

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Self-reflection: Make it part of your life

Conventional wisdom has declared that it takes 21 days to integrate a new habit into one's normal routine.

With that in mind, the holidays present a perfect opportunity for new beginnings, allowing to shed the old, to redefine ourselves, take chances and make the world change.

We are all so involved ... with our jobs, our families, our extra-curricular activities, that we seldom take the time for self-reflection.

If we would just stop for a moment, we could listen to the unique sounds of nature: the cacophony of a flock of migrating birds, the crickets' din, or the wind whipping against a trees leaves.

If we would just stop for a moment, we would marvel at the ebullient colors of nature: the beautiful hues of a pre-dawn sky, time-battered rocks and stones, the winding recesses of the mountains, rainbows and beautifully packaged presents.

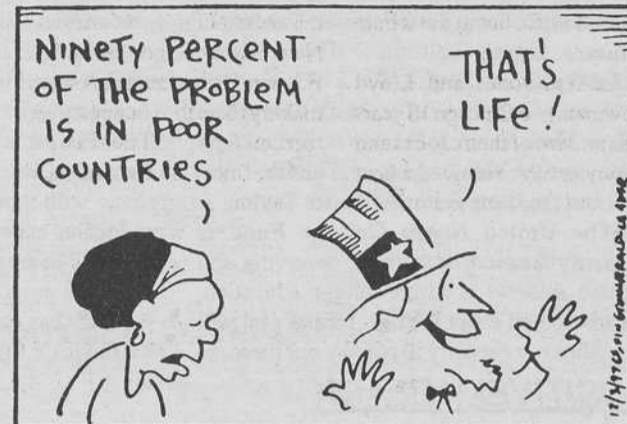
If we would just stop for a moment, we would enjoy the nose-tickling scent of fresh-cut grass, the freshness of flowing water, the autumny tinge in the air after a good rain, the aroma of your favorite food.

As Kwanzaa fast approaches, African-Americans, and all Americans, need to take time out for self-reflection, not just because it is important for renewal, but because it is important for survival.

Kwanzaa, as with many other holidays, is a time to reflect on whether you lived up to your values and how you will improve yourself in the future.

Every year about this time, anxious children scuttle their parents orders to go to sleep because they want to find out if the fat man in the red suit said they were bad or good. Immediately, they begin recalling the good and bad things they did throughout the year, often offering a promise, a cursory one at that, to "really" behave in order to make sure they get presents.

Self-reflection is ingrained in us during our childhood. With proper care, it can be an effective tool to be used throughout our lives.



Who is an American?

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A story in the December 14th *New York Times* declared that a joint *Times/CBS News* poll had found, as the headline put it, "Americans Reject Means But Not Ends of Racial Diversity."

The report, which included graphs and a discussion of the possible meaning of some of the statistics, said that "Americans today endorse the goal of racial diversity in schools and offices, but reject some of the main methods used so far to achieve it."

Yet, in my view, this poll was not quite what it seemed.

For one thing, the headline is wrong. *Americans* do not "reject" the means to achieve diversity: White Americans oppose means, generally speaking, by significant margins. Black Americans support them, generally speaking, by even more significant margins.

For example, 57 percent of whites said that affirmative action programs weren't needed to ensure that businesses have diverse work forces; 80 percent of blacks said they were. Only 35 percent of whites agreed that affirmative action programs should be continued "for the foreseeable future;" but 80 percent of blacks said they should.

Even when blacks and whites agreed on a survey question, the gaps were striking: 82 to 95 percent of blacks supported special education and job-training programs for minorities and laws to protect them against discrimination in hiring and promotion. The percentage of whites who agreed ranged from 59 to 65 percent.

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
President  
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But, despite those gaps, the agreement does suggest that Americans have a more complex view of the means to achieve diversity than that headline acknowledges. That may be because the poll is skewed by a serious flaw: it focuses only on Blacks and Whites.

Yet the statistics of employment and college- and graduate school-admission show that white women, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans have also benefited significantly from affirmative action. The views of and about those groups — significant factors in our diverse society — are absent from this survey.

Nonetheless, the survey is valuable.

What can be said is that, on the one hand, 61 percent of whites feel affirmative action programs should be either ended now, or phased out in the next few years, while, on the other, nearly 66 percent agree that there should be special preparatory educational and job-programs (which many conservatives would likely classify as affirmative action) to help minorities.

This seeming contradiction does reflect what the two major referenda to this date on affirmative action — the California electorate's

approval of a ban on affirmative action in 1996; the Houston electorate's choosing last month to continue that city's affirmative action program — have shown: How affirmative action programs are operated, and how affirmative action is explained is crucial to whether a majority of whites will support it.

The gap between white support of racial diversity and their objection to the means to achieve it has existed since the founding of the nation. Indeed, a Gallup poll, taken just before the 1963 March on Washington, found that 63 percent of those surveyed disapproved of it, and that 38 percent felt that the civil rights movement was being too assertive in pushing for

bedrock civil rights for blacks in the South.

The present survey does confirm, again, that a significant segment of White America has closed some of the distance between the ideals we all pledge allegiance to and the practices it will pledge to support. That is progress.

We who believe affirmative action is a proper mechanism to achieve inclusion must intensify our grassroots efforts to stem the spread of anti-affirmative action referenda to other jurisdiction and to Congress. We also must strengthen the arguments on our side and discard those outmoded, flawed and legally risky practices that have undermined affirmative action's credibility.

We must make clear that affirmative action is actually two things.

First, it's a set of tools to remedy discrimination.

Second, it's a philosophy which declares that inclusion is a moral, economic, political and demographic imperative too vital to our nation's future to be left entirely to chance.

Whether by happenstance or (See *American*, Page 11)

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