

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

# Satellite blackout emblematical of black political life

Consider the satellite-induced blackout in the context of black political life: The blackout stumped communication for millions of Americans who's lives are tied to pagers. The partisan wrangling among black Democrats and Republicans has produced a similar communication void and threatens to sever our ties as a people.

Black Democrats and Republicans need to stop and talk, sans the trappings of their parties. The infighting needs to cease. Too often, black politicians fall into the same snipe-at-my-party-and-I'll-snipe-back-at-yours-twice mentalities of their white counterparts. Nary a time can you watch a news program or read the newspaper or a news magazine and not find a politician lambasting someone from the other party as an insensitive, un-American, politically inept and morally bankrupt oaf or chiding the entire party as a horde of political also-rans clamoring to cement their hold on American people — and thus the government — even if it means proposing detrimental policies.

Black Democrats and Republicans cannot afford to fall into this political nether world. As a people, we have too much we need to do. It's discouraging watching black politicians throw verbal salvos at each other when its likely the parties involved have never sat down with each other to brainstorm solutions to problems.

Black Democrats and Republicans need to quit locking themselves into the political leaning of their parties because both major parties have faults.

The Democrats, known for their liberalism, often want to throw money at problems. And while money can cure many ills, it can also birth new ones: more bureaucracy which means more government; more taxes which means more poor and working poor. And what happens if money isn't the answer.

Republicans, often tagged with the conservative label, want less government and more citizen say-so. If Republicans had their druthers, they would eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts, which funds countless enrichment programs that have improved children's lives and kept many from lives of crime. They advocate (though not across the board) more tax breaks for the rich, relying on the routinely-disproven "trickle down" theory which says that if the rich get richer they will provide more opportunities for the poor.

Then there are those blacks, siphoned off to independent parties, who sometimes won't acknowledge black Republicans or Democrats. Often, they have limited agendas, solutions that aren't salient and haven't engaged in serious conversation — or debate — with their counterparts in other parties.

Humans disagree. That's a fact of life. But if blacks don't re-establish communication and brainstorm on ideas we all care about — education, taxes, crime, welfare reform, the economy — then we may face a political blackout.

72 days to register for primary election  
135 days to register for general election



INDIVIDUAL RETIREMENT INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

## Minorities still cannot let their guard down

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Five years ago, the Denny's restaurant chain was caught up in a huge national controversy after it became known that many of its restaurants routinely discriminated against African-American customers: by not seating them, or seating them and then making them wait an inordinately long time for service.

To me, the most poignant — and infuriating — incident occurred in Annapolis, Maryland in May 1993 when six black Secret Service agents were refused service at a Denny's restaurant. The agents were on their way that morning to provide security for President Clinton's appearance at the U.S. Naval Academy.

In all the resulting brouhaha, I was struck by the comment agent Alfonso M. Dyson made in recounting what had happened.


"You never would think it would happen to you, especially not in full uniform," he said, referring to the incident. "I was definitely unprepared. I had let my guard down."

That a Secret Service agent who is African-American would say at the end of the 20th Century that "I had let my guard down" in expecting to be treated courteously when he stepped into a restaurant stands as a devastating rebuke to anyone who declares that anti-black bigotry is no longer a significant fact of American life today.

What brought this incident, and these thoughts, to mind was that just recently two Denny's restaurants in Florida were accused of discriminating

### To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
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against black customers, state corrections officers in one instance and 40 sixth-graders and their chaperones on their way to Disney World in the other.

I do not believe these incidents are the fault of the Denny's company itself, which appears to have made commendable progress in building its commitment to equal opportunity in employment and courteous treatment to all its customers.

In fact, I count myself among the most vociferous in cheering the progress in all sorts of areas along the color line during the past three decades. Indeed, in a very recent column I returned again to my "mantra" that African-Americans must not let the difficulties they face in some areas obscure the extraordinary opportunities for advancement that also lie before them.

But I know it would also be a mistake to dismiss these as merely isolated incidents of "petty racism." Instead, we ought to view them for what they are: Telling indicators that the residue of America's racist past still exists and that African-Americans still endure significant denial of opportunity.

Another more worrisome reminder of what occurred in New Jersey on April 23 when four young men — three were African-American and one, Hispanic-American — on their way from New York to North Carolina for a basketball clinic were shot after their van was stopped by New Jersey state troopers on the state turnpike.

The police contend they stopped the van because it was speeding and because they suspected the men were carrying illegal drugs.

The men, through their attorneys, contend that they were not speeding and were stopped solely because of the color of their skin.

The case is still under

investigation, but there have been enough questions raised about the police account, the discrepancies between the police account and those of the young men and the accounts of several witnesses to the incident, all of which contradict the police account and suggest the young men were victims of "racial profiling," a notorious, racist police practice often termed "driving while black," which presumes that black and Hispanic motorists are likely to be criminals and thus can be stopped arbitrarily.

As news reports about the incident have been made clear, the New Jersey State Police Department has a long history of accusations of racism against nonwhite members of its own force, and two years ago was found by a state court to have engaged in "racial profiling" along the turnpike.

Their reputation for this is well known. Indeed, one of the witnesses to the incident, an engineer with the *Voice of America*, told the *New York Times* that he was driving home along the turnpike that night

(See *Guard*, Page 13)

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