

COMMENTARY

Push for parental culpability is mean-spirited, useless

Carl Rowan

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Seventeen-year-old Fred Barker swipes a liter of gin from his family's liquor cabinet and sneaks it into a high-school barbecue. Later, Fred and three inebriated buddies frolic through the neighborhood, smashing car windows with baseball bats.

Two days later, police go to Fred's home and arrest his parents on charges of contributing to the delinquency of minors at the party, and of the malicious destruction of property.

A month later, one of Fred's classmates is driving his family car well above the speed limit.

When a cop tries to pull him over, he tries



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to outrun the police car, but smashes into another vehicle, killing the driver.

Police arrest his father on charges of reckless driving and manslaughter.

These are just two examples of the dramas that develop in the 13 states where, by statute, parents are held criminally responsible for the misdeeds of

their children. And examples, also, of what could happen across the nation if, in the wake of the tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., more jurisdictions attempt to establish "bad parenting" as a category of major crimes.

No society anywhere, at any time, has produced agreement as to what is good or bad

parenting. While some parents argue that to spare the rod is a "permissiveness" that spoils the child, other parents hold that spanking and hitting teaches children early that violence and intimidation get desired results.

Some parents believe that a show of total trust creates a productive bond with their children; others believe that they must peek into diaries, search bedrooms and pockets, and be constant detectives in order to know what their children are doing.

In modern America, there are just too many forces other than parents that turn good girls and boys into bad ones — such as peers, the movies, television, the Internet, neighborhood criminals and more.

Still, even the Clinton administration is now asking for laws to hold parents "accountable for their kid's actions,"

especially when parents "knowingly and recklessly" allow juveniles to have "a gun that was later used to cause injury or death." Well, "knowingly and recklessly" is a huge caveat, and it suggests that those proposing to punish the parents know that it will be very difficult to prove that parents are the real culprits.

This country has been on binge of prison-building in recent years, but we still don't have enough jails and penitentiaries to incarcerate all the parents that someone thinks are guilty of "bad parenting."

So while we rightly encourage parents to be more observant and vigilant in monitoring their children's behavior, we would do well to resist the emotion-inspired campaigns to punish parents for all serious youthful delinquencies.

Advertising in Black Press: Benign neglect or blatant racism? White advertisers ignore black consumers, yet we keep coming

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The tale of African-Americans in advertising and associated economic development is the same old story: Everybody wins, but us. On the other hand, the same old action item still applies: No demands on our part results on our being left out economically.

Blacks have an awesome presence in the American marketplace.

Blacks' band loyalty is a product seller's dream. But, sadly, sellers, who are mostly white, pay scant attention to targeting advertising to African-Americans. America's advertising industry's ignorance of the \$300 billion black market when it comes to revenue reciprocity is an institutionalized process of economic disenfranchisement.

Denial of this consumer group's proportional economic prosperity totals

more than \$100 billion that could go to African-American communities in ad revenue placements, jobs and other income. And, we the buyers demand no more from sellers than mo and mo goods.

Although many talk about the lack of fair trade in this economic exchange, little is being done by either side. A "Tale of two systems," is what the Federal Communications Commission's first African-American chairman says of broadcast discrimination. "Some advertisers do not recognize the reality of minority consumers and the power of minority-formatted stations in reaching them. They fail to recognize that there are untapped markets in the neighborhoods of long-neglected minority communities," states William Kennard.

His pointing out that if minority-formatted stations could make themselves profitable they'd be able to

Business Exchange

By William Reed, Publisher of Who's Who in Black Corporate America.



invest more in money and production in their serving communities seem to fall on deaf ears among black consumers as well as white advertisers.

The nation's black-oriented newspapers suffer a similar same system of neglect by white merchandisers.

With almost two centuries of a strong presence in speaking out on racism and the nation's negligence of our social and economic plights, the Black Press of America is rarely sought out for distribution of the coupons

and promotions producers and retailers regularly utilize to get us into their jeans, cars, airlines and shoes.

African-American households spend more on apparel, telephone services and most consumer items than average U.S. households.

But producers and sellers of those products and services spend much more to bring promotional notices of them with white (or general community) media than with blacks in the business.

But, African-American consumers still buy the items

with no demand for the reciprocity that could directly affect them through more jobs and economic opportunities within their communities.

A rising tide lifts all boats, and if all black consumers made demands for a better return on the money they spend, we'd all enjoy more economic benefits.

Blacks hold in their pockets 8.2 percent of the nation's total buying power. If we had just 8.2 percent of what we spend coming back at us we'd realize more than \$100 billion in jobs and economic opportunities. Rev. Al Sharpton's National Action Network (NAM) has made some progress toward gaining advertisers' reciprocity.

More advertisers must now give thought to tailoring products, marketing, and advertising to diverse market segments. Merchandisers and marketing specialists need to recall Henry Ford's economic

axiom: If workers aren't paid enough, they can't buy my cars."

The ad industry must realize that the more they generate proportional shares into black media and markets the more enriched businesses and workers will return in purchases and economic production.

Both groups suffer from their discriminatory acts. Black consumers in their failure to demand a greater return on their bucks miss out on more economic opportunity and better lifestyles in their communities, while white advertisers miss out on expanding the reach of their products and services through a better black-oriented media. Both groups should remember that the solution to poverty is creating opportunities.

William Reed is publisher of Who's Who in Black Corporate America.

White House scuttling Black Press' storied history

Dr. John E. Warren

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The 172-year-old African-American newspapers serving this country should look at the efforts of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy as a wake up call for our newspapers and our communities.

The message is, if there is money to be made, the white media, electronic and print, can do a better job of reaching our friends, neighbors and their families than we can.

White newspapers that have presented us as the personification of the drug

culture in America are now being called upon through donated advertising space, to reach our children in the war against drugs.

Isn't it ironic that the very advertising industry that controls the \$166 billion a year, the same advertising industry that our newspapers are virtually excluded from, now have enough dollars to donate advertising revenues to the Partnership for a Drug Free America?

If we are ever going to claim a vote of participation in an industry set on eliminating or buying us out, then we must wake up and

The message is, if there is money to be made, the white media, electronic and print, can do a better job of reaching our friends, neighbors and their families than we can.

organize to support our communities and ourselves.

Every Black person in America who can hold a pencil or pen should be writing not to Barry McCaffrey, who has already demonstrated how he feels about us and our market, but rather to President William Jefferson Clinton,

McCaffrey's boss.

We should be demanding that the president take steps to correct this matter.

Black America has been first to forgive and support this president at all times. We should expect no less from him in return.

This drug-media campaign must not be

reduced to television spots, Internet news clips and radio/television ads by a non-Black media industry determined to make a dollar at any cost.

African-American newspapers must be recognized for their contributions to all aspects of the life and values of our communities.

Our participation must be based on entitlement and not charity.

If the Partnership for a Drug Free America can get the American Association of Advertising Agencies to encourage their clients to do business with Black

newspapers, then the Black Press can certainly contribute space for public service announcements.

Until that time, the Black Press must insist on participation that acknowledges our vote and value to our communities as a service that goes beyond pro-bono. Everyone who has ever picked up a Black newspaper or hopes to do so in the future, should be writing and calling the White House to make their views known.

Dr. John E. Warren is publisher of the San Diego Voice & Viewpoint.