

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

The more things change...

Another young black man was lynched July 25, little more than a month after President Clinton called for all Americans to cross the great racial divide.

The remote, rural expanse of Elk Creek, Va. - a few miles from the North Carolina/Old Dominion border - muffled Garnett "G.P." Johnson's agonizing cries for mercy as two savages, in a drunken, drug-influenced stupor, burned him alive; then beheaded him, as two others stood and watched. Johnson believed he was among friends.

The once-tranquil Elk Creek, a small country town several hundred miles southwest of the former Confederate capital of Richmond, has now become a police stomping ground as federal Justice Department, state and local law enforcement officials comb the area for signs of overt racial underpinnings.

And though the federal investigation may reveal the killers' motive, troubling questions will linger considering how the mainstream media largely ignored the story or relegated it to the inside "not-as-important" news pages.

This week, call-in viewers to a Black Entertainment Television talk show about the killing were befuddled about the perceived "diss." So are we.

News of Johnson's brutal murder should have sparked a national outrage among all God-fearing Americans. The mainstream media should have clamored over the viciousness of the crime, much as they have done during their coverage of the Jon Benet Ramsey, Gianni Versace and the Menedez brothers "high profile" murder cases.

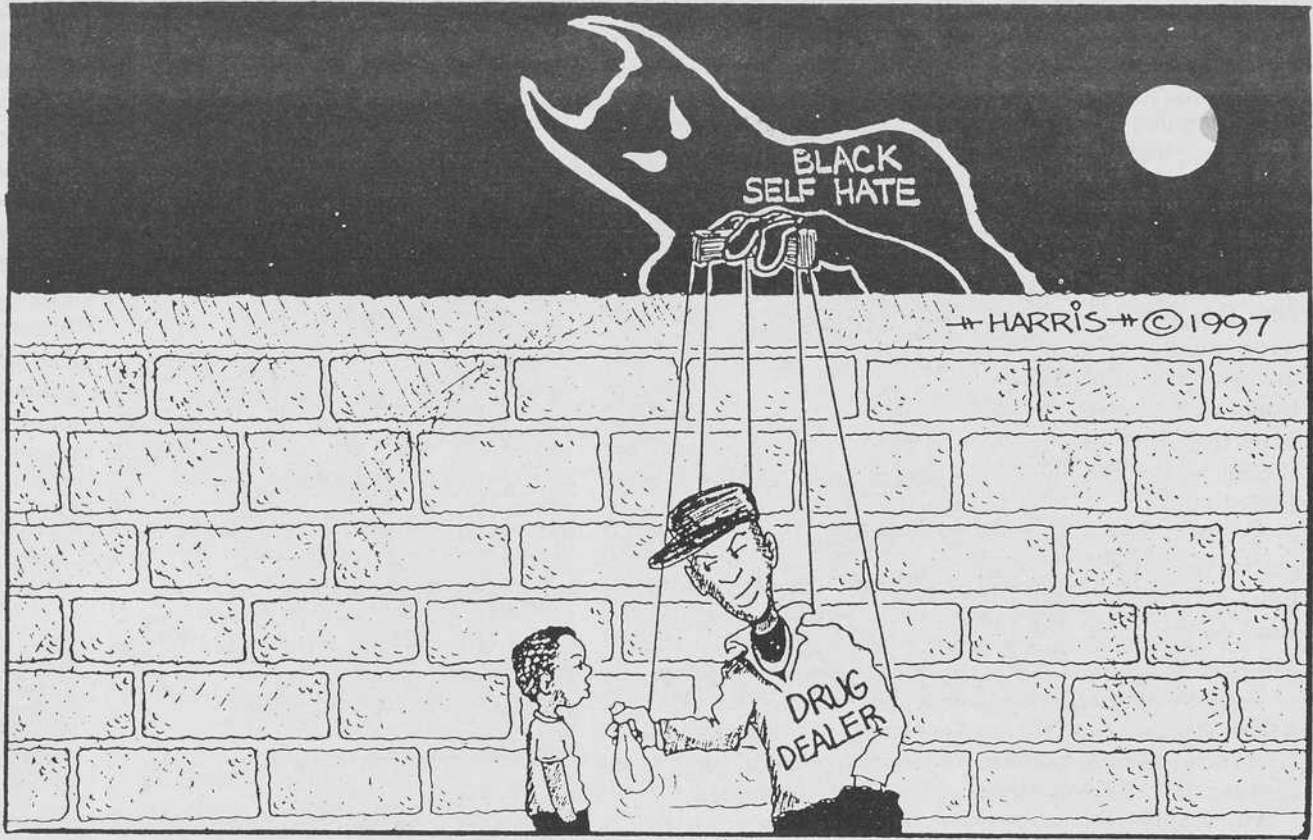
Though upset about the lack of collective outrage, many of those BET callers said they were not surprised. Many expressed the long-held notion of many Anglos: the value of a black life is not considered equal to that of a white life.

Read your U.S. history if you need a refresher on that premise.

Before the Civil War, for taxation purposes, Southern plantation owners and Northern industrialists in Congress decided that all black slaves were only three-fifths of a man.

Consider the senseless murders of people like those four Birmingham church girls, Detroit's Malice Green, Miami's Arthur McDuffie, Los Angeles' Sherrice Iverson and Las Vegas' Charles Bush, and you'll see that many in white America never forgot that fraction.

In part, we have only ourselves to blame. Maybe the rest of America watched as blacks did and continue to senselessly kill each other without much collective outrage from our own political, religious and business leaders. If we don't care, why should we expect them too?



A VOICE FROM THE HILL

Reflecting on the African-African-American Summit  
We need to harness our enthusiasm, expertise

By George Wilson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I was one of 900 delegates from the United States who made the trip to Harare, Zimbabwe for the fourth African-African-American Summit recently.

These gatherings were the brain child of the Rev. Leon Sullivan who sees the summit as a way of forging links between Africans in America and those on the continent. Aside from the U.S. delegation, there were delegations from all over Africa who seemed to be in search of this rather elusive unity.

Prior to reaching our final destination of Harare, we made a brief stop in Johannesburg, South Africa. During our stay, we attended an event held at the guest house of Nelson Mandela, president of South Africa.

During his brief talk to our group, Mandela thanked the international community, particularly the United States, for helping bring an end to apartheid.

I wanted to feel euphoric, but that emotion just wouldn't come. From the time Mandela entered the room with a phalanx of white security officers surrounding him, it was hard to determine if he was being guarded or watched. It seemed strange that a black leader could not find anyone who looked like him to be trusted with his security. I got the feeling that Mandela runs South Africa much as Marion Barry runs in Washington, D.C.

Mandela has a real balancing act to perform. He has to find a way to change the

quality of life for black South Africans while satisfying those who control the country's major institutions.

The potential for explosion exists on both sides. While riding through areas that were inhabited primarily by whites, I noticed that many of the homes were surrounded by walls topped with barbed wire. It seems these residents are looking beyond talk of freedom and are prepared to defend and protect their privileged position in South African society.

After a short night's rest, we were off to visit Soweto, the home of some six million Black South Africans.

En route, our black tour guides described Soweto and some of the subtleties of life in the sprawling area.

Soweto is an area outside of Johannesburg. The houses run the gamut from palatial to garage-like dwellings that lack running water and toilets.

If things are getting better in South Africa, the fruits are coming slowly to many Black South Africans.

In spite of depressing conditions, there were a sizable number of BMWs in Soweto.

How can people in an area with more than 50 percent unemployment afford luxury cars? They can't. Like many Americans, Sowetoans go deep into debt to give the illusion of prosperity.

A brief visit to South Africa showed the enormous gap between how blacks and whites live. Failure to close that gap could result in chaos.

Prior to 1980, Zimbabwe was known as Rhodesia. After the British left their former colony, many predicted that Zimbabwe wouldn't last. Well, the country is still there and the British haven't really left. They still control many of the country's institutions, businesses and some of the culture.

The summit had an ambitious agenda. The many workshops were set up to provide opportunities for Africans and African-Americans to forge links. Unfortunately, because of the

cost, many Zimbabweans could not attend.

After observing the behavior of some African-Americans, it seems that unity is a long ways away. Some U.S. delegates showed disdain for Africans. If asked, some would admit that they spent a week in Africa without talking to any Africans. How can you unify with someone you aren't speaking with?

Sullivan deserves commendation for his role in attempting to move Africa forward. What is needed now is a follow-up to capture the enthusiasm and turn it into tangible results.

George Wilson is a 16-year Capitol Hill correspondent for the American Urban Radio Network.

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

**LAS VEGAS Sentinel-Voice**

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Telephone (702) 380-8100 • Fax (702) 380-8102

**Contributing Writers:**  
Kim Bailey  
Lee Brown  
Carl Chamberlain  
Loretta Arrington Hall  
Sharon Savage  
John Stephens III  
Fred T. Snyder

**Photographers:**  
John Broussard  
Jonathan Olsen

**Ramon Savoy, Publisher-Editor**  
**Lynette Sawyer, General Manager**  
**Marcello Sawyer, Copy Editor**  
**Damon Hodge, Staff Writer**  
**Diamond Ross, Staff Writer**  
**Crisandra Varnado, Staff Writer**  
**Willis Brown, Production Manager**  
**Don Snook, Graphics**  
**Ed & Betty Brown, Founders**

Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association

**SPEAK OUT!**

We accept letters to the editor

Send your letters to:  
Las Vegas  
Sentinel-Voice,  
900 E. Charleston,  
Las Vegas, NV 89104  
or fax to 380-8102

All letters must be signed and contain a daytime phone to be verified for your protection.