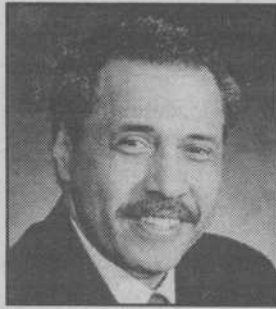


COMMENTARY

Consequences of good and bad words

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The consequence for a high-ranking white college official of using a phrase that we have all heard and most of us have used to characterize the propensity of some of our people not to observe the principle of etiquette of being punctual, was that he was forced to resign.



LOUIE OVERSTREET

Good words can motivate humanity to high callings. Back in 1961, President Kennedy challenged Americans to provide and concentrate the human and capital resources needed to send a crew to the moon and safely back to Earth before the end of the decade. His good words resulted in astronauts Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins journeying to and from the moon in July of 1969. For a period of time the good words of Martin Luther King urging Americans to value content of character more than the color of a person's skin caused a majority of Americans to practice a new found sense of fairness.

Just as good words can change things for the better, bad words are capable of degrading, enslaving, imprisoning and eliminating masses of humanity. Throughout recorded history persons of all hues and religious faiths have been the victims of inhumane treatment and racial and religious genocide. So one of the things (I will share three other tips with you later) we as Afri-

can-Americans can do is stop crippling our minds with the mistaken belief that we are the only people in the world that have ever "caught Hell."

What about the treatment the first Americans received? Do you remember being taught the history lesson that the United States, founded by people of English descent, had

the suggested divine right to expand from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean in order to manifest its destiny? However, in order to accomplish the mass colonization of a land already occupied, words had to be used to have fair-minded people to accept the virtual annihilation of a race of people. The phrase that became the rallying cry was, "the only good Indian is a dead Indian." Since Indians chose to fight rather than to be enslaved, that's where we came in with our constitutionally conferred status of being "3/5 human" for voting purposes of white males.

The practice of genocide against humanity is not limited to being an interracial phenomenon, it has also been an intraracial practice as well. Presently, people of Great Britain are killing each other over governing and religious differences. However, what is now taking place in Northern Ireland pales in comparison to what took place in Germany during the 1930s when bad words were used to first ostracize
(See Consequences, Page 13)

AIDS ultimate global pest control agent

By C.D. Ellison
Special to Sentinel-Voice

On a recent Sunday afternoon, Moms threw words already languishing at the tip of my coffee-singed tongue.

"When is that race conference in South Africa?"

"It's already happening," I swallowed another swig of caffeine salivation

"Oh...whole lot of talk about reparations, right? That's why Bush wasn't all that hot about it, huh?"

"Yeah-whole lot of talk," as we speed read a *Washington Post* Op-Ed tale of post-apartheid South Africa's Northwest Province where 23 percent of adults are HIV-infected. "Damn-Moms, check this out. You know about a fifth of South Africa's population carries the AIDS virus?"

"Mmm hmm. I know all about it. With all that talk about reparations, will there be enough of us around to even get any?"

As their populations dramatically dip into stagnation, a staggering 25 million Africans are infected with HIV, a slow, grueling, tormenting death expecting to reach its

end in eight years for most who carry it. Despite the fact African-Americans represent only 16 percent of the U.S. population, they disproportionately claim 45 percent of the nearly 650,000 American AIDS cases reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). That's an awful lot of brothers and sisters falling victim to a disease with origins disputed to this day.

I became lost on what lost reparations arguments would do for an entire people losing their war with a blitzkrieg-fashioned immune system killer compared to the ravaging Black Plague of the 14th Century. At that point, I couldn't hold out any longer. A conference on World Racism would only serve full purpose if it discussed the survival of an entire people hanging in the most delicate, unimaginable balance. And I wondered why Boyd Graves wasn't there, even though his presence would seem like the perfect intervention to overhaul another hot-air balloon blasted talk on race in dire need of it.

Unbeknownst to her, Moms' one-liner rang many

bells of wisdom in it. What's more important: hustling a global shakedown from Western governments who have no intention to bite? Or actively addressing how best to combat a medical crisis of species extinction potential? Enter Dr. Graves...

Though unseen, one can even smell the incurable rancor lynching the vocal chords of Boyd Graves. His bitterness permeates the digital, pin-drop air of long distance between he and his listener-as thick as his anger is an unfortunate stench of sadness imposed by hard times and hard faith. It is the voice of a man chiseled by struggle and the fate-driven jackhammers of inevitability.

Boyd Graves has AIDS.

"I feel like an American Mandela, waiting for the cavalry," bemoans Graves. If his last name is any indication of his condition, then Dr. Boyd Graves-as he is known in many circles-is no stranger to the soul's joust with pain. Pain for Graves is a braving of merciless, gritty elements striking every muscle, vein and cerebral reflex absent
(See AIDS, Page 15)

Mfume: Blacks on TV trumps educating kids

By Emory Curtis
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Here's a question for you. For us, is the paucity of Black faces on network television in prime time a problem that ranks with public school problems that has our sixth graders performing at fourth grade levels?

To us, our children haunting the bottom of school academic performance statistics is much more significant than whether a network adds or drops a show with a Black or two in a leading role.

Amazingly, Kweisi Mfume, president and CEO of the NAACP, sees it differently.

Mfume has shown how he ranks those problems. For three years and running, Mfume has made leading roles for Blacks on national television a key plank of the NAACP's program.

During that same time period, the NAACP national office uttered not a word relative to our children's miseducation in public schools. That education problem didn't just recently come up, nor is it a localized problem. It is a national problem that has been around our neck

for years and years. Our national leaders have known about it and have failed to publicly acknowledge it.

Last year's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) test was given to 240,000 students. Thirty-four percent of White fourth graders performed at grade level, while only 5 percent of Black fourth graders reached that level.

In other words, nationally, a little over one out of three White fourth graders were at grade level; only one out of 20 Black fourth graders were at grade level.

The NAEP is this country's gauge of public school academic achievement across the states. NAEP testees are put into four categories: "advanced," "proficient," "basic," and "below basic." The last term, "below basic," means the student is not ready for the next grade.

In California, three out of four Black fourth and eighth graders and two out of three Latino fourth and eighth graders were in the "below basic" category. It was about like that eight years ago.

In this knowledge-based economy, that's a blooming

disaster. What are those youngsters who will leave school without a real eighth grade education going to do to make an honest living?

And, do our leaders, such as Mfume, give a damn?

This nation's public education system's goal is to deliver education to the nation's young, including our young. Historically, through the NAACP, we have fought many legal battles to erase race-based barriers to that goal.

The goal is still ahead. Our children are still mostly grouped on the bottom of nearly every education statistic that means anything positive.

Plainly, the system is leaving us behind. It is up to our leaders and organizations to publicly make that point and to marshal us into a force to correct the imbalances that prevent an equal delivery of education by public schools.

Education is a front-burner issue in every state. Nationally, there is dissatisfaction with the public school system. Even top K-12 schools in the U.S. are not producing the quality of students they
(See Education, Page 14)

Boycotts easy, but effectiveness questioned

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Where will it all end? A better question is "Where should it all end?" Some folks think boycotts should end when they as individuals get what they want from the deal. Others, including myself, think they should end when Black people, collectively, gain the reciprocity we deserve from the marketplace, from our tax dollars, and from the corporate sector, which reaps huge benefits from our consumer dollars. Now, here is the wrinkle we often miss and one that I constantly promote when it comes to economic sanctions. While we are boycotting, we should also be doing something positive for ourselves with the dollars we withhold from others.

Let's look at the hotel boycott currently being conducted by the NAACP. The hotel is accused of discriminatory behavior against Black patrons. The NAACP protested and called for a boycott against the hotel. What has to happen for the boycott to end? My guess is that an apology will be sought, more jobs for Black people will be the order of the day, and don't forget about the diversity training they will need to take. Throw in some of the other items on the usual laundry list of Black demands and the boycott will be over. We will then return to our meetings and reveling in that same hotel, paying for their chicken dinners as we continue to discuss our economic plight and how unfair we are being treated.

Instead of and in addition to using our valuable time and resources to organize, promote, and encourage building our own

hotels, we often get so deeply involved in "hurting" others, about their own stuff, that we overlook what is more important. When it comes to economic empowerment, we cannot rely alone on the largess of others. And we cannot for a moment think that getting mad and picketing and boycotting merely for apologies and other superfluous concessions, although those are good starting points, will take us where we need to go. Ownership and control are the keys to economic empowerment in this country.

As I wrote in a message to our people on the Internet, I hope everyone who reads this will pass it on to someone in control at the NAACP-any NAACP chapter. If we could finally do what Tony Brown promoted over a decade ago, that is, forego our meetings in the hotels owned by everyone else and pool that revenue to begin investing in and building our own hotels, it would be a true blessing and an outstanding act of stewardship. In addition, if the NAACP leadership would follow the examples Mabra Holeyfield in Memphis, Donnell Thompson in Norfolk, and Donahue Peebles in Miami, and move to build hotels rather than only picket them we would truly be on the road to true freedom.

During one of the national Black town hall meetings organized by Tavis Smiley and Tom Joyner, Brother Kweisi Mfume, the NAACP's president and CEO, said Black people need a plan. Well, not only plans but also actual working models are
(See Boycotts, Page 15)