

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Crime reminds us how far we have to go

When James Byrd hitched a ride home after his niece's bridal shower, it's likely he didn't expect to die.

But he did.

Lawrence Brewer, 31, and 23-year-olds Shawn Berry and John King are being held in a Texas jail without bond on charges of first-degree murder. The trio is accused of chaining the 49-year-old father of three to the back of a pickup truck and dragging him to death. His head, neck and torso were severed from his body on the 2-mile trip. The former vacuum salesman probably never had a chance.

Unfortunately, it seems, more and more blacks are becoming victims of hate crimes. And while Attorney General Janet Reno has yet to rule the slaying in Jasper a hate crime, blacks in the town 100 miles from Houston, know racism when they see it. The defendants are reported to have had ties to the Ku Klux Klan while in prison.

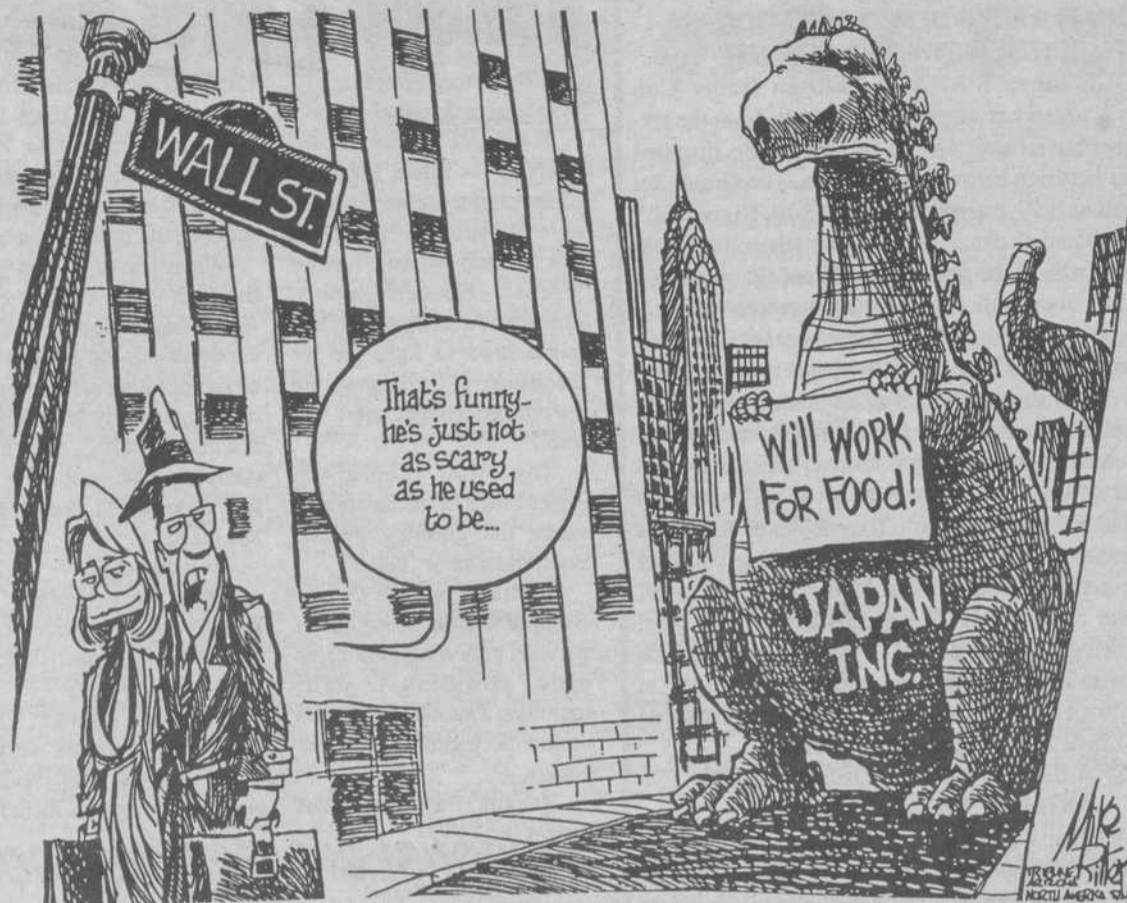
The Texas NAACP is pushing for capital murder charges that would allow for the death penalty. But putting these scourges to death isn't likely to stem what appears to be a growing tide of violence targeted against blacks: A black couple was gunned down by marines with white supremacist ties; residents of the Texas town of Vidor intimidated the lone black resident of an all-white government housing complex into moving; a Chicago boy was mauled by a mob of white toughs; a handyman was beheaded by three white men he knew.

The tales are graphic and harken to the days when black men were hunted like animals, strung up on trees or hung on makeshift crosses, lynched and burned for minor transgressions — looking at a white woman — or for nothing at all.

The crimes — new forms of lynching, if you will — wreak of overkill. Byrd's torso was left battered, with limbs missing. Authorities couldn't recognize the face of Emmitt Till; the young Mississippi boy's face had been beaten in and he had been shot more than 1,000 times.

Thirty years after several acts gave us civil rights and the right to vote, it seems more and more whites are voting to treat blacks in an uncivil manner. As if crippling racism in corporate America, environmental discrimination and the repealing preferences weren't enough, the torrent of racial violence seems to be on the rise.

That we are talking about such heinous acts in 1998 shows we've come far, but have nearly an eternity to go.



Erasing preferences hurts aspiring collegians

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Everybody knows that education is the key to economic self-reliance. The better educated you are, the better off you'll be personally, and the more you can contribute to society.

That's why the assault on expanding opportunity in higher education for students from racial and ethnic minority groups is so dangerous to the economic and social health of the country.

Nowhere is that danger more sharply underscored than in America's two most diverse locales: California and New York City.

In California, Gov. Pete Wilson led the drive to pass Proposition 209, which banned affirmative action in university admissions.

The predictable result has been a sharp drop in students of color accepted at the state's elite universities.

Last year, 260 black students enrolled as freshmen at the University of California at Berkeley. This September, the number will plunge by more than 50 percent — to 98. This spring African-Americans, Hispanic Americans and Native Americans made up 10 percent of those accepted for next fall, compared to 23 percent last year.

It's much the same story at the University of California at Los Angeles.

On the East Coast, New York Gov. George Pataki and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani are trying to narrow access to the 11 four-year and 6 two-year colleges of the City University of New York. They propose sharply

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
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curtailing the network of remedial-education courses have helped tens of thousands of CUNY students achieve two-year and four-year degrees since 1970.

The recent decision of the CUNY trustees to do so will hurt thousands of highly motivated black, Latino and Asian-American students, many of whom are struggling to get ahead academically while working and raising families.

No one can disagree that the controversial open-admissions program transformed CUNY in one stunning respect:

In 1969, the year before the open-admissions policy began, 91 percent of students of CUNY's four-year colleges — located in the most racially- and ethnically-diverse city in the world — were white; 9 percent were not.

Today, nearly 70 percent of CUNY's students are African-American, Hispanic-American and Asian-American.

In other words, open admissions produced at CUNY an enormous expansion of educational opportunity across New York City's color line. Dismantling it will sharply curtail access of people of color to educational opportunity. Try

as they might, the proponents of the move can't obscure that prospect.

What makes these assaults on educational opportunity such a threat to the society is that studies clearly show the benefits of helping people reach their highest potential educationally.

In California, African-American and Latino students who could have handled the work at Berkeley and UCLA are now being denied a shot at the best education their state has to offer.

In New York City, a longitudinal study released in 1996 found that the open-admissions program was far more successful in educating

needy students than earlier research had suggested.

According to the document, more than half of those who entered the university under open-admissions earned bachelor's degrees — sometimes more than a decade later — and they went on to better-paying jobs as a result.

Because many of the open-admissions students were poorer than other students, they often worked full-time while they went to college and took much longer than four years to graduate.

In addition, the study estimated that during one year in the 1980s, CUNY graduates admitted under open-admissions earned a total of almost \$67 million more than they would have if the university's program had not been instituted. It estimated their additional lifetime earnings at about \$2 billion.

Nearly a third of CUNY students are parents supporting children. Nearly half of its freshmen were born outside the United States. Most are from (See Education, Page 15)

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