

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Praise overdue

It started with Crispus Attacks during America's colonial fight for independence from Mother England birth in the colonial era and it's continued in the 200-plus years of this nation's independence, including the present military conflict in Afghanistan: Blacks go to boot camp, train, suit up in military garb, travel to all parts of the world, soldier, fight and die, all in the name of protecting America, its allies and its interests.

Although Blacks have fought in every American military campaign since the Revolutionary War, their contributions have largely been overlooked, relegated, ignored or forgotten.

Only through the foresight of enlightened individuals do their stories ever get told. Even then, the stories are often relayed in a bland, after-the-fact style that fails to capture the essence of the black military contribution, of the struggles Blacks endured to get the chance to fight and die for their country, of the dangers they faced in combat—even from other Americans—and the indignities they suffered upon returning home.

Chief among those indignities is the treatment of African-American veterans. Granted, America does a poor job overall of embracing its sons and daughters who risked life and limb to ensure its sovereignty. On top of the difference, black veterans must deal with pernicious racism, which reveals itself in a variety of forms—racial profiling, redlining, employment bias, police brutality, stereotyping, unlawful searches and seizures and other forms of subjugation affiliated with racism.

When weighed against the sacrifices they made to protect America, their suffering is utterly incongruous. No matter how well meaning, events honoring their contributions can't fully undo the hurt many of them feel at being slighted. In fact, there is no salve, only temporary respite from the pain. But that doesn't mean America shouldn't take every chance it gets to heap praise upon its sons and daughters of color, as was done recently with a breakfast to honor black veterans.

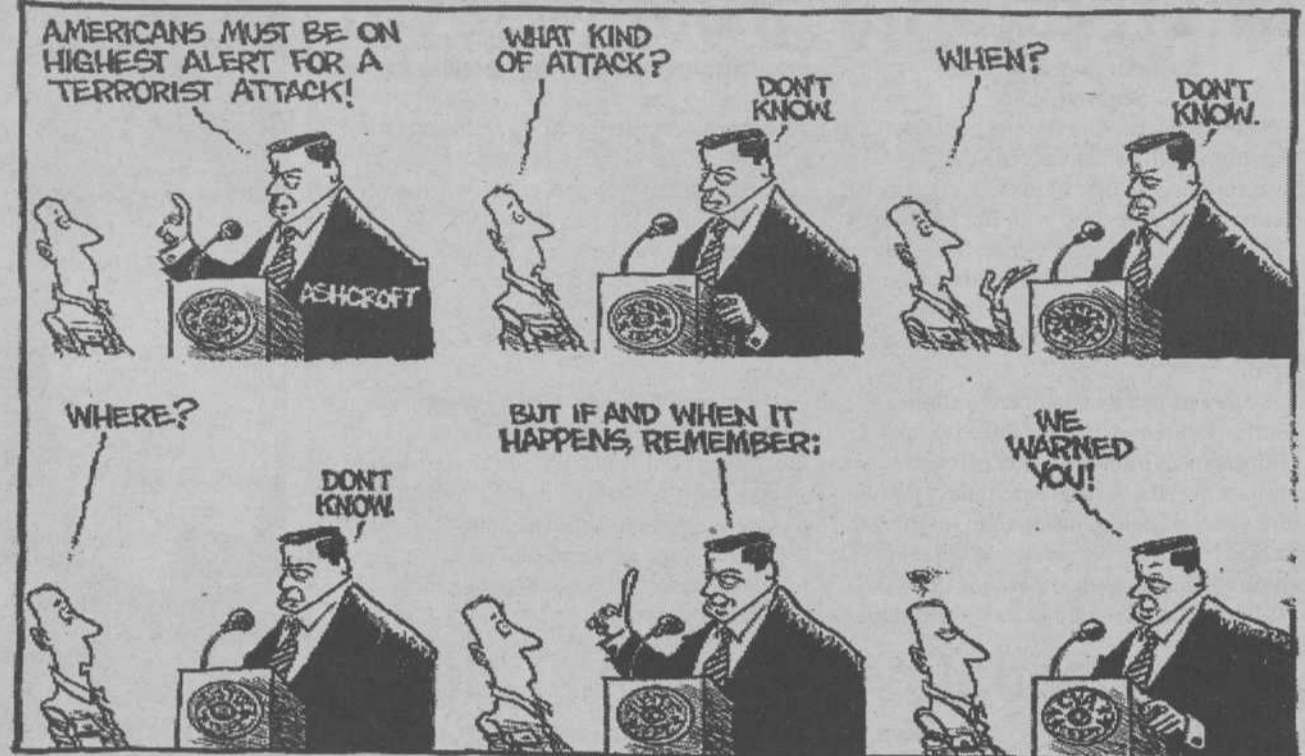
What is does mean is that we should not only seek to honor the contributions of black veterans of the past but work to make sure that future black veterans aren't subjected to the same kind of disparate treatment.

For sale: Mayor's job

From New York City comes more ammunition for political watchdogs who say that proponents of America's election system should abandon any pretext of it being fair and open and admit that money buys political office.

Case in point: Republican Michael Bloomberg, the new mayor of New York City. Bloomberg spent \$50 million of his own money the campaign to succeed Rudolph Guiliani. Guiliani's endorsement, combined with the money, helped the billionaire media mogul overcome a wide deficit to narrowly defeat Democratic opponent Mark Green. Green shelled out \$12 million, making this the most expensive mayoral race in U.S. history according to the citizen lobbying group Common Cause.

All this only serves to undermine faith in the American political system. Were Joe Schmo interested in the race, he would have quickly priced out of contention. While the Bloomberg-Green race is an extreme example of capitalism politicized, examples exist at nearly every level of government. Take our own City Council, where incumbents amassed war chests in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, undoubtedly scaring off challengers and robbing voters of a chance to hear divergent views. Sadly, state and federal lawmakers choose to do little to rein in campaign spending. Debates over campaign finance reform typically produce little, leaving us with the same political system, where money buys offices.



One needed economic stimulus, the needy

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's now clear that the American economy was headed for a recession even before the terrorist attacks of September 11. But surely the suddenness and sharpness of that descent was intensified by those atrocities.

Part of the evidence can be seen in the fact that not only are such key economic indicators as employment, production, profits, and incomes falling, but their decline has accelerated markedly. Unemployment is now at 5.4 percent, up from 4.9 percent for September—the biggest monthly increase since the recession of 1980. In mid-2000 the national unemployment rate was just 3.9 percent.


In human terms that means that businesses reported 415,000 jobs were cut during October. Overall, a total of 7.7 million people are now out of work. Rates for every major demographic group—adult men and women, teens, whites, blacks, and Hispanics—rose significantly.

Unemployment among Hispanics is now at 6.4 percent, up from 5.6 percent a year ago. African-Americans sustained a full 1 percentage point increase in their unemployment rate in October alone, pushing it, at 9.7 percent, almost back to double-digit levels. It was only a year ago that the black employment had fallen to a 50-year record low of 7.2 percent.

Such sectors of the workplace as the travel and tourism industry have been swamped by layoffs, and such cities as New Orleans, Las Vegas and New York are facing immediate futures that are even more alarming the over-

To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price
President
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all national picture.

Equally worrisome, economist Bill Cheyenne, of John Hancock Financial Services, told the *Washington Post* that this bad news isn't the worst of it. "The economy could easily be shedding 200,000 to 300,000 jobs a month for the next 3 to 4 months, and a 6-percent unemployment rate by the New Year seems very possible right now."

These facts and these prospects are why the House of Representatives' top-down approach to stimulating the economy—the \$99-billion bill they recently passed, which mainly gave tax breaks to corporations and those at the top of the income scale—was so outrageous.

Those provisions would give the top five percent of taxpayers a total of \$15.3 billion, while taxpayers in the bottom 80 percent who missed out on this year's tax rebate would be given a total of \$13.5 billion.

Yet, Americans who are most likely to face a drop in income from the loss of a job are, guess what, in the bottom 80 percent, not the top five percent.

Senate Democrats have vowed to push through their own plan that gives greater benefits to lower-income tax-

payers and those who've lost their jobs.

The passage of a more inclusive stimulus package can't come too soon. For one thing, what the Senate must do is repair the gaps and tears in the social safety net so that it can effectively play its historical role in stabilizing economic demand during a recession, ignoring that now could lead to catastrophe.

The Great Depression underscored in dramatic fashion that a social safety net was needed not only out of compassion for individuals but to protect the economic demand which is the underpinning of the whole society's stability.

Consumers will spend only when they have money and confidence in a secure economic present and future. Companies will invest and

hire workers only when they have customers. That meant protecting middle- and low-income Americans from drops in income due to job losses via programs—unemployment insurance, a hard-earned tax rebate, or welfare—that can keep them spending in order to maintain a stable demand for products, and thus, a stable economy.

The need to continue this bundle of protections—to help individuals and to help the society as a whole—couldn't be more poignantly apparent.

For example, in Louisiana now less than one-fourth of unemployed workers are eligible to receive unemployment insurance. That circumstance, which is among the worst of all the states, must be corrected.

And the earlier tax cuts that shrank the federal surplus bypassed 34 million low- and moderate-wage earners who earned too little to qualify for the rebate checks sent out last summer. That must be corrected.

And: the five-year term limits imposed by the 1996 Welfare act will soon be expiring, leaving an uncertain (See Stimulus, Page 14)

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