

HAIL THE CONQUERING HEROES

I love a parade and I didn't miss the welcome home parade for our military which was held recently on Fremont Street. I didn't attend the later festivities at the Silver Bowl. Even though I had planned to go from the time I first learned that there would be a parade, it became imperative after reading the Review Journal newspaper's Friday May 10th edition.

This story begins all the way back to last August's invasion of Kuwait by the armed forces of Iraq. Even though there had been ongoing wars, of one size or another, going on in numerous places around the world, the Persian Gulf crisis brought the whole business of war home. Whether we agree or disagree with the motivation, it became immediately clear that the U.S. would involve itself in the affair. That being the case Americans would, in all probability, be sent there to do something. I don't have any particular opinion on war. I am neither hawk nor dove. I believe it is best not to fight if ones does not have to and I believe that one must fight with

all one has if one must fight. I don't believe in truces. I believe that one fights until it is completely over. That is not to say that one might need not ever fight again but it is to say that if one is to fight again at least it will not be with the same adversary.

Between the invasion date and mid January approximately half million military personnel was called up and sent overseas. We were able to watch the buildup and as they developed on both military and civilian carriers. As a community which has a very large military component, we had our concerns for friends, loved ones, neighbors, students and those many others which we did not know. As usual, in time of war, we all suddenly became Americans even those of us who are usually kept on the outside looking in at all of the goodies which America offers its citizens. Men and women, raw recruits and veterans, black, white, brown, red and yellow all answered the call and went over there to answer the biddings of our country.

There was such a surge of



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by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

patriotism. Flags were flown everywhere. Of course, it meant that the flag sellers made a killing. I'm not knocking them for capitalist society—make money whenever and however one can if they can get away with it.

The media never let the war and those serving out of sights or out of our minds. Every television station covered and recovered the war. We saw soldiers and their families—every branch of the military—on an hourly basis. I was really pleased with that coverage. Just three months ago, I presented a scholarly paper at the meeting of the National Social Science Asso-

ciation on the subject of World War II Documentaries and Blacks in the Military. In short, the paper was about hoe during that war, the presence of blacks in uniform was almost totally overlooked not only in the newsreels of the day but also in the newspapers, magazines (Johnson Publishing Company had yet been founded) radio reports and even in the hundreds of movies about the war, in both the Pacific and in Europe, that were released during the war years.

That was 1941, fifty year ago. 1991 presented a much different picture. Now, I'm aware, as though I need to say so, of the earlier charges that the Persian Gulf war would place an inordinate number of blacks and other racial minorities at risk. I'm aware of the percentage of our national population which each of these groups comprise. I'm further

aware of the fact that their great numbers in the military ranks is partially a result of the lack of opportunity outside the military to make a living and that those numbers are a result of those groups volunteering and not a result of their having been drafted. This essay does not attempt to address any of those issues. That will need to be done at another time and perhaps in another place.

It is important for a nation to recognize its defenders. This has always been the case. In ancient times, runners were sent to carry the news of the war back home. It was important the the citizens be kept apprized of the progress of the war. Whether we read the Bible or the histories of individual nations, we find records. Records are important. They must be complete.

The Review Journal's May 10th edition carried a forty page, two section special titled; "Heroes: Celebrate The Return." There were twenty seven actual photographs, six drawings and three items which were simply in silhouette for a total of thirty six pictures. All total, there were 87 pictures of military personnel. Of those there was one which was clearly of a black soldier and another which might have been but could also have been of someone with a fairly good

tan. I saw nothing of Asian American military, nothing which could not distinguish them. There were three women but not a single minority women. I know there were about a dozen and many of those were either students or former students in some of my classes at UNLV.

Throughout the course of the war, national media, especially print media, carried numerous articles and pictures of those involved in the war effort.

Life, Newsweek, Time and many of the others presented dazzling pieces of photo journalism which, in many ways, were firsts. Nothing of that sort had been done for minority military personnel in any previous war. It seemed that we as a nation had finally put an end to the war of heroes and was now able to accept that heroism, patriotism and a willingness to risk one's life for one's country has nothing to do with color of one's skin. For far too many years it has been easy for the John Waynes of America, those who never risked anything except in the movies where it is easy to be tough or those others who have hidden behind their wealth or position to take pot shots at minority people whom they claim never did anything for the country anyway and therefore deserved nothing. No longer could that be said. We all saw, on television and in the magazines and the newspapers photographs which better represented America's pluralistic composition.

On a day to day or week by week basis there is not much inclination to preserve, for posterity's sake, individual articles or photographs. Special editions are different. They become keepsakes for many. The Review Journal missed a golden opportunity to turn the corner on its tradition of maintaining an absence of presence if minority people in its reporting. In its special "heros: Celebrate the Return" it tipped its hand. On page 40AA there is an article titled "Gulf Welcome Not Unlike That After WWII." It interviewed several local notables who remembered the homecoming after the war. They, like the welcome home in 1946 were all white. The Review Journal's special on the return of our troops in 1991 was very much like that of 1941. Mostly white.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- 20 year Resident of Las Vegas
- BA & MA, Foreign Languages, UNLV
- Adjunct faculty of UNLV and Clark County Community College
- Former Gaming Employee & Casino Entertainer
- 10-years in-Court experience in the Criminal Justice System:
- 8-years as Court Interpreter - Translator for the State of Nevada,
- 1-year Judicial Clerk for District Court Judge Nancy Becker,
- 1-year Attorney or Public Defender's Office assigned to Municipal Court.

GOALS:

- Adherence to Fairness and Justice for both sides
- Emphasis on Rehabilitation and Restitution Programs
- Swift Judicial dispositions within the parameters of the law
- Making the Courts more accessible to the citizens
- Emphasize Saturday and Night Court for the future

ENDORSEMENTS:

- Las Vegas Police Protective Association - Metro
- Nevada State, AFL-CIO
- Southern Nevada Central Labor Council (SNCLC)
- Hispanics in Politics
- City of Las Vegas Firefighters

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