

OUR VIEW Father's Day

Today is Father's Day. For those who don't know about the history of this date, U.S. Census data notes that it goes back to 1910. It was conceived by Mrs. John B. Dodd of Spokane, Wash., and proclaimed for June 19 of that year by the mayor. Dodd (first name Sonora) got the idea after listening to a Mother's Day sermon 1909. She wanted to honor her father, Civil War veteran William Smart. Her father had been a pillar for the family and a symbol of righteousness—his wife died while giving birth to their sixth child. Widowed but unbowed, Mr. Smart raised the newborn and his other five children on a rural farm in eastern Washington, or so legend has it.

The ensuing years saw Father's Day become a national day of honor and remembrance. The first presidential proclamation was issued in 1966 when President Lyndon Johnson designated the third Sunday in June as Father's Day. As a nation, America has annually celebrated Father's Day since 1971. Back to the Census data for a minute: This being an era of high divorce rates, absentee fathers, baby mama drama and men fathering litters of children, the good news about dads often gets buried. Fact is, there are millions of American dads doing right by their families. Census data from 2003 reported:

—An estimated 105,000 stay-at-home dads, or "Mr. Moms." "These are married fathers with children under 15 who are not in the labor force primarily so they can care for the family while their wives work outside the home. These fathers cared for 189,000 children in 2002," the data reports.

—That fathers provided more care than mothers and child-care providers for two million preschoolers. "This amounts to about 1-in-5 preschoolers of employed mothers," reads the report.

—Approximately 25.8 million fathers are part of married-couple families with children under 18. Among this group, notes Census data, two-in-10 are raising three or more of their own children under 18; one-in-10 are raising their own infants under age 1; one-in-8 are under 30; four percent are 55 or over; two percent live in the home of a relative or a nonrelative; and six-in-10 have an annual family income of \$50,000 or more.

Even in the touchy area of single fatherhood—an estimated two million in America in 2003, up from 393,000 in 1970 (there's now one single father for every six single parents, compared with one-in-10 in 1970)—the news isn't all bad. Among single fathers, Census data reports:

—10 percent are raising three or more of their own children under 18.

—45 percent are divorced; 34 percent have never married; 17 percent are married with an absent spouse; and four percent are widowed.

—10 percent are raising their own infants under age 1. This percentage is not significantly different from the corresponding rate for fathers in married-couple families.

—22 percent are under 30.

—5 percent are 55 or over. This percentage is not significantly different from the corresponding rate for fathers in married-couple families.

—13 percent live in the home of a relative or a nonrelative.

—24 percent have an annual family income of \$50,000 or more.

This barrage of numbers can be confusing. They show that, in many cases, fathers are doing their part. Of the billions collected in child support each year in America, most of the money comes from fathers. But a father's influence goes beyond monetary support. Research shows that children whose fathers are active and interested in their lives have more confidence, perform better in school and are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. For America to recapture its moral standing in the world, and for it to reclaim a generation of young people wrapped in nihilism and narcissism, men in general and fathers in particular are going to have to step it up a notch.

Fathers must lead households and men (with women by their side and, sometimes, leading the way) must lead communities and this nation. In this way, we can honor not only Mr. Smart, but all fathers the world over.



Running away from Blackness

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As they say in New York, "Fa-gedda-bout it!"

It's sad to see some of our brothers and sisters making every attempt to deny who and what they are. We hear it in their statements, we see it in their actions, and we feel it in our relationships with one another.

Plain and simple, some Black folks are trying to run away from their Blackness. They do it in all sorts of ways, but it's mainly to appease White people in hope that they will see a "different kind of Black person."

That's how O.J. Simpson used to be characterized, before they showed him the doorway back to his Blackness—even though he still has not taken the hint.

Now it's being said about Barack Obama: "...he is not Black in the usual way," said one White commentator.

We have some serious psychological problems, obvious vestiges of our conditioning and maintenance over several generations, but trying to run away from who we are is the height of madness for Black people; besides, it's rife with futility.

It is also shameful, considering the legacy left to us by our forebears. Are they resting in their graves now, having sacrificed themselves for our true freedom, for a cause from which we are now trying to distance our-



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selves?

Obama's statement, "...There is no Black America" is indicative of a fear that we will be alienated from White people if we do not give deference to them by suggesting that we are really not Black, but rather we are "neutral."

It seems to me they would want us to be who we are rather than pretend and play silly games. When it's all said and done, they will make their decisions about us based on their respective social paradigms and parameters anyway. So why are we scared? Why try to run away from your Blackness?

Obama tells Blacks not to vote for him because he is Black, which I am sure is highly appreciated by his corporate donors and the Washington status quo. It is also a very condescending statement to make and suggests Black people aren't sophisticated enough to decide based on qualifications.

On second thought, that may indeed be the case.

We gave in to Clarence

Thomas because he was Black, didn't we. But have you ever heard White candidates tell White folks not to vote for them simply because they are White? We always have to make other people feel comfortable, don't we?

Obama knows full well that millions of Blacks will vote for him simply because he is Black, but to tell us not to do so brings credence to the contention that he really isn't "...Black in the usual way."

If being Black doesn't mean anything, if there is no Black America, why do Black folks get excited about Bob Johnson, Tiger Woods, Serena and Venus, Oprah, Shani Davis (Olympic Speed Skater), Dominique Dawes, and Debbie Thomas?

Why are we constantly discussing the possibility that Obama could be "the first" Black president (John Hanson notwithstanding) if Blackness means nothing in

this country and if it does not even exist? Why do we have an annual "State of Black America" report and forum?

Yes, Barack, there is a Black America, and other Americas too, just as there are 50 separate states rather than one country with no internal borders.

Our problem is that we are merely emotional about it, which is why we still place so much value on "the first Black."

Some Black people are just too busy embracing diversity rather than embracing their Blackness first. Who, other than Black folks, do you hear promoting "diversity" and allowing themselves to be called "minorities?"

When is the last time you heard an Italian person denounce the "Little Italy" communities across this country?

When have you seen Chi- (See Clingman, Page 15)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice

DIROT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper. Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc. 900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104 Telephone (702) 380-8100 Email: lvsentinelvoice@yahoo.com

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Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association and West Coast Black Publishers Association