

Some say America mired in cultural war

WASHINGTON (AP) — There's a "war" going on in this country, but most people may not notice. It's about whether absolute right and wrong exist and whether Americans can even tell the difference. In the midst of prosperity, some thinkers see a decline in things money cannot buy — values, morals and old truths.

Commentator Pat Buchanan pledged at the onset of his third presidential campaign to "clean up all that pollutes our culture."

Another prominent activist from the right, Paul Weyrich, has gone as far as suggesting conservatives separate themselves from U.S. culture — "an ever wider sewer," he called it — because the "enemy" has won.

A president who lied and still leads is held out as an example of cultural decline. So are magazine covers peddling sexual gratification and raunchy TV. Even the move toward turning George Washington's birthday into a generic Presidents Day is cited as a sign of how this country has fallen.

"I wonder if, after this

culture war is over that we are engaged in, an America will survive that will be worth fighting to defend," Rep. Henry Hyde of Illinois, the leading House impeachment prosecutor, told the Senate in his effort to unseat President Clinton.

The culture war is an apocalyptic struggle ranging across the landscape of national life, yet hardly visible to so many. It takes multiple forms: the constitutional impeachment drama, Hollywood fare, billboard advertising, the teaching of history, behavior on college campuses, Internet content and more.

The question about absolute truth vs. relativism has engaged philosophers since the earliest time: Is truth eternal and unchanging or is it relative, depending on circumstance, time and place?

To the cultural warriors, America is "slouching towards Gomorrah," the biblical city destroyed for the sinfulness of its people. Yet the disquiet is difficult for many to fathom. Most social indicators either are good or improving.

"There is a cultural war among the elite," says Boston College sociologist Alan Wolfe, author of "One Nation After All." "But it doesn't go much farther than that."

Even some of the book titles at the center of the conflict recognize that people are not really with it: William Bennett's anti-Clinton "The Death of Outrage" and Robert Bork's "Slouching Towards Gomorrah."

James Hunter, who popularized the phrase in scholarly circles with his 1980s book "Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America," agrees the fight mobilizes no more than 10 percent of the population.

But he says that does not diminish its intensity or importance. Elites, after all, shape what is taught to children, shown on TV, turned into law and resolved in courts.

"Certainly the majority of Americans live their lives fairly removed from these kinds of tensions," he says. "That doesn't mean there's not a culture war."

The culture war is often traced to the 1960s, the decade of protest, free love,

beads and bad pants. Some slogans from that time still hold meaning today, among them "Do Your Own Thing."

"Americans are pretty tolerant," says Todd Gitlin, once at the vanguard of the counterculture as president of Students for a Democratic Society. "They have their judgments. They just don't think people should enforce their judgments."

Gitlin, who wrote "The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America Is Wracked by Culture Wars," concedes the 1960s eroded traditional authority and brought on the "rambunctious relativists" — perhaps the sort of people who later would judge that Clinton should stay in office. That is how GOP Rep. Tom Delay of Texas, the majority whip, saw the impeachment struggle. He told the House it was "a debate about relativism vs. absolute truth."

Some public opinion research indicates Americans, while more religious than many cultures and hardly freewheeling about sex, are moving toward consensus on many social issues.

VEIB

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that this year, the event will become more commercial, while keeping its cultural bent. He hopes to eventually attract talent from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa.

"The African music is especially interesting because it is the precursor to African-American music," he said. "African music carries a very heavy male line, opposed to our music over here, where the top line is female. And they don't sing slavery songs. They sing war songs."

The Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, the Equal Opportunity Board, KLVX Channel 10, KCEP Power 88, Pepsi, Proline and the Postal Service are sponsoring the two-day event.

Activities begin 6 p.m. Sunday at the Fremont Street Experience and First Street. A preview community performance is slated for 2 p.m. Monday. The final performance, which PBS will film, is scheduled for Monday night at 7 p.m. at UNLV.

Balcony seats cost \$15, with main floor tickets selling for \$20 and \$30. Golden Circle tickets are available for Sunday's performance at \$100 apiece and include entry to workshops, a pre-concert reception and the soloist competitions on request.

Those interested in tickets can call 895-3801.

Protest

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"But," he added later, "Where are the men who are supposed to stand up and protect our community? ... Fifteen to 20 shots were fired in Nucleus Plaza last night.... We are killing our own!"

Muhammad reminded the assembly that the police are paid by our tax dollars and that it doesn't necessarily take great numbers to make a change.

Bell said that the National Alliance also plans a local memorial service, as part of a national anti-police brutality campaign on April 3, to heighten awareness of this problem and press the president and attorney general to convene a task force to investigate the issue.

Code

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an intellectual man, a family man... a complete man," says Code Marketing Vice President Stephanie Tavares-Rance. Tavares-Rance stated the embodiment of a man can be found within his style.

Style, unlike "Image" as we were told in a very successful marketing campaign some years ago, is everything.

"We want the successful African-American doctor, lawyer, businessman who likes to dress nice," she stated. The magazine will feature black men dressed to the 9's as found in the popular men's fashion mainstay *GQ Magazine*.

But, will Code simply be a charcoal coated version of *GQ*? No chance says marketing vice president Perry Grayson. For his \$4 cover charge the upscale African-American male will receive articles, pictorials, and advertising which appeal directly to the way he feels.

A whopping 500,000 copies are slated to be distributed during the premier print. Code will be found in every major airport in the US, Grayson stated. A universal appeal personae is the ultimate goal making allowances for substance and sophistication.

Appeals to those who identify with the edgy style of actor Samuel L. Jackson or the sophistication of actor Denzel Washington are major selling points to advertisers. An ad for Tommy Hilfiger or late designer Giorgio Armani can be found within the upscale magazine. Jordan's Nikes or OJ's Bruno Mali shoes will make the ad roster.

All benevolently trying to get their fair

share of the nearly \$532 million consumer dollars blacks are expected to spend in 1999. While Grayson's chief concern is the advertising bottom line, some 100 pages of the first issue will be devoted to editorial content — the primary selling tool.

Editor-in-chief Eugene Robinson, a thirty-six year-old post baby boomer African-American male, has experience ranging from writing for the defense industry to working for computer behemoth Apple Computers.

He notably has done his own informal marketing analysis and determined there's nothing in the marketplace which brings what Code proposes to the African-American professional male.

"People will come to realize that there are those of us out there who don't wear baggy pants... there are those of us who are professional with specific needs for style," he continued.

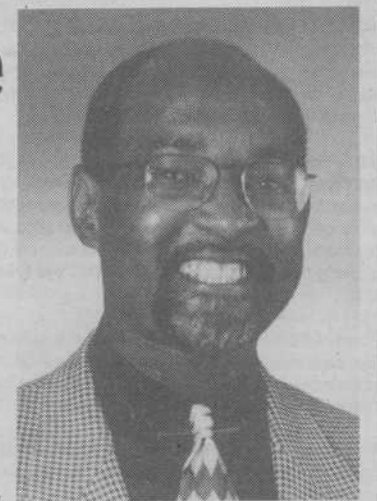
"Successful African-American males are not a silent majority." He said that Code will deal with cutting edge issues, but will not stop short of taking political stances. "Nobody buys a magazine for political reasons," he says. "The truest form of polling is if you buy the magazine."

Robinson said the packaging of the magazine will not be on the basis of it being a black publication. "You can't sell me a magazine just on the basis that it's a black magazine... you have to have good copy and good editorial content."

He expects the reader to be the ultimate barometer of success or failure. "Did we set out to produce the best magazine? Yes. That magazine is Code."

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