

## OUR VIEW

## Blacks make for easiest targets

"What's old is new again." While this adage mostly refers to clothing styles, it can also be applied to the time-worn practice of other races disparaging African-Americans. One of the signature selling points of slavery for colonial-era Whites was the notion that subjugating African-Americans to lives of servitude was not only OK but, in fact, Christian. Chattel slavery, the perverted thinking went, was certainly a more civilized and cultured way of life for an uncivilized and uncultured people, certainly a better fate for them than traipsing barefoot across thicket-strewn deserts, dodging lions and alligators and chucking spears at livestock.

Disparaging images of African-Americans would re-surface two generations after slavery in films like "Birth of a Nation," which caricatured African-Americans as shiftless and lazy and convinced a slew of White men that their Black counterparts were over-sexualized beasts who secretly lusted after White women and would stop at nothing—save for a noose or a hail of bullets—to get their meaty hands on a pristine, pure White girl. The curtailing and eventual end of lynching saw the proliferation of black-and-white movies depicting African-Americans as wide-eyed, big-lipped dolts good for nothing but entertaining. Fast forward to the last half of the 20th century, and the denigrating images have permeated nearly every societal aspect, from television to the film to music, board games (Anyone for a game of Ghettoopoly? Anyone) and even postage stamps.

Even though there is little correct about political correctness, the Mexican government's distribution of stamps with cartoonish characters resembling a shill and an Aunt Jemima mammy lookalike rankles so much because it's essentially state-sponsored racism. A few notches below the government-backed racial animus pedaled by the likes of Bull Conner, to be sure, but the cumulative effect on non-Blacks in Mexico could be the same as the vile histrionics of a segregationist governor: perpetuating belief that African-Americans are somehow less human and, as such, can be parodied negatively because, well, they are less human. Were the U.S. government to distribute stamps with insensitive images of Mexicans, it's safe to assume that Hispanic leaders in America, as well as Mexico's political brass, would be up in arms, demanding a racial cease and desist.

This is actually strike two for Mexico in terms of its relations with Black Americans. Mexico's president, Vicente Fox, remarked that Mexican immigrants take jobs "that not even Blacks don't want to do," a not-so-veiled jab at the employment travails faced by a portion of the African-American community, that we're so desperate, our lot in life so poor, our ability to succeed in professional circles so stunted that we're resigned to menial labor. Fox later apologized—as high-profile folks often do when they've placed a foot in their mouths and have to answer calls from the likes of the Rev. Jesse Jackson and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

The Mexican stamp issue underscores the fact that racism isn't only America's albatross, but it's a cancer that afflicts the world. In a *Boston Globe* editorial last month, Jeff Jacoby used a *New York Times* education article on high achievement among Asian-American students and a controversy over the aborted appointment of the first African-American chancellor at the University of Massachusetts at Boston as jumping-off points for a discussion on race. Sadly, he ends his column with the type of myopic propaganda that's so poisoned—and could ultimately doom—U.S. efforts to overcome racial barriers: "Asian kids don't have a gene for calculus or getting into Yale. They have a culture that demands hard work, cares deeply about academic success, and rejects 'racism' as an excuse for mediocrity. When the same can be said about Black American culture—or, for that matter, about White American culture—the math club at Quincy High (a school in New York) will look very different."

No wonder America has race problems.



## Concern scant for missing Blacks

Dora LaGrande  
Sentinel-Voice

Over the past five weeks, the news has been saturated with the disappearance of Natalee Holloway, who was last seen in Aruba on Sunday, May 29, leaving a nightclub with three young guys. Two weeks later, on June 17, two American Black men in a wedding party were mysteriously murdered on the island of St. Thomas, but there was little if anything said about these two murders. Certainly, the FBI didn't send seven special agents to St. Thomas nor were professional search crews dispatched there to investigate the murders of Tristan Charlier, 24, and Leon Roberts, 25. Even though they, like Natalee, had no criminal history and were just visiting an island in the Caribbean.

White children and White women — Jon Benet Ramsey, Laci Peterson, Jessica Lunsford, Elizabeth Smart, Samantha Runnion, Danielle Van Dam and Adam Walsh — all became household names while Black children and women Cynteria Phillips, Alexis Patterson, Tamika Huston, Sherrice Iverson and Rilya Wilson were mentioned minimally, if at all, either in their local papers or nationally.

Alexis Patterson, a Black child, and Elizabeth Smart, who was crowned as America's missing child, disappeared around the same time, but NBC, CBS, CNN, MSNBC, FOX News, ABCNEWS.com and other news organizations gave Elizabeth daily media updates with around 42 articles



## ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

written about her, and The "Today Show" and "Good Morning America" never even gave Alexis a mention, and other news organizations wrote five articles about her.

While it is sad and tragic that women and children go missing, one cannot be surprised. Tens of thousands of women and children go missing every year in this country alone, and most of the missing adults tracked by the FBI are men. Of the nearly 47,600 active adult cases tracked by the FBI as of the beginning of May, 53 percent were men and 29 percent were Black. One would be very hard pressed to see the hyper-charged media frenzy for Black men, Black women and Black children that they have seen for White women and White children.

More than one in five of those abducted or otherwise unaccounted for are Black, but listening to the news media you would never get that impression. Your impression is and probably always will be, if we don't take them to task, that most of the abducted or missing are White girls and White women, overwhelmingly upper middle class and attractive.

Many news directors, editors and everyday people stereotype men and minorities who turn up missing and marginalize them as gang-bangers, career crooks-in-

training, drug dealers or users, or they deem that the subjects are involved in some other criminal activity or suffer from some sort of pathological issues. It seems like the belief of those doing the stereotyping is that having some of those undesirable people periodically vanish or turn up dead is actually a good thing.

A case in point regarding stereotyping happened right here in Las Vegas in the past two months. The Sentinel-Voice ran an article chronicling the cries of a father seeking justice for his son who died after being stabbed in an attack by a White guy on May 14 in a North Las Vegas store parking lot. The attacker was arrested and released in a few days. For nearly a month, no charges were filed by District Attorney, David Roger. Law enforcement officials initially

made the assumption that the victim was gang affiliated, even though the slain son, had applied to be a policeman twice, and was accepted.

Dannett DeWinter Johnson III, had just started his new job as a corrections officer. Had this father not come to town, called a meeting with community leaders and had his son's death publicized, this would have just been another unsolved murder of a Black man. So, it's quite apparent that the "protect and serve" moniker only applies to those who are not of minority descent, because far too frequently the cases with Black victims are not investigated fully.

What does the mainstream news media coverage—or intentional lack of coverage—of Black children and adults say about how Blacks are valued in this society? Why don't Black women and children get similar coverage as Whites? Even coverage of Jennifer "The Runaway Bride" Wilbanks received more coverage than any Black who has been abducted, kid-

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