

COMMENTARY

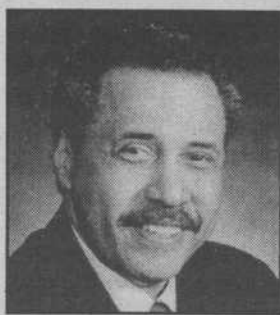
Nation's mental health poor

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

What has become of a nation where definable demographic groups are hell-bent on engaging in self-destructive behavior? In cities throughout this nation blacks under 30 years of age are killing each other in record numbers. The same holds true for brown youths in urban core areas everywhere in this country. Also, there are middle-aged white males "goose-stepping" across mountain ridges in Idaho and Utah. Inward breeding in this small gene pool is guaranteed to produce another generations of "nuts."

To understand what we may become as a nation, we first must understand what is causing groups to exhibit negative and destructive behavior. Could the answer be that we as a society feel that the values of trust, respect and sense of personal responsibility are no longer important? Given our behavior, the foregoing listed values appear to have been supplanted with valueless beliefs that can be characterized as greed, neglect and fanciful visions of domination.

I also believe that the vast percentage of violent acts occurring today stem from some misguided interpretation of Amendment II of the U.S. Constitution. You know, the amendment that allows crazy black and brown youths to possess handguns that are used to kill human beings who, in the vast



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majority of cases, are persons they know, and at the same time allows insane whites to possess AK47s under the guise of owning "sporting rifles."

Deeper examination of these acts of violence may reveal that the acts are a true reflection of our mental health as a nation, or more correctly, the psychological bent of a

growing number of Americans. Even for those of us who like to delude ourselves with the perception that we are rational and well adjusted, the pressure of keeping our "cool" in a rapidly changing society is enormous. Self-induced sociological trauma in living and competing in a multi-ethnic, racially mixed culture; witnessing the perceived increase in societal promiscuity; more government intervention in our lives, and dealing with technological advancement in seemingly uncertain economic times have had an accumulative and potentially devastating impact on population groups in our society.

This pressure is manifested as frustration or fear, based on a sense that we are incapable of controlling our individual destinies and are no longer able to influence the environment in which we must interact. Such frustration and fear make it difficult for our rational minds to suppress our latent primal instinct to strike out against individuals, institutions and/or physical

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Archie Bunker lives!

By Richard Muhammad
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Actor Carroll O'Connor was remembered recently in a Roman Catholic funeral mass in Los Angeles. Friends and loved ones paid tribute to the veteran actor who died days earlier of a heart attack. He was 76.

While Mr. O'Connor is gone, a role he played remains with us, not only because of his portrayal of TV character "Archie Bunker" in "All In The Family" but also because the 1970s sitcom icon is part of America's twisted collective psyche.

"Archie Bunker" is the embodiment of America's love affair with racism and penchant for toning down its affects. Mainly referred to as a "lovable bigot" by reporters and media analysts, he wasn't lovable at all. He was another reminder that problems of race and status aren't to be taken too seriously in America.

The ability to laugh at his crude insults, racist jokes and ignorant expressions was an escape valve.

It was a chance for White

America to collectively excuse the views and hearts of those it loved: fathers, uncle, brothers, cousins, dock workers, butchers, bakers, cabbies, judges, police officers, doctors and bank presidents.

"Archie" was supposed to be a caricature for eight seasons during its CBS network run—and possibly forever in syndication. But like the minstrel shows and Blackface of yesteryear and the shuffling of "Steppin' Fetchit," "Archie Bunker" was much more than an on-screen character. He was proof that racism really isn't a dangerous thing. It might be embarrassing, or unsettling, but never dangerous.

Nothing is ever that bad for Blacks—not slavery, not Jim Crow, not segregation, not racial profiling, not police abuse or a failed drug war.

"Archie Bunker" was a harbinger of later cries of reverse discrimination from White males, who control the majority of America's political, economic and media power. He was the forefather of those who bemoan feeling

besieged by political correctness because they couldn't tell the old nigger jokes, limit membership at the country club or keep Blacks out of their neighborhoods.

His was the subtle, or not so subtle, racism that recently stirred a racial stew in Chicago, when White, suburban Catholic league schools rejected playing a Black parish on the city's south side because of safety concerns.

"Archie" was puffy, gray-haired and balding—kinda like a pale koala bear. He was something to laugh at, like the uncle, father, boss, or teacher whose views seemed outdated but who really wasn't a threat.

After all, "Archie" never lynched anyone, burned crosses on their lawns, or led a mob pursuing a Black person down a street. "Archie" didn't lead the Queens, N.Y., mob that chased Michael Griffith to his death in 1986. Nor did he lead the group that killed Black teen Yusef Hawkins in Bensonhurst, N.Y.

"Archie" was an old guy (See Bunker, Page 15)

Character counts, but how much?

By Emory Curtis
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In looking 50 years backward, I've seen the general mores of this country change drastically. An Atlanta Journal-Constitution report on how the South's Bible Belt is catching up with the rest of the country in the ratio of couples cohabitating without benefit of a legal marriage brought it to my mind.

Years ago my sister and her friends, all of whom were public school teachers in San Antonio, Texas, a liberal city for the South, were afraid to attend public dances where the big bands such as Ellington, Basie, Lunceford and Erskine Hawkins were playing.

As much as they wanted to attend, they didn't because they were afraid it would be viewed as a moral transgression that could cause their contract to be dropped. At the time, Southern public school teachers didn't get great pay but they were highly respected in the Black community.

On the job and in the community, schoolteachers were expected to conduct themselves in a respectful man-

ner, and, like preachers, were unofficially looked upon as the moral norm setters of the community. On the school grounds, from a distance, one could tell the difference between a schoolteacher and a custodian or cafeteria worker by their dress.

Those days are gone; we now look at teachers as another day worker. Off the job, they are free to be as immoral as we are. I'm not sure that Black communities are better off with that change.

In those long ago days, cohabitation was seldom the topic of discussion (gossip) at any level; the same is true now, for opposite reasons. At that time cohabitation was frowned upon at any level and completely verboten for schoolteachers; as a result, even a hint of it was a topic of conversation (gossip). Now, cohabitation is common and doesn't rise to gossip level.

From the AJC report on cohabitation in the southern states, unmarried couples living together is so common in many southern cities that it is below the gossip radar screen. That makes them even with the rest of the country where it is no longer a given when

couples live together.

Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and Seattle are the three leading large cities in terms of the number of unmarried couples in the 2000 Census. Among the Southern states, Florida has the highest proportion of unmarried couples. In nine Southern states the number of unmarried couples within their borders more than doubled during the 1990s.

Interestingly, this increase in cohabitation mostly occurred at opposite ends of the age and economic spectrums.

Many young people all over this country care less whether the couples they know have a marriage license rolled up in a dresser drawer or not. At the other end of the scale, many senior citizens shack up because estates are too complicated to easily join. They have too many assets to marry.

On the other hand, there are others, young and old, in the opposite boat. They shack up because they don't have the money to spend (waste) on a marriage.

With southern states joining the crowd, the country's move toward cohabitation at

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Generation gap splits Black America

By Lee Hubbard
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Today's Black youth in their early 20s grew up listening to the lyrics of Snoop Doggy Dogg, Tupac Shakur and A Tribe Called Quest, while their parents grew up listening to the likes of The Whispers, Anita Baker or Marvin Gaye.

Parents of today's youth marched for civil rights, and began flocking to the polls for Democratic Party candidates in the 1970s and 1980s. Today's Black youth rally against police brutality, but they have no major calling like Blacks of the past.

These differences are apparent in the new study, "Diverging Generations: The Transformation of African-American Policy Views," conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington, D.C., based Black think tank.

"This report will give us a better idea of what younger African-Americans are thinking and how their views might shape future public policies and political outcomes," said Eddie N. Williams, president of the Joint Center.

The report examined the divergence in Black opinion between younger and older Blacks in regards to political participation, education, the criminal justice system, the environment, and civic participation. It found the differences aren't that much, but some of the views between older and younger Blacks can be as wide as a canyon.

Among non-voters, Black young adults (18-25) were six times (24 percent vs. 4 percent) more likely than those ages 51 to 64 to say that the lack of good candidates is

a reason not to vote, and eight times (32 percent vs. 4 percent) more likely to say that politicians do not keep promises. Older Blacks are committed politically to the Democratic Party and its ideals, while younger Blacks aged 26-35, close to a third, identify themselves as political independents.

While this political independence is a good thing to some, it is troubling to some political analysts, like David Bositis, a researcher with the Joint Center. He said political independents tend to be less partisan than Democrats or Republicans, and they tend not to vote as frequently as people who are invested into political parties. As a result, Blacks who are independent do not vote as much.

"Strong political partisans vote, while weak partisans don't," said Bositis. "That means that younger Blacks vote much less than older Blacks, and that is something to be concerned about."

Younger Blacks views tend to differ on the issue of education and support for public financed school vouchers, which would go to parents to send their children to the school, public or private, of their choice. The survey stated Blacks under 50 are much more likely to support school vouchers than Blacks over 50.

Thirty is the median age for Black Americans in America, compared to 38, which is the median age for the White population in America, so the gap between younger and older gaps will probably widen as time goes on. While generational differences (See Generation, Page 14)