

COMMENTARY

Inconsistent compassion

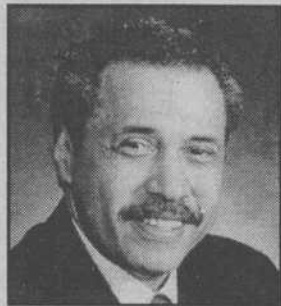
By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Past and present international, national and local events graphically illustrate how inconsistent we can be when it comes to exhibiting compassion for human conditions.

For example, upon winning WWII, we as a nation spent billions under the Marshall Plan rebuilding European nations we defeated in the war. Yet, a couple decades later in our own country, we gave up on fighting a war against poverty. We know that we lost nearly 310,000 American lives fighting the war in Europe and Asia. We do not know how many lives we lose each year to the condition of poverty.

In present day America, our federal government's ill-defined and inconsistent foreign policy objectives in different regions of the world- the media now representing the fourth branch of government- and technology enjoying sacred cow status in our society are contributing factors to why death can be exploited and misery disregarded in our society.

Such inconsistency manifests itself in a number of ways. However, the one consistent manner in which it is manifested is under the guise of patriotism- the loss of life will be politically and commercially abused. Individuals as well as organizations that



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labor without fanfare to preserve the intrinsic values of death with dignity, the right to personal memories, and privacy, are no match for the antics of institutional exploiters.

On the one hand, an atmosphere is created where death can be exploited by eulogizing it in terms of patriotic sacrifices, while at the same time, the daily misery experienced by the permanent underclass in our country continues to be almost totally disregarded.

While I share in our nation's grief over the loss of life resulting from the World Trade Center event, I also recognize there is a gross inconsistency in the compassion we are exhibiting over the plight of these victims and that of the homeless in our society.

As noted, the ability of the federal government and media to control the national agenda through the use of technology can create gross inconsistencies in what we as citizens feel about the plight of others. If you doubt me, question yourself regarding how you feel about the publicized victims of the New York tragedy, with your feelings about the hundreds of people living on the street at the corner of Foremaster and Main Streets in downtown Las Vegas. I bet you feel compassion for one group of human beings and disdain for other the group

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We must evict Jim Crow from AU fraternity row

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

While there was predictable outrage recently over White fraternity students making a fool of themselves at Auburn University in Alabama and the University of Mississippi, the racially insensitive incidents raise fundamental questions about what we should be doing in and out of school to prevent that kind of obnoxious conduct.

The idea that White university students, especially in the era of supposed racial harmony as a result of the ongoing war in Afghanistan, could think it's okay to simulate a lynching, wear KKK robes and hold a gun to the head of a cotton-picking African-American is reprehensible. What's even more reprehensible is the kind of education and training those students received-or did not receive-before they set foot on a college campus.

Let's start in the home. In order to foster an atmosphere

of acceptance-I don't use the term "tolerance" because I think people should do more than merely tolerate one another-every family should read and discuss at least one book that reviews this country's history. If you're going to read only one book, my recommendation would be John Hope Franklin's classic "From Slavery to Freedom." Inasmuch as we live in a visual age, I also recommend the family watching and discussing the PBS series "Eyes on the Prize."

There is also plenty of information on the Internet to educate both parents and students. An excellent place to start is www.tolerance.org, the site maintained by the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Ala.

The site helps one examine his or her hidden biases, provides tools for fighting hatred, and gives the history behind many of the derogatory images of Blacks throughout history.

Ferris State University in

Big Rapids, Mich. maintains a "Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia" on line at www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/cartoons. The curator of the site says the cartoons were downloaded this year from White supremacy sites on the Web. "American Blacks have often been mocked by the larger society," the curator writes. "This dehumanizing ridicule was evident in the minstrel shows of the 1800s, cinematic depictions in the 1900s, and on comedy stages today.

"Despite the gains won during the Black Civil Rights Movement, too many Americans still laugh at the portrayals of Blacks as physically repulsive, intellectually inept, morally stunted, and culturally deprived." An important question was posed: "Why do so many people find these cartoons funny?"

In some instances, the answer is prejudice.

And that's the focus of another good site, (See Jim Crow, Page 13)

Give and take: Politics of charity getting complex

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Organizations and individuals have collected more than \$1 billion for the victims of the New York tragedy; I would imagine those funds would also be used to help the victims in Washington and Pennsylvania.

Americans certainly moved, with all haste, to dig deep into their pockets and come to the aide of their fellow citizens. Children collected pennies, entertainers held benefit concerts, and the money flowed into New York, or to somewhere, so fast that fund administrators had to pause to figure out how they were going to disburse the much needed contributions. The money also grew so fast that apparently those in charge are still trying to "figure" the whole thing out and get things right.

One billion dollars and counting, and the families of the victims are still waiting for their assistance from these various funds. That's the sad part of it. All of the giving that has taken place over the

past month or so, probably the fastest and most successful fundraiser in history, and either the people in charge do not know how to administer the funds, or something else is going on with all of that money.

We know that where there is giving there is taking, and experience tells me that wherever there is a huge amount of money there will be someone who will figure out how to take some of it. After all, there were people so money-hungry that they tried to forage in the wreckage at "ground zero" in New York for the victims' money.

The overriding question in this case of the not-yet-distributed billion dollars or so is: Where is the money? Or should we say, "Show me the money." The victims for whom the funds were donated should have something by now. I would submit that some administrator(s) has been paid by now. I also submit that these funds should be flowing, expeditiously, to the families that need assistance. No excuses. Send the money

to the families so they can get on with their lives.

This country has a reputation for reacting positively when a crisis occurs. We have certainly responded, even as the call continuously goes out, by sending millions of dollars to New York, but the people in charge have been negligent in doing their part. Even more tragic would be our discovering that much of the money raised has "disappeared."

I think it's a sad commentary on our country and some of our citizens that we exploit the tragedies and misfortunes of our fellow citizens. Is money so important to us that we will risk our very souls for it? People are suffering from the worst calamity to ever hit this country, and there are those who would deny them their compensatory relief: money donated by well-wishing and concerned fellow citizens.

But, as I always say, "Where there is a large sum of money, there is always (See Charity, Page 14)

Black vote: Researchers struggle to identify trends

By Dr. Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At first blush it appeared that the major trend in the Black vote in the immediately past elections was division, but that gave way in some races to strategic voting and then to traditional patterns of unity.

First the division. We are now experiencing the second generation of Black elected officials at the municipal level and since the first generation of strong Black mayors has passed from the scene. And where once Blacks were unified in their support of one person, now members of city councils are challenging incumbent Black mayors. In short, the mood is the equivalent of "everyone into the water."

An obvious example of this was the reelection bid of Houston's mayor, Lee Brown, who was not only challenged by a Republican Hispanic candidate, Orlando Sanchez, but other Black members of the city council as well.

The result was that he failed to obtain 50 percent of the vote and faces a run-off with Sanchez.

The next example was the narrow victory of Shirley Franklin in Atlanta, the first Black female mayor-elect of that City. Franklin, former chief aide to former Mayor Maynard Jackson, was a seasoned city official.

Yet a substantial field of candidates, including several city council members,

challenged her. She barely won 50 percent of the vote, avoiding a run-off.

The mayor's race in Detroit featured a generational divide when 31-year-old Black state legislator, Kwame Kilpatrick, head of the Black Legislative Caucus, ran against 70-year-old Gill Hill, the three-term head of the Detroit City Council. Kilpatrick, son of Rep. Carolyn Kilpatrick (D-Mich.), completed the generational change of the political system in the city that has been underway since the passing of scion Coleman Young by this solid consensus victory.

Finally, Jane Campbell, a White moderate Democrat, won election to be the mayor of Cleveland, having defeated 37-year-old African-American Raymond Pierce, a former assistant secretary of education in the Clinton administration. Campbell, who had a long record of service as a county politician, was able to draw 27 percent of the Black vote which, coupled with her strong support in the mixed and predominantly White wards, gave her the victory.

Next, strategic voting. In the New York Mayoral race, while a post-election survey found that loser Mark Green, a Democrat, won 72 percent of the Black vote, Republican Michael Bloomberg won the race with 15 percent of the Black vote.

This was important because 41 percent (See Vote, Page 13)