

OUR VIEW

Our Problem

The dirtiest four-letter word in the American language doesn't begin with an F and end with a K. Nor is it a crude reference to male or female genitalia. And it has nothing to do with the place nonbelievers in various faiths are doomed to if they don't repent. No, the dirtiest four-letter word in the American language is race. Or racism.

Racism is a cancer that has festered in American hearts for nearly 400 years. Through the years, it's only grown more pernicious, moving from the overt (chattel slavery) to the covert (redlining, mandatory minimum sentencing, harsher discipline for minority students... the list goes on.) Last year, CNN reported that most Americans view race as a lingering problem. Its poll found that: 49 percent of Blacks and 18 percent of Whites thought racism was a "very serious" problem; 48 percent of Whites and 35 percent of Blacks described racism as a "somewhat serious"; and 48 percent of Blacks and 43 percent of Whites said they knew someone who was racist.

Generations after the passage of the landmark civil rights legislation, there are still places in this country, such as Vidor, Texas, where Blacks fear going after dark because of their history of racial animosity. And there are still subversive movements working overtime to rob African-Americans of their hard-earned and well-deserved freedoms. (See the voter disenfranchisement and suppression activities orchestrated by Republican operatives in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections.) If racism is cancer, we've yet to find effective chemotherapy, meaning we remain susceptible to flare-ups. Flare-ups like the latest debacle involving O.J. Simpson.

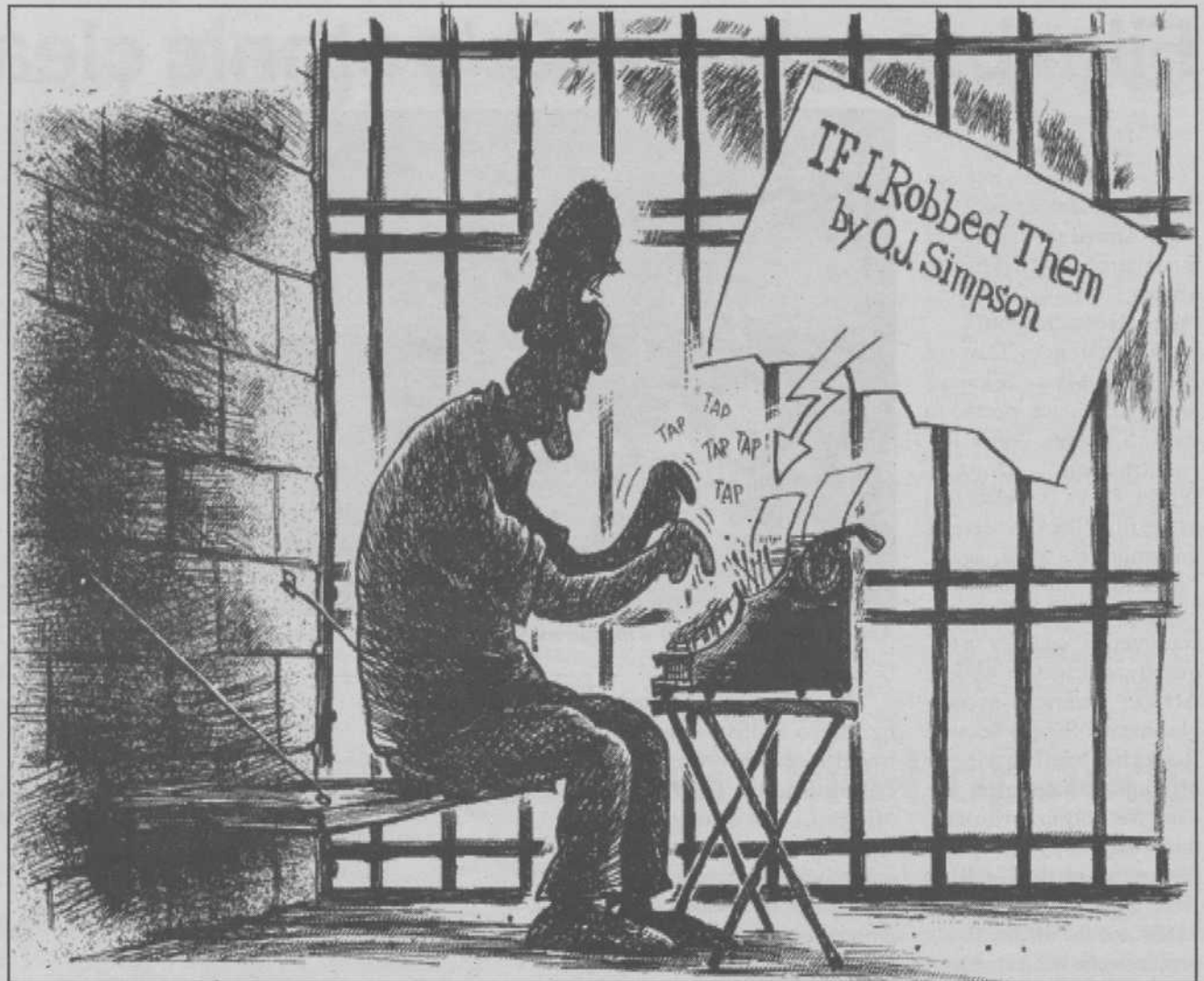
Time will tell if the NFL Hall of Fame running back serves prison time for a bevy of charges (kidnapping and armed robbery) related to trying to retrieve allegedly stolen memorabilia from a hotel room at Palace Station. No doubt the image of Simpson in handcuffs made much of America happy. Many Whites (and some Blacks, too) feel he got away with the murders of his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman. Internet posts about the story refer to Simpson as "nigger" and "guilty f—king nigger."

This brings us to the n-word, perhaps the most reviled of racial epithets. The NAACP has "buried" the word and several municipalities have floated unenforceable bans on it. But it still remains as charged as an improvised explosive device. And it's never far from the tongues of non-Blacks eager to characterize some behavior as "niggerish" (such as been done with alleged dogfight ring-leader and former NFL quarterback Michael Vick) to call a Black person a nigger. The term ghetto also carries racist overtones. Acting ghetto is supposed to be akin to "acting Black." How do you act Black? Was ex-*Seinfeld* star Michael Richards acting Black when berated comedy show attends with epithets? Wasn't Don Imus' degradation of the Rutgers University women's basketball team a tad niggerish?

While we're posing questions, here are a few more: Why is racial profiling still an issue? When will politicians tackle environmental racism—many minority communities are near chemical plants? Where are those who are being gentrified out of their neighborhoods supposed to live? How do so many firearms end up in minority communities? Didn't the suburban, White 311 Boyz deserve the same harsh punishments as the Black youth responsible for the Easter weekend attacks? Why is Black New Orleans still suffering two years after Katrina?

Louisiana is a good place to end this column about racism. Last September, a group of White high school students in Jena, La., hung nooses on a tree near the school. They said it was a prank. It sparked tension. Black students were assaulted at parties. A White man pointed a rifle at three Black teens at a convenience store. A fight broke out on Dec. 4 that led to six Black teenagers being charged with attempted murder. (An appeals court overturned the conviction of 17-year-old Mychal Bell, while charges for three others were reduced to aggravated battery.) If the situation was reversed, would the district attorney threaten to prosecute White students to the full extent of the law? Unlikely.

Racism continues to metastasize, like a cancer.



Fed officials are money magnets

By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Over the recent years, scandals — involving quick money — have become numerous amongst our senators and congresspersons. Republicans and Democrats alike have been doing the "Perp Walk" and destroying their legacies. There are 10 Whites for every one Black, but the papers seem to concentrate a majority of their coverage whenever a Black official is targeted.

I have never seen so much press given to Congressman William Jefferson (Democrat, New Orleans) for his entrepreneurial activities. Somehow, I truly believe that this is blown way out of reality.

Our corporate leaders pay bribes routinely to Asian, African and other officials, as it is the way they do business. No one seeks to prosecute them but they all want to "crucify" Congressman Jefferson. Please don't get mad at him trying to make some money as the majority of Congress does a very good job at doing just that.

According to *Roll Call* newspaper, here are the top ten congressional leaders by net worth:

(1) Representative Jane Harman, D-Calif., \$216.11 million. Her wealth soared dramatically last year. Her



HARRY C. ALFORD

bank account swelled by \$44 million. Almost half of her net worth comes from Harman International Industries, the company founded by her husband, Sydney. They also have vast real estate and private investments, hedge fund holdings and family trust accounts and have no outstanding debt.

(2) Senator Herb Kohl, D-Wis., \$215.85 million. He owns the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team and formally owned Kohl's Department Stores. The majority of his holdings are in a blind trust.

(3) Senator John Kerry, D-Mass., \$213.8 million. This guy knows how to marry. He has been a politician the majority of his adult life and has been married twice to very wealthy women who have shared their holdings with him.

(4) Representative Darrell Issa, R-Calif., \$158.58 million. He made most of his money from founding Cleveland based Viper Car Alarm

Company. He has holdings in DEI LLC and Greene Properties, Inc. His wife is an employee of Greene Properties.

(5) Senator Jay Rockefeller, D-W.V., \$79.4 million. He has gotten it all from the famous family trust.

(6) Representative Vern Buchanan, R-Fla., \$67.23 million. He owns 20 car dealerships and also leases ships and aircraft. Buchanan also owns and rents properties in Florida, California, Colorado, Michigan and Kentucky.

(7) Senator Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., \$50.5 million. This lady knows how to marry well, also. Her wealth increased marriage after marriage. Among her and husband Richard Blum's holdings are San Francisco's Hotel Carlton, condos in Hawaii and Tahoe City, Calif.

(8) Sen. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., \$47.35 million. Somehow his wealth more than doubled during the last year. An heir to the Kennedy Empire, he has been a politician the vast majority of his adult life.

(9) Senator John McCain, R-Ariz., \$44.25 million. Somehow his net worth jumped \$15 million from last year. A career naval officer and then politician, it gets a little mysterious here — unless his latest wife brought a lot to the household.

(10) Representative Robin Hayes, R-N.C., \$36.12 million. He is the president of Mount Pleasant Hosiery Mills and has holdings in property located in Minnesota and South Carolina. He also holds stock in companies that have many issues voted on during a con-

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