

Point of View

Editorial

READING, A LOST ART

I am a child of television. Being born in 1951 I really can't remember a time without it. Our TV was a big piece of furniture with a record player on one side and a small screen on the other.

Many of my childhood experiences are interwoven with TV. My love for boxing comes from sitting with my father "Friday Nights at the fights." Television was my friend. However, I am fortunate that my parents taught me that TV was my tool, that I should have control of it, not the other way around. I believed that we may have lost control of television, and in the process lost the art of reading.

Television is a wonderful medium, but it should be used with discretion. Television informs, entertains and babysits: It does such a good job that we allow it to perform a lot of other parental functions, from learning ABCs to sex education.

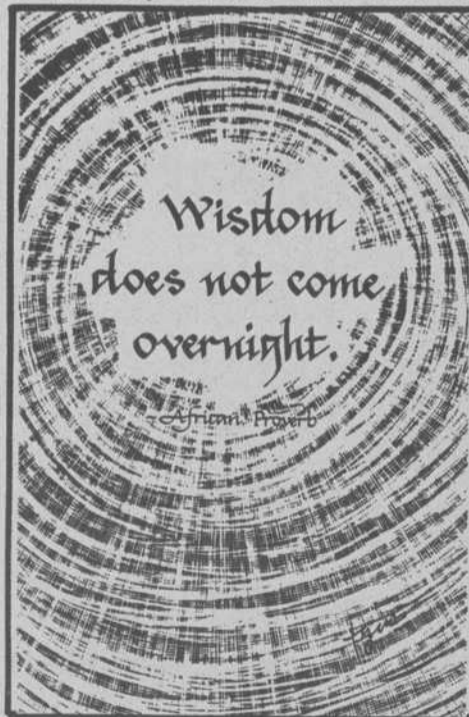
Television lays it right out to you in colorful graphics. Abstract thinking is optional, because TV is such a visual medium.

The visualization process that used to occur in the mind is laid out on the screen. The fault rests with those of us that allow TV to dictate to us and our children.

TV has become such a complete entertainment center that we rarely turn it off, but we should. By our example and our direction, we should put reading and writing back in our homes. The expression "Do as I say, not as I do," never was true. If you don't read, most likely your children won't. Are there books, magazines in your house...Do you read them...If you can't see the intrinsic joy of reading, then think about the skill we may be losing. If there is one characteristic that successful people have in common, it is the ability to read well. Reading is a survival skill and a pleasure.

Michael K. Boyd

It Takes Time and Work



The views expressed on these editorial pages are those of the artists and authors indicated. Only the one indicated as the Sentinel-Voice editorial represents this publication.

To Be Equal

DEFINING POVERTY

By JOHN E. JACOB

The Census Bureau will hold a December conference on aspects of defining poverty, with special attention to ways in which federal non-cash benefits to the poor could be included in calculating the numbers of the poor.

This kind of technical discussion could have a tremendous impact on poor Americans and on national social policy.

It is the latest in a long line of efforts to change the definition of poverty. It is clear that the definition needs to be changed because it is inadequate and out-of-date, but it is equally clear that including non-cash benefits is not the way to define who is poor.

That's because such a measurement would artificially reduce poverty statistics without reducing poverty. Just as many people would be poor, but the official numbers would change to make the problem seem less serious than it is.

Such non-cash benefits include food stamps, Medicaid, public housing

and others. There is no agreement on the methodology that might be used, so the current Census Bureau practice of publishing alternative measurements of poverty including such benefits is deeply flawed.

For example, it is generally agreed that food stamps can't be counted at their face value, but there is no



John E. Jacob

agreement about what kind of discount to apply to them.

And of course, any count that includes the value of Medicaid benefits is a travesty. It would not count as poor a chronically ill person who had no income and no assets, but received care valued at \$100,000 in a hospital and a nursing home.

Aside from such absurdities, there's something wrong with counting in-kind benefits as income for the poor without also doing it for the affluent who also receive non-cash benefits and subsidies, including some from employers, such as health insurance.

It is a reflection on our times that there is such a big push on to devise methods that deflate the poverty statistics while there is silence about the deficiencies

intended to serve as a permanent definition. Back in the 1960s, it was devised as a way of determining the minimum necessary income to afford enough food for short-term survival.

But times have changed and the price mix of life's necessities has changed. Because of the sharp rise in the cost of housing, energy, health care, and other survival needs, families need a lot more income to buy the survival food-basket.

But the formula hasn't

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of current methods of defining poverty that understate the numbers of the poor.

Too many people simply take the poverty line as the minimum necessary to achieve an acceptable standard of living. If you make above the poverty line, you are all right; if you earn less, you are poor.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The poverty line was never

changed in over two decades. Poverty has been drastically understated. People who ought to qualify for means-tested programs are denied them. And the public isn't aware of the depth of the problem of poverty.

If the Census Bureau wants a more realistic definition of poverty, it could also think about measuring after-tax income instead of its present practice of counting all income prior to taxes.

Today, a family at the current poverty line pays about ten percent of its income in taxes. If poverty measures the ability to purchase the necessities of life out of one's own earnings, then there's no justification for using gross, pre-tax income as the standard.

A realistic measurement of poverty is long overdue, but too much of what I see considered would make today's inadequate standards even more unrealistic. Whatever solution the Census Bureau comes up with, Congress should have the final say.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Brother Editor:

This letter is written out of concern for the slanderous article published in the Sentinel-Voice, October 24, 1985 alleging that Brother Minister Louis Farrakhan threatens the Black community. The article was a reprint from the New York Daily News which is currently boycotted by the Black and minority community of New York City, for unfair employment practices and unfair reporting with regard to Black and minority news.

A Sentinel is a lookout or one who is vigilant and watches; guards if you will the best interest of its concern or constituency. The October 24 issue was not a reflection of your best journalistic standards.

The motto on your masthead "The Truth Shall Set You Free" would have best been served if you would have done basic

journalistic research.

Truth, freedom, justice and equality in America are still goals rather than accomplishments for Blacks in America. Strong Black leadership must be free of influence and pressure from anti-black interests who bankroll, bankrupt, and ultimately disrupt and destroy every pro-black movement and institution.

The message Minister Louis Farrakhan sends to the hopeless, despised, and rejected is a message of hope. The Nation of Islam, the Black Clergy and progressive Black leadership are going to rebuild Black institutions, economics and moral fabric working together from a position of unity and strength. Why build coalitions across town when there is no coalition in town? As long as you deal with the power brokers from a position of weakness rather than strength you will

continue to be their negroes looking to hob nob and rub elbows with those who neither love you nor respect you. Let us be our beautiful selves and build independently so we may have and keep "Power forever at last."

Thank you.

Bro. Martin X. Shaw
Bro. Michael J. Willis-Shabazz Ali
Bro. Alex X. Porter
Bro. Ezra Sekori Koki
Bro. Anthony Morris

The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice welcomes expressions of all views from readers. Letters should be kept as brief as possible and are subject to condensation. They must include signature, valid mailing address and telephone number, if any. Pseudonyms and initials will not be used. Because of the volume of mail received, unpublished individual letters cannot be acknowledged. Send to: Letters to the Editor, The Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice, 1201 S. Eastern Ave., Las Vegas, Nevada 89104.

