

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Our victories on the battlefield not mirrored in society

As congressional types engage in partisan balking and bickering over whether President Clinton should commit ground troops to the escalating conflict in Kosovo, NATO recently greenlighted the addition of an international alliance of ground forces, up to 20,000, that will enter the Yugoslavian province as a peacekeeping force to ensure refugee Kosovar Albanians safe passage back home.

NATO officials haven't ruled out using the ground troops in an offensive capacity to help remove Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milosevic.

As is evident, the addition of ground troops in any conflict or war signals the onset of "real aggression" and more lost lives.

Should the United States unilaterally decide that ground forces are needed to successfully supplement a 2-month-old air campaign that has destroyed key Serbian military outposts and roused rebels from armored depots, then America will have to brace for several of its sons and daughters to return home in body bags.

Among any significant deployment of ground troops will be numerous minorities, particularly of African-American and Hispanic descent.

War provides a perfect opportunity to juxtapose the dichotomy of the lives of minorities: We paid a tremendous price to preserve the freedoms and superiority of this country, yet we still fight intrinsic battles to put ourselves on an even economic playing field, to feel as partners in stopping crime with those whose "job" is to protect and serve, to get our fair share of government contracts, to reverse discriminatory sentencing and death penalty laws. The list goes on and on.

Given our history of defense of this country, we shouldn't have to fight for full inclusion. One of the first men felled in the late-18th struggle of a 13-colony entity to usurp her British rulers was an African-American, Crispus Attacks.

Prince Hall Masons, African-American Masons affiliated with the non-religious Masonic order, fought 25,000 strong in the Battle of Bunker Hill and other key battles in the Revolutionary War. They also defended Philadelphia in the War of 1812 and saved future president Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders from Indians in the Battle of San Juan Hill during the antebellum area.

Blacks served admirably in World War II only to return home to scorn, violence and lynchings. After Franklin Roosevelt desegregated the military, Black soldiers and nurses proved their worth in World War II. Most famous among all-black units were the Tuskegee Airman. The fleet never lost a battle nor a plane.

Countless other heroic exploits in Korea, Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Kosovo and elsewhere go untold but no less appreciated. Whether the soldiers joined the military because of their patriotism, financial reasons or to escape bad environments, they serve their country and some pay the ultimate price.

Given that, it's a shame that we're still fighting for inclusion.



Racial profiling nation's dirty widespread secret

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The murder of Amadou Diallo, an unarmed black man by four police officers in the Bronx last February has now become well known throughout the world. The firing of 41 bullets at Diallo was only the most recent publicized example of police misconduct in New York City.

Black and Latino New Yorkers could easily recite the names of other prominent victims: Haitian immigrant Abner Louima, brutalized by Brooklyn police in 1997; Anthony Baez, shot to death by police when his football accidentally struck a police car; and Eleanor Bumpers, an older African-American woman gunned down by cops in her own home.

Beyond these publicized examples of police brutality is a much larger problem of racially-motivated "profiling" by law enforcement officials. In cities like New York, white cops routinely harass and stop African-Americans and Latinos without cause.

The New York Police Department's Street Crimes Unit, whose officers were responsible for the killing of Diallo, has admitted to stopping and frisking 27,000 New Yorkers in 1998 alone.

Only 4,600 of the individuals who were detained and searched were actually arrested.

Experts estimate the real number of individuals who were frisked may exceed 100,000. In effect, the cops

Along the Color Line

By Dr. Manning Marable

based their actions of "racial profiling": an officer could "reasonably suspect" a person of committing criminal acts if that individual was black or brown.

Thousands of racial minorities, most of whom have never been charged or convicted of any crime, are routinely subjected to this kind of intimidation.

According to figures from the New York City Comptroller's office, from July 1993 to June 1997, new claims of police misconduct rose by 45 percent.

During this same period, payments by the city in police brutality cases rose 38 percent. In fiscal year 1997, New York City paid out \$27.5 million to settle court damages created by police violence.

In New Jersey, the state police have practiced racial profiling for decades. Back in 1993, African-American state troopers filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, with eight of them testifying before Congress, presenting evidence of racist policies and practices by the state police.

Authorities dismissed them as "malcontents."

In 1996, New Jersey Superior Court Judge Robert E. Francis ruled that the state police practiced race-based stops at highways, violating the constitutional rights of racial minorities.

Evidence showed that black motorists were almost five times more likely to be stopped: in other words, they were guilty of "driving while black."

This February, the New Jersey State Police Superintendent Carl A. Williams generated a firestorm of criticism by making crude remarks linking racial and ethnic groups with

illicit drugs and criminality. Gov. Christie Todd Whitman jettisoned Williams, but continued to deny that her cops engaged in systemic racial profiling.

But on April 20, New Jersey Attorney General Peter G. Verniero released a comprehensive study proving all of the allegations of police misconduct. State officers had deliberately falsified information about the racial identities of drivers they had stopped to cover-up their racist actions.

On one section of New Jersey turnpike, investigators found that 34 percent of all stops Latinos and blacks. Only about 1 percent of all stops led to vehicle searches. But African-Americans and Latinos represented more than three-fourths of all searches.

Once black people are ensnared into the criminal justice system, they routinely experience the same racial profiling in the courts.

According to studies of (See Profiling, Page 18)

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