

# Point of View

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

## TO BE EQUAL

# THE U.S. - JAPAN WAR OF WORDS

By John E. Jacob

Japan-bashing is becoming a way of life, especially in an election year when politicians try to find scapegoats to take attention away from their own failures.

Meanwhile, an ocean away, America-bashing is becoming Japan's newest recreational activity.

Their Prime Minister recently made a big splash by publicly wondering about whether we Americans "lack a work ethic." And that insult follows a long string of provocative comments that's bringing U.S. anger about Japan's trade policies to a boil.

African Americans, especially, are on the stereotyped minds of some Japanese political leaders. We all recall comments that blame U.S. economic underperformance not on the greed of the wealthy or on misguided national economic policies, but on blacks and minorities.

So here's a modest suggestion to politicians on both sides of the Pacific: let's cool the rhetoric.

The Japanese need to stop lecturing us about how we should be more like they are.

They have to recognize that they often don't play by the rules. When their protectionist policies lead to job losses in key U.S. industries we're going to fight back.

And they'd better stop parading their racism by shooting off nasty comments about our minority population. African Americans are customers for their goods and you don't insult customers unless you want to lose their business.

It wouldn't hurt for them to educate themselves about America, either.

That crack about the lack of a work ethic doesn't sit well with a work force that puts in more working hours than any outside of Japan, or to the thousands of Chicagoans, including many African Americans, who stood in the wind and the cold for hours to apply for a handful of hotel jobs.

So those loose-mouthed Japanese politicians ought to

shut up and shape up. So should our own.

It's legitimate for U.S. politicians to point out unfair Japanese trade practices and to insist on negotiating a fairer trade system. But some of the escalating rhetoric has an ugly message that sometime smacks of racism.

I often wonder how outraged they'd be if the Germans or other Europeans committed the same economic transgressions. We

## MINORITY REPORT

# IS BLACK CULTURE PROFANITY AND STEREOTYPES OR IS IT PRIDE, DIGNITY AND ACCOMPLISHMENT?

By James E. Alsbrook

When I was teaching at predominantly black Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio eighteen years ago, student dramatizations and public readings sometimes featured performances consisting of vile and profane language and gestures supposedly representing "black culture."

One student said she repeated the profane words because they were "taken from real life in the ghetto" and were her "ticket to Broadway." She said truthfully that "Porgy and Bess" and other black-oriented dramas show infidelity, dope and prostitution and degrade blacks but the performers get "big names." The only other way blacks get their names in big newspapers is to commit a crime or die, she added.

She was not aware that the repulsive skits she presented were gladly accepted as true by biased people and used to justify their injurious prejudices.

When I came to predominantly white Ohio University about fourteen years ago, the black drama students were using the same trash. I remember seeing at Memorial Auditorium one depiction of a Chicago or Harlem tenement in which the graduate students used the vilest of language under the guise of "reality" and "artistic freedom." I recall also the "senior recital" of a black student who called it "An

evening of black Drama—a College of Powerful Monologues Accented with Musical Interludes."

His show contained six skits allegedly revealing "black culture" and depicted whores, dope addicts, thieves, drunkards, con artists and buffoons.

He made no portrayal of honest, intelligent, moral, educated or hard-working black people.

When he finished and the curtain mercifully fell on his stinking, poisonous swirl of disgrace and depravity, I went to the stage to tell him that I was amazed by his choice of material. Meanwhile, several white students congratulated him. One used the word "revealing," and another, "compassionate," and another, "realistic."

I told him his performance was a disgrace—a disaster. With several of his white fellow students and theatre teachers in hearing distance, I told him he was misleading his audience and misrepresenting black people generally and that I was resentful and humiliated. We argued about stereotypes.

When he followed me toward the door and was away from whites, he said, somewhat apologetically, something to the effect that "This s— smells, but this s— sells." He added that white people buy most theatre tickets and "I've got to eat." When I mentioned race pride and integ-

riety, he said he could not buy food or clothes with race pride and integrity.

But now—ten years later—better forces have come into play. First came the Cosby show with its focus not on the skum or sium, but on the positive goals of the large black middle class.

Blacks have suffered setbacks like Oprah Winfrey's stereotypical "Brewster Place" and Alice Walker's trashy book, "The Color Purple," but the day for black dignity and intelligence has been ushered in the big print and electronic media. Maybe creators of blacks depravity and trash will take notice. Now, for blacks the trend is for class—not trash.

The big media, with the blessings and money from big foundations, have suddenly and forcefully begun to change the images of blacks from negative to positive for one or both of two reasons:

1. The media, including advertising and news executives, see racism growing (David Duke, Skinheads, Neo-Nazis, Ku Kluxers, etc.) and black poverty increasing with the recession. These two flash points could lead to another round of financially ruinous and internationally embarrassing riots like those of the sixties. The accenting of the positive about blacks through the power and prestige of the media would cause white resistance to black advances to soften and white vulnerability to

become a strong force within the U.S. economy, they'll have to better adapt to our traditions of corporate responsibility, locate job-generating plants in urban areas, and buy more goods and services from American companies.

But we've got a lot of work to do, too.

American racism remains a barrier to using all of our human resources productivity, and we should emulate Japan by invest-

ing in educating all of our children to excel in a high-tech society.

And the big lesson: we have to become more competitive by developing our human and physical resources through massive investments that put our people to work and reclaim our lost markets.



JOHN E. JACOB

David Duke and Pat Bauchanan to diminish.

2. These media and others want to avoid the violence of the sixties by widely recognizing black excellence and achievement, thereby including blacks more fully in mainstream status and advantage. Blacks' prestige, enjoyment of life and personal satisfaction will ease inter-racial tension and raise hope.

Regardless of which reason is correct, the power of positive media coverage will have a constructive effect on blacks and on an America now at an economic, political and social crossroads.

Let black performers who prostitute themselves and their profession at the expense of truth and racial integrity regret their greed and treachery.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### THE POWER OF THE BLACK VOTE

We are clearly the majority. We have been used and abused in this unfair political structure of the United States Government, to say the least. We have listened to promises of white candidates, put them into office only to find that we've done much more damage to ourselves than good. It's time for a change. A serious change that only we as a collective people can make. It's time that we as a

(See Letter to the Editor, Page 5)

## THE SENTINEL-VOICE

Nevada's only black community newspaper.  
Published every Thursday by the Brown Publishing Co. Inc.,  
1201 South Eastern Avenue • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
Telephone (702) 383-4030  
Serving Las Vegas, North Las Vegas, Reno, Carson City,  
Sparks, Hawthorne Henderson and Tonopah.

Betty Brown, President and Publisher-Editor; Lee Brown, General Manager; Ramon Savoy, Advertising and Marketing Director; Lourdes Cordero-Brown, Office Manager; Willis Brown, Production; Don Snook, Graphics; Charles Jenkins and Curtis Ennis, Distribution

Members: National Newspaper Publishers Association,  
West Coast Black Publishers Association  
This newspaper is audited by Community Papers Verification Service,  
6225 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705 (608) 238-7550

Subscriptions payable in advance  
Six months \$15.00  
Twelve months \$25.00

The rates apply to Continental United States Only