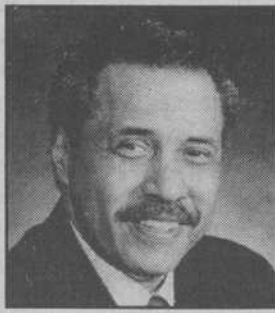


COMMENTARY

# Race a factor in many United States wars

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

What will be the similarities and differences between our nation's avowed war against present day terrorists, the war on drugs, the war on poverty in the 1960s, as well as the past Indian and Civil wars?



LOUIE OVERSTREET

The most obvious similarity is that in each of the five wars listed, race was, or is a precipitating factor. The most obvious difference is that in four of the wars, the victims were persons of color and the perpetrators were white. The war that will be waged is the result of the fact that the vast majority of the victims are white and the perpetrators are persons of color.

Readers, I can hear you saying, man, Overstreet forgot all about Grenada (1983), Panama (1989) and Haiti (1995). No, I did not. These were not wars but merely military exercises to get rid of an airport built by Castro on an island with less than 100,000 people; a drug dealing former friend of the United States, and a dictator. In the overall scheme of world domination, these are "small potatoes."

Which leads to the question: how will religion (race) "color" our nation's response to a clear and present danger to our way of life?

To answer this question, we first must understand the history of the treatment of persons of color in this country by the dominant racial group and any lingering feelings of guilt they experience. Within the borders of the United States, red people have been slaughtered, black people enslaved, yellow people interned and brown people killed crossing the border between Mexico and the United States.

It is clear our elected leaders are going to great lengths not to make the war against terrorism a religious (race) campaign. This is quite a different approach and attitude from that which exists when persons of color are oppressed within the borders of the United States. The oppression of people within our nation's borders is a much different proposition than fighting people throughout the world in 8 to 10 different countries that are populated by a billion people of the same religion. Thus, in order to successfully prosecute a worldwide war against terrorism, it must be demonstrated—regardless of history to the contrary—that in the present day United States we "treat our Muslim (persons of color) citizens with respect."

After addressing the race factor in wars (See Overstreet, Page 18)

# Mr. President, please, act like the president

By Roland S. Martin  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In the precious hours and days after the horrible tragedy in Washington and New York, I must admit it was a pleasant sight to see President George W. Bush put forth a strong and bold front.

The devastating attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were so horrendous that the only thing Americans seemed as if we could depend on was strength from the commander-in-chief, who not only must be the face of America to the world, but he (and I hope one day she) must also act as the healer-in-chief.

Although nine months into his presidency, Bush's strong and measured words in the aftermath of seeking justice against the terrorists clearly said that his view was consistent with that of what other Americans were saying.

"Make no mistake. The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts," he said hours after two planes

crashed in the World Trade Center and another into the Pentagon on Sept. 11.

Three days later at the National Prayer and Remembrance service, Bush issued a compassionate speech, as well as a matter-of-fact and chilling statement: "This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing."

But as the days progressed and the investigation began to result in arrests and more and more information about the hijackers, the language of the president began to take a turn for the worse.

Sept. 15: "We're going to meet and deliberate and discuss—but there's no question about it, this act will not stand; we will find those who did it; we will smoke them out of their holes; we will get them to justice. We will not only deal with those who dare attack America, we will deal with those who harbor them and feed them and house them."

The feelings went from disturbed to appalling on Sept. 17 as I witnessed a president, a native of my beloved Texas, lean back in his leather recliner and proudly say that he wanted terrorist Osama bin Laden, the most wanted man in the world, "dead or alive."

"Did he just say what I think he said?" I asked myself. It only took a flick of the remote from CNN to Fox News for that question to be answered.

There is little doubt that a long and extensive war against bin Laden and terrorists in general will result in either his death or capture, but it still was crass and unsatisfactory for such a statement to roll off the tongue of the president of the United States.

It seems with each passing day the president's attitude is reverts back to the trademark cocky and arrogant attitude evident at times during his presidential campaign.

(See Bush, Page 18)

# Blacks show different type of Americana's patriotism

By Dr. Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The recent catastrophe perpetrated by elements in the Middle East has conjured up the image of Osama bin Laden as evil and the war against him as a just one, provoking an outpouring of patriotism—even super-patriotism-in America.

It is understandable to send a message that America has not been conquered by this despicable act by returning fire with patriotic symbols. But to match the radicalism of the act of aggression against the country with an internal radicalism may not be helpful and may even be destructive.

In any crisis such as this, fascists raise their ugly heads; with the threat of fascism, the restriction on individual liberties becomes an issue. In some places officials are busily locking down America and instituting more strenuous security procedures in areas that have no apparent relationship to terrorism. The argument is being made that there is public support, since many would approve of some

limitations on their liberties if it meant that 1) they would have greater security and 2) if American leadership could then react to the threat more effectively.

But where do you stop? There is talk about removing the restrictions on computer spying, on telephone intercepts, on asking for personal identification and limiting travel and movement, much of which could have a new racial impact.

Super-patriotism is also dangerous because many of the participants are ultra-nationalists bent on using the moment of crisis to enhance their racial privilege—in other words, to more sharply define the line of separation between who they believe is a "real" American and who is not. They seek to use the legitimacy of the moment to punish those they believe are guilty of transgressions—the "un-real" Americans.

The message in hyper-Americanism has always been that the "real" Americans are at least White (even if they arrived yesterday), and all others were suspect.

Some of the super-patriotic emotionalism is being played out around how people look. At least one American from India has been killed in Arizona, mistaken for an Arab. So people who look like they are from the Middle East are being killed, maimed and threatened by the "real" Americans, even though they may be legal citizens.

The racism coming out is part of a misguided xenophobia that equates the enemy with race, not with a political problem that needs solving, the source of which is located in the policies pursued by leaders. To the extent that American policy has often lined up against Middle Eastern Arab interests, it has enhanced the racial aspect of the problem. Therefore, George W. Bush took a very positive step when he recently visited a Washington, D.C. mosque and asked Americans not racialize this crisis.

Adding to the hyper-Americanism feeding the super-patriotism is the sense of paranoia among conservative talk show hosts. I head one

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# Witch hunt not needed to find, punish terrorists

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Federal investigators had barely begun to sift through the bomb rubble of the Oklahoma City federal building in April 1995 for physical evidence and clues. They had not interviewed survivors or eyewitnesses. They named no suspects and issued no official statement about motives for the bombing.

Yet, an expert on CBS claimed that the bombing had "a Middle Eastern trait." The stampede was on. The rest of the TV networks blared reports that "two men of Middle Eastern appearance" were being sought. As the death toll climbed, the network talking heads relentlessly slammed home the message that Middle Eastern crazies had finally struck terror in America's heartland. The predictable happened. By week's end, according to the Council on American-Islamic Relations, there were more than 200 physical and verbal attacks against American Muslims, which included the burning of three Islamic mosques and community centers.

A full-blown domestic, anti-Muslim witch-hunt was brewing. Fortunately President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno did not rush to judgment and scapegoat Arabs. The swift arrest of Timothy McVeigh squelched the building mob hysteria against them.

But it didn't squelch-it propelled Clinton's 1996 Antiterrorism Act, which

civil rights and civil liberties groups had waged a protracted battle against, through Congress. The law gave the FBI broad power to infiltrate groups, quash fundraising by foreigners, monitor airline travel, seize motel and hotel records and trash due process by permitting the admission of secret evidence to expel immigrants. The implication being that present and future attacks would likely be launched by those with an Arab name and face rather than by men like McVeigh.

President Bush, like Clinton, in his first public words on the apocalyptic devastation of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon attacks did not reflexively finger-point at Arab terrorists. But his tough-talk pledge to mount a worldwide hunt for the murderous culprits seemed an open signal that the prime targets of the hunt will be Arab terrorists. The media quickly took the cue and ladled out to a shell-shocked public PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, and especially, Saudi terrorist Osama bin Laden as prime suspects.

The grotesque attack may well have been orchestrated by one of the smorgasbord of Islamic fundamentalist Israel and U.S. hating terrorist groups who would gleefully bring mass destruction to U.S. cities. This has stirred fresh tremors that a new wave of Arab-American bashing could be in the making. If so, the blame for that must fall on the media's wrong-headed

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