

## OUR VIEW

## Truly Free?

July Fourth is approaching, so perhaps a quick history quiz is in order. Raise your hand if you know what the holiday commemorates. Wow, some of you don't know. How about this: Someone please come and write on the chalkboard what country the United States was seeking independence from. No takers! What are you all learning in schools these days? Let's make this next question multiple choice: What was signed on July 4, 1776, officially separating the United States from Great Britain? (The latter happens to be the answer to the second question). Is it A) the Gettysburg Address, B) the Emancipation Proclamation, C) the Declaration of Independence, D) the No Child Left Behind Act or E) the New Deal. We'll give you some time to make a choice ... (minutes fly by and no answer). Okay class, we'll make it easy. The answer is not A, B, D or E. Any guesses? You're correct, it's C.

Had this been an actual test, there would've undoubtedly been a contingent of people who failed miserably—which is important because so many of us have a poor grasp of history. And because we ignore the past, we're often doomed to repeat the same mistakes of yesteryear.

Independence Day 1776 is generally acknowledged as the birth of the nation-state of America and the Declaration of Independence is universally recognized as the preceding founding document that led to the 13 colonies forming the United States of America. In colonial times, the holiday was marked with gun salutes. These days, family vacations, massive fireworks displays and outdoor barbecues dominate commemorative festivities.

America wears its independence like a Purple Heart. (Big, bad Britain was no match; anybody else want to try and get some?) In nearly every speech from presidential candidates, you hear some variation of how American troops are fighting to protect our freedoms, fighting against enemies who would just as soon bomb us as take those freedoms away. Many, by and large, have bought in to the verbal sleight of hand. To them, it seems logical that if we didn't overthrow Saddam Hussein that the former Iraqi dictator would've led a brigade onto American shores, enslaved the lot of us, scrubbed the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of all their references to Christianity and replaced them with passages from the Qu'ran; or that if we didn't hunt 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden over the hills and through the caves of Afghanistan, that soon, very soon, hordes of America-hating Muslims would overthrow us, claim our soil their own and institute Sharia.

Neither scenario is even a remote possibility. America is too strong and too powerful to be taken down by a single country or, for that matter, a group of enemies. To what extent our freedoms are threatened, it pales in comparison to the havoc we're wreaking in foreign countries like Iraq, whose people are increasingly calling for the American military to extricate itself so that they can go about the business, as independent citizens do, of building and running a country. The same freedom from foreign occupiers and foreign meddling that drove the 13 colonies to tell Great Britain to take a hike, is the same freedom many countries throughout the world seek. Only this time, it's the U.S. that's targeted for booting. It's gotten this way because America, like Great Britain before it, generally operates unilaterally. If it moves, the occupied country will follow suit. This is where problems arise.

So we're put in a tough situation, or what should, at least, be a morally vexing one: How to celebrate this country's independence from foreign rule when this country—land of the free, home of the brave—is standing in the way of another country's independence? Americans should think about how U.S. foreign policy has, in some cases, served to stifle independence across the world, rather than foster it. (Note: This is certainly not a knock against our troops; they merely execute strategic objectives, they don't set policy.)

Perhaps then we could empathize with Iraqis disgusted by the Iraq War's civilian death toll. We could see them as American colonialists saw themselves 232 years ago: deserving of the right to be truly free.



## We are out of our minds

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

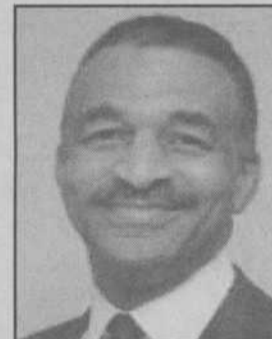
File this article under, "You gotta to be kidding me!" Dr. Amos Wilson's words, quoted by Kwa David Whitaker, in his outstanding presentation titled, "The Wake-Up Call," rang in my ears when I heard about the latest in a series of self-deprecating, self-denigrating, and self-hating acts of Black-on-Black economic violence by a Black organization.

Of course, Amos Wilson was not disparaging Black folks just to be negative; he loved his people and would do anything to help us achieve economic empowerment and "Afrikan consciousness," as he put it.

While Wilson and Whitaker used those words to awaken our people, more and more black (small "b" intended) people are actually committing acts that are directly reflective of a "sick people."

Prior to the most recent act of economic treason, we had the Chinese Connection, which involves the \$10 million contract awarded by Black folks to a Chinese sculptor to carve the National Martin Luther King Monument, and the awarding of the project design contract to a White-owned firm.

It was unconscionable that a Black organization would not see that a Black sculptor and designer would get those contracts. But,



JAMES CLINGMAN

Amos Wilson was right: we have lost our minds. "Massa, is we sick?" "No, 'we' ain't sick, but you sho is."

Now, as if the MLK Statue was not bad enough, the NAACP National Convention is going to Detroit—a city with 80 percent-plus Black population; Detroit, with its Black Mayor, whose mother chairs the Congressional Black Caucus; Detroit, with its history of Motown, Muhammad's Mosque No.1, New Bethel Baptist Church, Rosa Parks, and Coleman Young; Detroit, with strong Black folks like Kwame Kenyatta, Joann Watson, and Theo Broughton; the NAACP is going to Detroit, and during its convention will present an Authors' Pavilion, which will not be managed by a Black bookstore! (Sorry for disturbing you, Brother Amos.)

A representative of the the National Association for the Advancement of "Colored" People, when asked about the Authors' Pavilion contract with a non-Black bookstore, responded with an equally

outrageous excuse: They were not aware of Black bookstores, distributors or publishers in Detroit. Can you say, "The Shrine of the Black Madonna"? It's a store that has only been there for 35 years or so, and has locations in Atlanta and Houston.

Is our NAACP telling its Black constituents that no one in the National Office knew about the Shrine? Are they saying that no one in Baltimore, where they are located, knew to ask one of the largest distributors of Black books, Brother Nati, at African World Books? Have they not heard of Maryland/DC-based Karibu Books, whom they could have called to get information on Black bookstores in Detroit?

Are they saying they never heard of Haki Madhubuti and Third World Press, or Lushena Books, both in Chicago? Would they have us believe they know nothing about Milligan

Books in L.A., whose owner, Dr. Rosie Milligan, annually presents Black Authors on Tour in the same town where the NAACP held its Image Awards? What about Nia Books, Amber Books, and Cush City Books?

Puleeze! Give us a break! This is absolutely ridiculous. And even though I should not have to say it, it's also unacceptable.

Black bookstores, publishers, and distributors all over this country are struggling to stay open. Why, in the name of all that is sensible, all that is logical, all that is reasonable, all that is respectable, all that is ethical, and all that is conscionable, would a Black organization not use a Black bookstore or distributor in Detroit, or even some other city, to present its Authors' Pavilion? "We didn't know," won't get it. Can you say, "The Internet"?

Where does this leave in-  
(See Clingman, Page 9)



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Telephone (702) 380-8100  
Email: lvsentinelvoice@yahoo.com

Contributing Writers:  
Frank Albano  
Debbie Hall  
Lés Pierres Streater  
Kanika Vann

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief  
Parker Philpot, Copy Editor  
Don Snook, Graphics  
Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

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