

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

F.A.C.T. or fiction

When does supposedly well-intentioned "civic activism" cross the line into hokey, even narcissistic self-aggrandizement? Look to F.A.C.T. for the answer.

On Monday, Fighting AIDS in Our Community Today, a nonprofit organization comprised of elected officials and health professionals, held a meeting to assuage West Las Vegas angered over several billboards touting the Westside as one of the nation's most AIDS-plagued areas.

In dispute are everything from the validity of F.A.C.T.'s figures, the way its numbers were reported, F.A.C.T.'s credibility as an organization, how will it implement a three-point program to decrease HIV and AIDS rates and increase awareness, and which entities will raise the funds that it's seeking to combat the immune-destroying virus and disease?

No one disputes the "fact" that HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in the African-American community and that resources need to be amassed and funds directed to battle the epidemic. In this case, it's not the message, but the messenger who needs to be whooped.

F.A.C.T. states that Clark County has the nation's ninth highest rate of HIV infections in the nation per capita. It further promotes that approximately 20 percent of those cases are concentrated in the 89106 area. Other tidbits: Every 45 minutes someone between ages 13 and 19 gets infected with HIV; 60 percent of all new HIV/AIDS cases in Clark County are African-American; AIDS is the No. 1 killer of black women between ages 25 and 44 — no attribution for any of this, not even a year for which the facts were reported.

To the lay person, the numbers might incite fear. But one must look closer into the F.A.C.T.'s figures. Even if the numbers are accurate, statistics are at best estimations. And if you're going to use statistics, where do the numbers come from so that people can determine how good they are?

On the handout distributed during Monday's meeting, for instance, there were sets of "facts" and a roadmap to finding a solution. What isn't there: information about F.A.C.T., where these "facts" come from, and not even a contact number for people interested in getting involved.

Here's a clearer picture of the epidemic: According to the Clark County Health District, only 22 percent of the overall 3,106 AIDS cases reported since 1982 have been African-American. In 1998, the most recent year available from the Health District's records, African-Americans comprised 23 percent of the total.

African-American HIV infection rates, which is not the same as black people who have the disease AIDS, were 26 percent of a total 2,131 cases last year.

F.A.C.T. distributed misleading information and in a harried effort to "get the word out", never bothered to hash out the numbers. HIV and AIDS cases are always reported separately, from the least common denominator of government to the Surgeon General's office. Combining the stats is a no no.

This is a point where communication between people becomes crucial. Were F.A.C.T. a true community-loving organization, it would have taken great pains to make its statistics clear, not obscure them in a dishonest effort to bulk up the numbers for more government money.

Secondly, the entire "awareness" effort seems self-serving and there's no explanation on how the group arrived at its 20 percent figure of HIV infections in the 89106 zip code, which comprises the area bordered by Rancho Drive, Lake Mead Boulevard., Main Street and Charleston Boulevard, hardly an exclusively black section of the county.

There are several notable names behind F.A.C.T., at least one of whom didn't even know about Monday's meeting. Even with the hint of credibility lent via several health professionals, F.A.C.T. seems disingenuous at best and capitalistic at worst.

Fortunately, the billboards are down and apologies, if you can call them that, have been issued.



Violence a hallmark of cultural superiority

Akwasi Evans

Special to Sentinel-Voice

After watching his son-in-law being lowered into the ground, Jim Kelley was interviewed by the media.

Kelley is the father-in-law of former Northwestern University basketball coach, Ricky Byrdson. Byrdson was murdered on July 2 by Benjamin Smith, a White supremacist who went on a racial killing spree over the 4th of July weekend.

Smith was a member of the World Church of the Creator, a White supremacist organization that teaches followers that God has changed his mind about who his chosen people are and that White people are destined to run and rule the world.

White people do run and rule the world, but it is definitely not in a godly fashion.

When Kelley was interviewed by the press about his feelings, his immediate response was, "We do not hate the murderer of my son-in-law."

But Smith hated Byrdson, even though he had never met the man. How can that be?

Well, because Byrdson's family belongs to a superior culture that forgives its enemies instead of making enemies of its allies; that believes in a God of love, not one of hate and comes from a culture that has been oppressed and understands that oppression is more cancerous to the oppressor than the oppressed.

For as long as White folks have been in America they have behaved as if they were destined to rule the western hemisphere. Ever since white Americans started importing African slaves, they have treated Black people like subhumans who could be manipulated and mistreated at the whim of even the most wimpy white person.

I contend that it is much more noble to be a slave than to be a slave holder and that cultural superiority is displayed through love, not hate.

America's founding fathers were slaveholders who practiced ethnic cleansing. They displaced the native Americans from their land and made Africans work the soil so that White men could build a society based upon democratic principles for themselves.

As we consider cultural superiority we would be remiss if we didn't contemplate morality. It is amazing to see a people who practice and preach hatred, deceit and destruction proclaiming themselves superior.

It is the height of irony for fear-ridden cowards to lay claim to cultural supremacy. African-Americans, as a whole, do not consider themselves culturally superior to anyone else. We recognize that God has granted us the ability to perform better than many others in many areas, but we attribute that to grace, not race. We know that we can

do more with less than many, but we know that divine mercy has allowed us to make silk purses out of sow's ears.

When the Honorable Elijah Muhammed, founder of the Nation of Islam in America, taught his followers that the White man was the devil, he was not teaching hatred. He was teaching his people to observe and objectify the action of White people toward other cultures, Africans in particular.

There is no more correct or concise way to define White America's historical and ongoing actions toward Blacks than devilish. Discrimination on the basis of ethnicity is evil, so is prejudging someone based upon the way he/she looks; randomly murdering people because of their cultural affiliation and, preaching and teaching cultural supremacy.

When it comes to superiority one fact seems most salient, and that is love is superior to hate. Good is superior to bad and superior people display their

preeminence through charity and humility, not cowardice and hatred.

Byrdson's family doesn't consider itself superior to the members of the World Church of the Creator, but I bet the Creator of the world considers them more acceptable servants than the self-proclaimed, satanic, cultural supremacist who sent Smith out on a raging rampage of assassination.

America's neo-nazi racists are the second lowest form of life, next to America's business and political leaders who allow these clowns to operate.

When Smith was caught by the police he was said to have committed suicide by shooting himself, three times, while driving a car. The genocidal acts of weak-minded White Americans are a testament to their destiny and they will reap what they sow.

The reality is that there is no such thing as cultural superiority. There is only (See Superiority, Page 14)

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