

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

100-year storm leaves mark everywhere but Westside

State and federal disaster officials are in town this week to assess the damage wrought by last week's 100-year storm, a storm that officials say caused more than \$630,000 in damages and qualifies the city for up to \$7 million in FEMA funds to restore utilities, repair damaged infrastructure and use for other necessities.

Hardest hit were the typical areas: downtown, most underpasses and the southeast portions of the town where man-made washes were supposed to lessen the amount of destruction. In several mobile home parks in the southeast, homes are still filled waist-high with mud and dirt. Some mobile homes were torn from their foundations, while others were water-logged into uninhabitability and yet lost roofs, sidings and furniture to the coasting floodwaters.

In a sad twist of irony, the Westside escaped major damage, as it always does. This, by no means, something to gloat about. The storm dramatically altered people's lives. Homeowners without homeowners' insurance will be forced to start their lives anew, some without the help of government aid. And even with state and federal funds to help, is some still won't be able to climb back to self-sufficiency anytime soon. And who's to say when the government checks will come in. Remember, we are dealing with a bureaucracy.

To what does the Westside owe its good fortune? *Who knows. Much as the rest of the city, it's ill-equipped to handle significant flooding yet it seems to escape major damage, aside from power outages or craggy, time-worn roofs that succumb to leaks. It seems the Westside does have good fortune, every 100 or so years.*

African-Americans need to be proactive about cancer

The numbers alone should spark concern among African-Americans: African-Americans are more likely to develop cancer than persons of any other color; African-American women have the highest incidence rates of lung, colon and rectum cancer and African-American men have the highest incidence of prostate, colon, rectum and lung cancer; African-American women are more likely to die of breast cancer (31.5 per 100,000) and colon and rectum cancer (20.1 per 100,000), than are women of any other racial and ethnic group; African-American men have the highest mortality of rates of colon and rectum (28 per 100,000) lung and bronchus (102 per 100,000) and prostate cancer (55 per 100,000).

Unfortunately, it often takes a personal tragedy for most African-Americans to take cancer seriously. By then, it could be too late. More than the \$50,000 it raised, the recent celebrity benefit concert for the American Cancer Society was important because a high-profile light was shed on one of the most serious problems in the black community.

The American Cancer Society deserves credit for bringing the information to the public in an entertaining manner. Sometimes, the best messages are learned through song. In between performances, the acts offered personal stories and encouragement. Let's hope the people heard and become proactive instead of reactive.



Us vs. them: The illusion of separation

Lloyd Williams

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It was recently announced that President Clinton is on a tour of many of America's poorest communities including a Native American reservation. The evening news on every television station reported that Clinton is the first President since Calvin Coolidge to visit an Indian reservation. Why is that even worth reporting? Isn't that an insult to the surviving Native Peoples?

Their forefathers were all but wiped out in wars with the white man, further exploited by presidents, who broke treaty after treaty, as they pushed the Indians further and further West. The natives were finally left to eke out an existence in the deserts on the least habitable land where nothing grows but cactus and tumbleweed. So, why would the press hail a president's visit as if it were the Second Coming of Christ?

Is Clinton offering to give the Native Americans their land back or to make amends? Is he even apologizing for this country's decimation of every Indian tribe because "they were standing in the way of progress?" That would be newsworthy. It is a national disgrace for America to have so many masses of people mired in the worst living conditions.

The United States is the world's richest country. It enjoys the world's highest standard of living. So what does the President have to offer the country's poorest?

Clinton is probably rehashing his promise of a new tomorrow at the dawn of the 21st Century speech.

Hey Bill, guess what? Keep your promises. As the native elder Black Elk once intoned, "They promised to take our land. That is the only promise they ever kept." This administration doesn't have a great track record with promises. First, Bill swore that he didn't sleep with that woman then Al Gore informed us that he had invented The Internet. What America needs is leadership to act now to ensure the physical and metaphysical well being of all its citizenry. This country's inability to translate, realistically, its technological advances and medical breakthroughs into comprehensive commonwealth benefits remains its greatest challenge.

Hillary Clinton proposed nationalized health care as soon as her husband took office. This was criticized as unworkable and communist, although many capitalist countries have successfully adopted some form of socialized medicine. Her opponents resisted the plan in the myopic 'have-versus-have nots' belief that there aren't enough resources to go around. Because the poor have somehow been deemed undeserving, a corollary rationale makes it OK to exclude them not only from health benefits but also from the "common wealth" of decent housing, fair employment and quality

education.

This us-versus-them philosophy is as primitive and outmoded as the belief in sorcery and witchcraft. How could the United States have billions of dollars, first, to bomb and, now, to rebuild Kosovo, but still be unwilling to flatten and revitalize its own ghettos?

The answer lies of course, in the false fixations of this society on race and color even though Americans, more than any other on the face of the earth, are a crossbreeding people. The purely black, white, yellow or red person is a declining myth. Americans, thus, ought to embrace eagerly the antithesis of the antiquated geographic-based racial hybrid type. What we now call white is actually pink, and in a state of reversion towards a generalized-type which is most likely of some brownish hue. Evolutionarily speaking, the world is changing very rapidly. Our continued reliance on supposedly valid, archaic racial classifications

that scarcely exist anymore may be ultimately self-defeating.

My fervent hope is with the next generation. My son was not born into the kind of world that I was, with Jim Crow and separate drinking fountains. He doesn't have to deal with many of the blatantly illogical concepts that his elders retain as deep-rooted, delusively conditioned, subconscious reflexes.

It is not easy to break loose from the patterns of the past, even when you recognize that they were based on prevalent, if total misconceptions. This is why education must be the next major industry to be developed here. Because of such technological innovations as air travel, satellites and Al Gore's Internet, the world has truly become a global village. Children born today will find it much easier to acquire accurate information, firsthand, and almost entirely outside of the realm of myths (See Williams, Page 16)

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