

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

2002 Outlook

With the end of 2001 approaching, newspaper staffs across the country are brainstorming predictions for 2002. And since birds of a feather flock together, well, the *Sentinel-Voice* has decided to join the prognostication party.

But first things first, it would be foolhardy to make sweeping predictions. After all, none of us ever expected Sept. 11. And in a world still largely stuck in a post-Sept. 11 dynamic of uncertainty, many predictions could wind up being as worthless as the paper they're printed on. Nonetheless, we predict:

LINGERING SEPT. 11 AFTERSHOCK: Whether it be the continued roundup and interrogation of hordes of Middle Easterners, South Asians and Israelis, the misguided demonization of Islam or endless promulgation of this new we-are-one-nation-united-under-God-styled Americanism—which is really racism disguised as patriotism—the Sept. 11 suicide hijackings will affect every aspect of our lives and psyche. We can also expect our government to understate the damage wrought by our military and for the U.S. defense industry to press for prolonged military action not only in Afghanistan but in other “hotspots.” Doing so will mean hefty profits.

IN CONGRESS: Attacks on affirmative action will intensify and black lawmakers, especially those in the Democratic party, will find it a tough go protecting many of the gains won during the Clinton era. Thanks to a Republican-controlled White House, the GOP, the party of the wealthy white majority despite its recent efforts at racial inclusion, has stirred vehement sentiment against racial preferences and quotas. That reality is reflected in the realm of higher education. Universities throughout the nation are scrapping racial diversity objectives, putting in their place “fairer” programs that “equalize” footing for all prospective students. This has yielded opposing effects, increasing minority enrollment at some universities, while decreasing the numbers at others. But knowing how Republicans think, you can bet that they will wrongly tout instances of the former as reasons to scrap preferences altogether, totally ignoring the latter data. Another GOP target that could go the way of the dinosaur: minority-dominated districts.

ALSO IN GOVERNMENT: To say the situation surrounding the U.S. Civil Rights Commission will be contentious would be an understatement. With the commission chairman and President Bush grappling over a new White House-appointed member—and many in the Grand Ole Party quietly plotting the demise of the independent investigative body—the fireworks are sure to fly.

ON THE JOB: It was a bad year for quite a few large companies, as they were forced to pay, in some cases, tens of millions of dollars to black employees who lodged racial discrimination lawsuits. And 2002 is likely to hold more of the same. Don't be surprised if a company you know, love and support is hit with a racial discrimination lawsuit—and forced to pay up.

OVERSEAS: Business interest in Africa will heat up—as more first-world countries seek to exploit its mineral wealth—while human interest in the plight of its people will waffle. Don't expect significant inroads in the continent's AIDS epidemic; pharmaceutical companies aren't in any hurry to lower drug prices to help those with HIV and AIDS. Can't put people over profits, now can we?

IN LAS VEGAS: The more things change...you know the same. Minorities and the poor will continue to scrap for everything they get, while the power brokers search for ways to bleed us even further. Here's hoping the Public Utilities Commission denies Nevada Power's nearly \$1 billion rate increase request. If they don't, here's a dead-on prediction: Lots of locals will be mad.



THE SOLOIST

Peace on Earth;
Goodwill toward men, women, children

Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

Accepting the Nobel peace Prize during a tradition-rich ceremony in Oslo, Norway in early December, Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, challenged the world's Government and its peoples to consider the future through the prism of our past and present—and choose peace.

Certainly, if we give even the briefest thought to the 20th century just ended, we would mark it as filled with extraordinary advances in science and technology, and in political democracy, too.

Yet, it was also, as Annan said, “perhaps the deadliest [century] in human history, devastated by innumerable conflicts, untold suffering, and unimaginable crimes.”

Look at just the last decade: Genocidal wars convulsed Rwanda and The Balkans; and “smaller” conflicts continued with deadly consequences in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, parts of Black Africa, Indonesia, The Kashmir region of India, and in some republics of the former Soviet Union.


All of these offer horrific evidence that the veneer of civilization is, still, thin and easily shredded.

Now, Annan, who shared the prize with the UN itself, declared in words that provoke myriad piercing images, “We have entered the third millennium through a gate of fire.”

But he went on to say that that “gate of fire” does not mean we've inexorably set foot on the road to Hell. We can choose the better way if

To Be Equal

By *Hugh B. Price*
President
National Urban League



we “realize that humanity is indivisible” and cultivate a “deeper awareness of the bonds that bind us all—in pain and in prosperity.”

The awareness of our human indivisibility has been much in evidence in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks—whose victims' very diversity underscored that, now as always, the best qualities of the human species are spread randomly among us all.

In America, government and civic leaders at all levels were quick to emphasize that the diversity of this nation was strength, not a weakness. And the commemorations, memorials, and even musical concerts which have all been connected in one way or another to September 11th have themselves displayed a united America of many hues and backgrounds.

Further, the speed and sincerity with which the United Nations, led by Annan, and other countries joined in an International coalition to end terrorism showed that, now more than ever before in our interconnected world the nations and peoples of the world have the strongest possible interest in promoting peace.

This “new, more profound awareness of the sanctity and dignity of every human life — will require us to look beyond the framework of States, and beneath the surface of nations or communities,” he said. “We must focus, as never before, on improving the conditions of the individual men and women who give the state or nation its richness and character.”

Jim Hoagland, foreign affairs columnist for the Washington Post, rightly and approvingly described Annan's call as “a clear endorsement of humanitarian intervention by international coalitions when governments fail to protect—or actually attack—their own citizens.”

That concept, Hoagland

pointed out, is what drove the West and the UN to intervene in Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor in the 1990's and it is one of the major questions about, as Hoagland writes “what comes next once American bombs stop falling in Afghanistan.”

I'll leave that particular question for another time, in order to look beyond to the broad doctrine of international efforts to promote peace and human rights Annan put forth— an assertion, Hoagland noted, “subtly subversive” of “outdated notions of sovereignty and national advantage” that many states, including UN member states, have abused.

One can be more confident now that the discussion of this idea has been joined in a much more focused way.

In other words, the calamity of September 11th may spur a significant advance in developing among nations and peoples the world over a powerful commitment to international cooperation.

With peace seemingly very far away right now, what an inspiring vision that is.

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