

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

American culture invasion infecting the global village

With Hollywood going totally insane, producing more and more movies that are sexually explicit, vulgar, violent, in bad taste, and downright filthy, how will cultures of indigenous peoples in underdeveloped countries withstand the assault on their senses?

It seems that every other month a group releases a survey or report about how western cultures are assaulting the cultures of peoples of color and peoples in developing countries.

The latest such report is the 262-page Human Development Report from the UN Development Program. It says that cultures of poor countries are under seige by an invasion of western ideas due to global economic integration.

"Globalization opens people's lives to culture and to all its creativity—and the flow of ideas and knowledge," the report says. "But the new culture carried by expanding global markets is disquieting because today's flow of culture is unbalanced, heavily weighted in one direction, from rich countries to poor."

In one sense opening the markets can benefit developing countries, providing avenues for export of their cultural goods which have always been in demand in developed countries—tourists trotting home with exotic artifacts from some far-off jungle or native village.

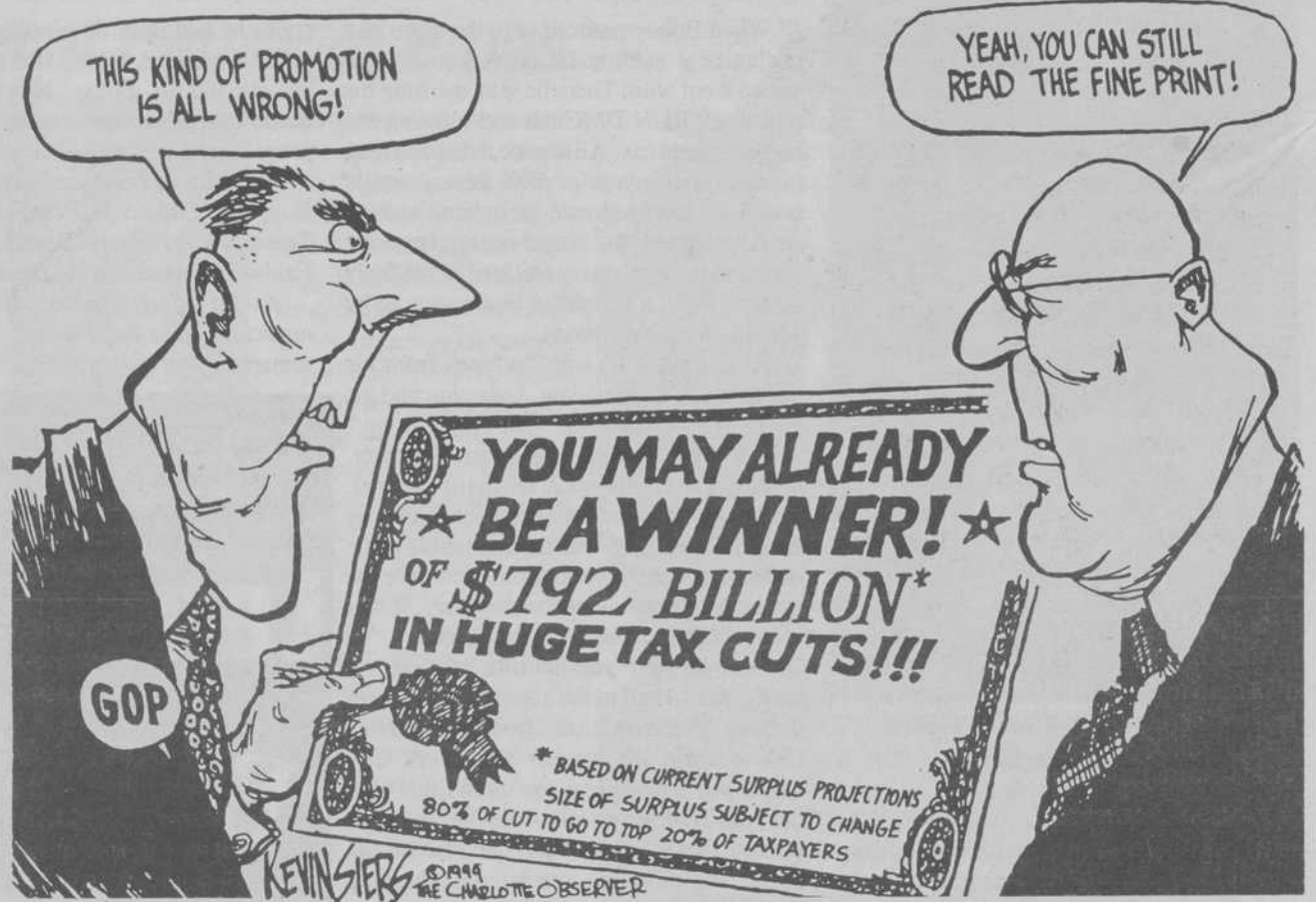
But more and more today, large investors are seizing the markets in these poor countries and exporting the cultural goods while making the producers of the artifacts virtual slave laborers in their own countries while the investors reap huge benefits from the goods.

The major danger, however, is the influx of images from U.S. movies and television shows. The report says that the largest export industry for the United States is entertainment.

CNN and the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) have infiltrated most developing nations, at times beaming images into these countries 24-hours a day.

If most of these images were of any redeeming value, it wouldn't be so bad. But much of what Hollywood is producing today are geared toward deadening the senses of the viewers to sex and violence. The result is that oftentimes there is an increase in the activities which these images suggest.

Why would a young boy in an African village aspire to be a gansta' rapper? Because he has been introduced to that concept through this cultural invasion from the west.



More hate, more need for new legislation

Special to Sentinel-Voice

I have seen evil in my life and I have always been aware of its presence when I was near it. I could feel evil in the air when I traveled to apartheid South Africa in the 1980's. It was palpable, like static electricity in the air and I was always conscious of the battle between good and evil which was going on around me. I saw evil again a few weeks ago in a little town in southern Illinois. I saw it in the eyes of the leader of the World Church of the Creator, a Christian identity, white supremacist group which claims Benjamin Smith, the man whose shooting rampage ended in the wounding and deaths of blacks, orthodox Jews and Asian Americans in Illinois and Indiana. It was to that same church that two California brothers belonged and who have been charged in the murder of a gay couple and who are thought to be behind the burnings of three synagogues in Sacramento.

Now, these hate crimes seem to be escalating and little pre-schoolers at a Los Angeles Jewish community center program have been shot it seems by another white supremacist from a different group of hate mongers. Despite the fact that we no longer read about them in newspaper headlines or see the reports on CNN, African-American and multi-racial churches are still burning, some even on the same Fourth of July week-end where Benjamin Smith carried out his killing spree, while the rest of the nation celebrated our independence. We are

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



still not free from the hate it seems.

And so the question must come how many people have to be murdered, how many children and innocents shot, how many James Byrds or Matthew Shepards have to be killed in order for our Congress to act to expand the federal hate crimes legislation?

The proposed legislation has been languishing in the halls of Congress for months and was finally passed by the Senate in late July. The Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 1999 was incorporated into the Commerce, State, Justice Appropriations bill. This modest legislation will eliminate the highly restrictive circumstances under which crimes based on race, national origin or religion can be prosecuted and extend the coverage to individuals with disabilities, women and gays and lesbians. Now it is up to the House of Representatives to pass this important legislation which is now before the House Judiciary Committee.

Clearly, toughening the laws will not legislate hate crimes away, but it will at least send a message that these crimes will not be tolerated and that we as a nation will

use every tool to eliminate them. But our work cannot stop there.

Hate groups are found in every region in this nation. Too often we write them off as a few kooks or pretend that they don't exist. Too often the actions of young men who are on the fringes of these groups' cross-burnings, spray painting, harassing of people of color in their communities—are excused as "boys being boys" or as kids who had a few too many beers.

But more and more hate groups are taking on new clothes of respectability. David Duke, once a KKK grand dragon, has run for public office and covered up some of his old rhetoric. Matt Hale, the leader of the World

Church of the Creator, dressed up and went on morning talk shows with the appearance of being unjustly accused, and claiming that Benjamin Smith had no longer been associated with his group, when only weeks before he had given Ben Smith his group's highest prize and made him his assistant. Today's hate groups not only recruit in beer joints and back woods, but they use the Internet and look for lonely young men on college campuses.

So our nation's work against hate crimes must begin with law enforcement and end in our schools, our communities and our homes. We must work hard to end the hate, to stop the scape-goating and blaming of others in a variety of ways. Ending the hate must be a priority for us all and we can begin by letting our congresspersons know where we stand on the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

(NOTE: You can write your congressperson at U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515)

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