

OUR VIEW

Violent Nature

"Can you tell me who unleashed our animal instinct?
Got the white man sitting there, tickled pink.
Laughing at us on the avenue,
Busting caps at each other after having brew.
We can't enjoy ourselves,
Too busy jealous of each other's wealth,
But coming up's just in me,
And the Black community is full of envy."

These are the prophetic words of Ice Cube. Rapped nearly 15 years ago, they're prophetic today. Who or what sparked the genocidal behavior so pernicious and pervasive among inner-city and young Blacks? We're not animals in any sense of the word, but some of us behave like savages. These thugs might as well be American Taliban, for they are urban terrorists who hold their neighborhoods and communities hostage to their violent proclivities.

When will Black-on-Black violence stop? This is a question that, unfortunately, no one can answer. It's a question given new life each and every time Black life takes a Black life. Longtime Oakland media personality Chauncey Bailey was allegedly assassinated by a Black man. And there's little doubt that about the skin color of the gunman or gunmen responsible for shooting four people (killing three) in Newark, N.J. When will Black-on-Black violence stop?

How can Black America overcome these self-destructive tendencies? Is the answer repealing laws authorizing mandatory minimum sentencing and creating more alternatives other than incarceration for first-time, non-violent drug offenders? Is it convincing the federal government to pump more money into secondary and higher education and cultural arts programs? Is it equipping parents, particularly single mothers and single fathers, with necessary tools to raise children in this pressure-packed world? Is it getting more men to serve as role models to younger men and boys? Is it deploying the government's might to stanch the influx of drugs into America and onto its streets? Is it churches embracing everyone, not just those who look pious? Yes. It's all those things and, guess what, it's none of those things.

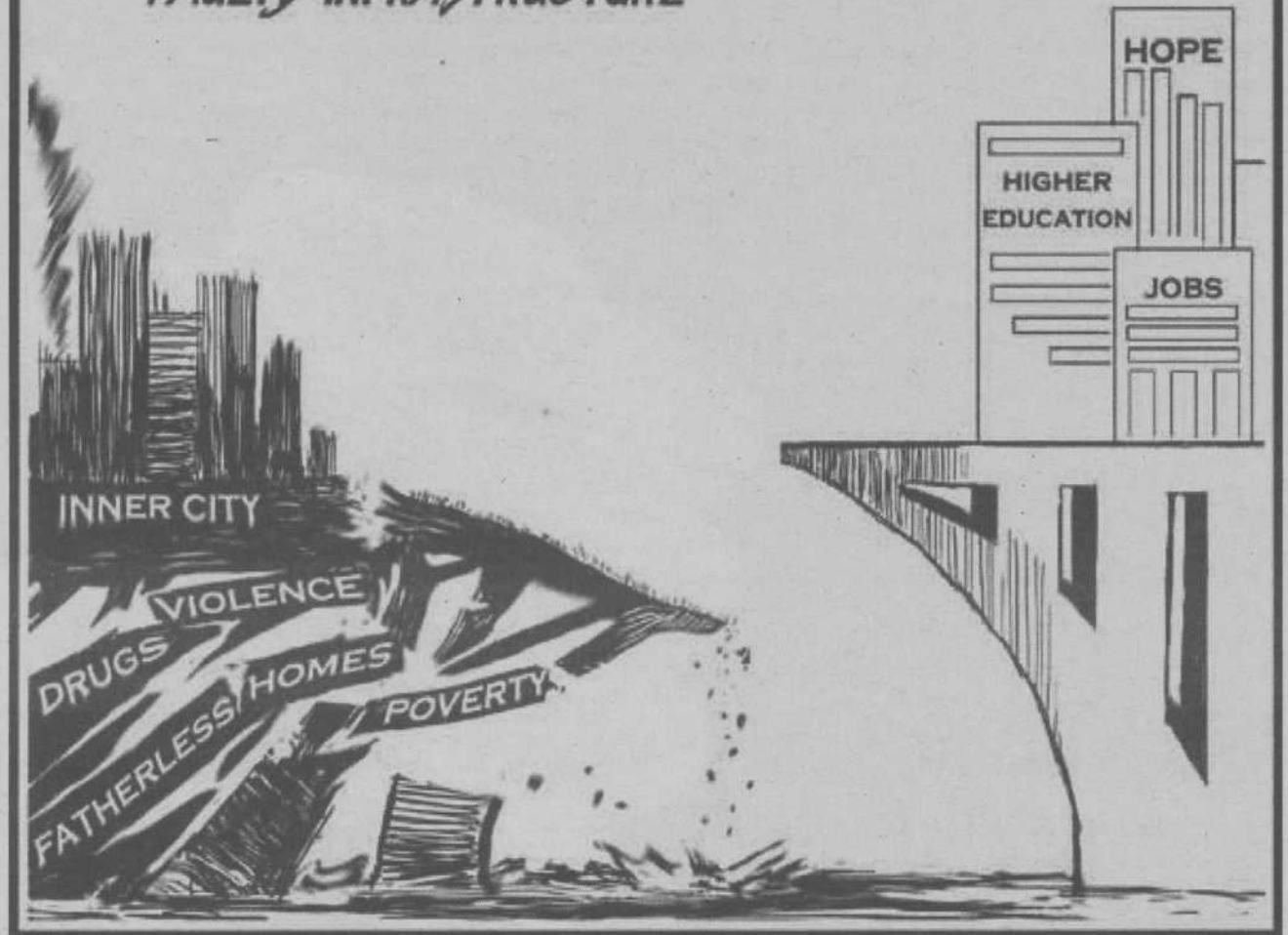
Violence is a part of the human narrative; has been since time immemorial. That's not the disconcerting part. It's our (our, as in all Americans') tacit acceptance of violence that is heartbreaking. We read the papers and see the headlines and generally shrug off the news. *Somebody died? That's sad. Well, gotta go.* Perhaps that's a coping mechanism, because violence in America, particularly in its ghettos and barrios, is so pervasive. Truth be told, it's hard to expend lots of energy on people in other cities whose family members and friends were brutally and wantonly murdered, when gang members are turning city streets into open-air gunfire fests.

Now, to go positive for a brief moment:

The problem is bad, but some of the conditions that lead to Black-on-Black crime can be attributed to a flawed legal system and not merely their supposed animal instinct. In an article titled *The Truth About Black Crime*, R. Jeneen Jones writes that, "In 1997, the American Bar Association observed that quite often public defenders, who are most likely to be assigned to poor and largely minority defendants, are inexperienced, underpaid, overworked, and largely indifferent to their client's plight. Even though it is illegal, throughout the nation, there are incidents of local officials influencing jury selection to include mostly White males. This is done mainly because local police and law officials are afraid that randomly selected jurors will be more liberal and less likely to convict defendants. What do all of these findings suggest? For starters, we cannot conclude how many African Americans or Black males are actually guilty of committing crimes. We can only obtain data on the number of Black males who are arrested for and convicted of a crime. ... Will we ever be able to agree on the truth about Black crime (or know the real story on White crime) in this nation? I doubt it. I do hope we will open the lines of communication and learn to discuss all of the facts."

Once we have the facts, we'll be that much closer to an answer to Ice Cube's question. Not only that, we'll be closer to a solution to Black-on-Black crime.

FAULTY INFRASTRUCTURE



Day of outrage needed in U.S.

By Susan Taylor
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I'm just back from the Essence Music Festival in New Orleans, which was a grand success, contributed more than \$120 million to the city and raised the hope and spirits of our people throughout the region.

While there, Tommy Dortch and I, our spouses Carole Dortch and Khephra Burns, Marcia and Michael Eric Dyson and PR guru Terrie Williams met privately with Mayor Ray Nagin about the deplorable and shameful conditions that the people of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region are still suffering under, the obstacles the mayor has faced in trying to marshal resources for the recovery and the actions we all can and must take on 8/29, the second anniversary of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

There must be a national outcry, a day of outrage, a day of protest, prayer—something the media can't possibly ignore. It must be a day during which we demand that our national decision makers redirect our tax dollars away from war and war profiteering to create a regional Marshall Plan that restores New Orleans and the Gulf Coast.

We matter. We care. We act. We're all weary, and our lives are overscheduled. But taking a stand at this crucial moment is something we

must do. As Frantz Fanon said, "Each generation must discover its mission and, having discovered its mission, either fulfill or betray it."

Our generation is at grave risk of the latter. There's not an issue killing our community that African-Americans have stood solidly together on and remedied since the Civil Rights Movement. Let's write a new history. Let's stand together on this and win social and economic justice for the people of the Gulf Coast region. With the hope and courage garnered from that victory we can then address the failing schools, the over-incarceration of our young and the other ills sucking the life out of our community.

This is the call: On 8/29, the tens of thousands who can travel to New Orleans will gather for the massive demonstration being planned there. (The exact time and place to follow.)

Millions of Black people, our White, Latino, Native and Asian brothers and sisters, all who are committed to social and economic justice, are to call their congressional and state representatives and the White House to demand the restoration and betterment of New Orleans, Gulf Port, Biloxi and the entire Gulf Coast region.

The telephone number for the White House switchboard is (202) 456-1414; the

switchboard for U.S. Congress is (202) 224-3121 connect callers directly to their Senators' and Representatives' offices, after asking for a state of residence and zip code.

America will inundate Washington with a storm surge of phone calls, emails and faxes, loudly protesting this administration's shameful disregard for the people elected officials are supposed to protect. We want the state and national headquarters of both the Republican and Democratic parties to get a startling and disturbing wake-up call: Black people will not be taken for granted.

On 8/29 we must be fully present with all of our caring, compassion and determination. Present on that day we must have our national leaders, presidential candidates and elected officials, faith communities, fraternities, sororities, union members

and celebrities present in full force.

Tyler Perry, Kimberly Elise, Regina King, Victoria Rowell, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Blair Underwood and others are with us in spirit, checking their schedules and awaiting details. CSI's Hill Harper is taping and is requesting the day off.

Comedian and festival host Jonathan Slocumb, who kept the 8/29 initiative alive each day and evening before the tens of thousands of festival goers, cares and will be present on that day.

Tom Joyner will be broadcasting from New Orleans on 8/29. We need Harry Belafonte and Danny Glover; we need Oprah, Spike, Halle, Angelina, Brad and Bono, Sean Penn, Wynton Marsalis, the hip-hop community, et al.

And of course, we need a huge turnout from the people of New Orleans and the Gulf (See Taylor, Page 13)

NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER
LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice
GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.
THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
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Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association
and West Coast Black Publishers Association