

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Blacks: Clinton affair covering vital issues

OK, he did it. He admitted he did it. Now let's move on.

President Clinton should have received huge amounts of press for admitting an affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky. But how much of what filled newspapers, television broadcasts and radio airwaves was news and how much was overkill?

The newsworthiness of the issue was never in question -- Clinton is the most powerful man in the world and in the most visible position the world has known. But his transgression isn't the end of the world.

Life goes on. So does news.

Earlier this month, U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya were bombed, killing hundreds and injuring scores more. Unfortunately, coverage wasn't as thorough nor did the stories garner above-the-fold ink. Instead, they were usurped by the minutest detail in what ranks with Watergate as the highest level of media scrutiny.

Problems pock the American landscape — especially in African-Americans communities. Thus President Clinton's sexual peccadilloes should take a back seat to the issues.

Blacks must mount up — and bring their leaders along with them — to battle assaults on affirmative action, unfair lending practices, rising tides of hate crime, juvenile violence, drug abuse, the availability of weapons, discrimination on the job, racism off of it and much more.

We must not spend our time vilifying Clinton, but pushing him — through our voice, our vote and our constituents to factor us into the nation's robust economy and soaring stock market.

We must not spend our time vilifying Clinton, but pushing him to make sure that vouchers, charter schools and other "choice" educational initiatives don't become a substitute for improving the infrastructure of the nation's public school system, which (un)educates most of our children.

We must not spend our time vilifying Clinton, but pushing him to put more money into after-school and recreational programs and other directives proven to prevent juvenile violence. Let's get our hands on our children before the police do.

What Clinton did was wrong, no question. But Americans, and Blacks especially, should avoid the hype. As long as politicians are bickering about what should be done — if Clinton committed perjury, the impeachment crazies will have a case — they aren't focusing on policy.

The seven-month independent counsel investigation has rendered a do-nothing Congress even more inept. Let's make sure the same doesn't happen to us.



New Black folk cottage industry a conspiracy

By Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Sometimes I will hear other people presenting a line of argument which touches a responsive chord in my head. I say to myself: "Aha! Yes, I see where they are going."

What I actually mean is that their strategy and agenda are clear to me, even though we have not previously discussed the ideas, and I may not even know them personally.

But if the idea promises me a powerful enough solution to one of my troublesome problems, I will begin to collaborate indirectly — which is to say conspire — by taking actions to support them and to help me jump on their bandwagon.

I am willingly co-opted because I, too, want to go in that same direction, toward the same desirable solution.

This is a very human scenario and is familiar to most people. But it must also be acknowledged that, at that moment of mutual recognition and shared self-interest, the dynamic of an informal conspiracy begins.

That dynamic is what we, who fight bigotry, racism, prejudice and injustice, often mean when we accuse our attackers of executing a national conspiracy to turn back the civil rights clock. And that dynamic is specifically why I call the recent spate of shallow, denigrating studies of Black Folk, written by obscure self-aggrandizers supported by mainstream media and publishers, a Black Folk Cottage Industry conspiracy.

It seems reasonable for scholars of any color or

ideology to investigate vexing social, economic and political conditions. Usually, book publishers for such academic sleeping pills are as scarce as hens' teeth. But when mediocre academics and self-serving opinionators devote inordinate time, resources and attention to "explaining" and "re-defining" Black Folk, so that they can demonstrate how little we understand our own condition and how unappreciative we are of the gains which larger society has permitted us, there is ample reason to be alert.

And when famous publishers commission and print these so-called "scholarly studies," and high visibility media rush to promote the authors, this convergence of power qualifies as a conspiracy.

In fact, these recent revisionists' definitions of Black reality are meant to reinforce arguments against Black demands for opportunity, access, equity and justice. The deconstructionist strategy seeks to deny any further Black advancement, and if possible, to reverse and systematically eliminate the economic and political gains which African-Americans have earned in the last 30 years, often as a result of support from public policies, public opinion and court decisions.

The books that are the vehicles for the new Cottage Industry are prominently reviewed, preferably with one or two right-wing African-Americans strutting in the hallelujah chorus. Fortunately, among those who have eloquently rejected such rubbish is Ellis Cose, the

African-American author of "Color Blind" and "The Rage Of A Privileged Class" and an editor for Newsweek Magazine.

He labels this cottage industry "junk science ... (which is) too fundamentally flawed to be taken seriously," even though, he laments, the media does just that: takes it seriously.

Dinesh D'Souza, although himself arguably non-White, is one who has benefited greatly from the Black Folk Cottage Industry. His book, "The End Of Racism" in which he ridicules the efforts of civil rights activists, is frequently and gleefully quoted by the Cottage Industry attack forces.

"The Bell Curve" is another book which exhausted both ink and readers as White authors Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray strained to prove that Blacks are genetically inferior.

These unqualified, would-be geneticists used test scores as the basis for their assessment, which biased their reported outcomes and revealed the self-fulfilling prophecy of their thinly veiled prejudices. Moreover, the fact that neither author had any

credentials in genetics did not bother them: one was a political scientist and the other a psychologist.

Another example of two such Cottage Industry exploiters are Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom. Together they have written a long and tedious tome, "America In Black And White: One Nation, Indivisible," based upon their collection and analysis of data, distorted in ways that try to prove exactly what they set out to prove: that African-Americans are intentionally deceiving everyone by denying that we are "almost" as well off as whites after all.

In effect, they accuse Blacks of the equivalent of gouging out our eyes so that we can collect disability benefits.

The Thernstroms further assert that the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and affirmative action practices of the last 30 years have had little or nothing to do with our progress. It was inevitable, say the Thernstroms, that Black conditions would have

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