with him. Being from Las Vegas, I know how lucky we are to be able to attend a good university for a very small price. It is time that the students here start paying a little

more, in the way of fees, to better the types of services that this campus can offer.

Besides parking, I feel that the university should charge small fees so we can have better recreational facilities on campus. Right now, there is no reason for students to stay on campus. It is just flat-out boring.

A good place to start is the parking problem. If we all just chip in our share, come three years from now we'll all be able to find that parking spot close to campus we try so hard to find today.

Grow up UNLV and start paying your share.

Charlie Benson  
sophomore  
Education

## UNLV Student Senate Meeting Schedule

The Rebel Yell encourages all students to attend UNLV's Student Senate meetings.

Monday, Jan. 30,  
6:30 p.m. MSU

Monday, Feb. 6,  
6:30 p.m. MSU