

## OUR VIEW

## Saddest Case

Great tool this Wikipedia thing. While lots of issues have been raised about the validity of the information placed on this citizen-run Internet encyclopedia, and the veracity of the folks who post things often leaves a lot to be desired. It is more helpful than harmful and, if you look hard enough, you can find a boatload of actual, provable facts. One such area where Wikipedia is dead on is the assertion that the right to be innocent until proven guilty is one that many countries throughout the world hold dear.

To wit: "This right is so important in modern democracies that many have explicitly included it in their legal codes and constitutions: The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Council of Europe says (art. 6.2): 'Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.' This Convention has been adopted by treaty and is binding on all Council of Europe members. Currently (and in any foreseeable expansion of the EU) every country member of the European Union is also member to the Council of Europe, so this stands for EU members as a matter of course.

In Canada, Section 11(d) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms states: 'Any person charged with an offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.'

In France, Article 9 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, of constitutional value, says 'Everyone is supposed innocent until having been declared guilty.' And the preliminary article of the code of criminal procedure says 'any suspected or prosecuted person is presumed to be innocent until their guilt has been established.'

Although the Constitution of the United States does not cite it explicitly, presumption of innocence is widely held to follow from the 5th, 6th and 14th amendments. See also Coffin v. United States. In the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, Article 5, section LVII states that 'no one shall be considered guilty before the issuing of a final and unappealable penal sentence.' The Universal Declaration of Human rights, Article 11, states: Everyone charged with a penal offense has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which they have had all the guarantees necessary for their defense."

This long preamble is necessary to set the stage to discuss the travesty that took place at the Regional Justice Center last week with the conviction of O.J. Simpson on armed robbery and kidnapping charges. Without a doubt, Simpson was guilty in the eyes of many long before the jurors returned with the verdict. First off, he was not judged by a jury of his peers. Nine women and three men—every one of them White—sat in judgment of Simpson. Clark County is 10 percent African-American and more than a 25 percent Hispanic. Where was the racial diversity? Prosecutors effectively got prospective Black jurors tossed. Why didn't the defense attack this? Can we really believe that the jurors weren't prejudiced by Simpson's acquittal in the double murder of his wife and one-time house guest? Please.

That 1995 trial divided the country along racial lines. Old wounds heal slowly, if at all. No way was Simpson given a fair shake. The trial would've had to have been held in some foreign country for there to be an impartial jury. The whole nature of the incident, in which the "victims" recorded Simpson and his co-defendants barging into a Palace Station hotel room and forcefully demanding the return of the former NFL star's swag, reeks of a set-up. Entrapment has always been a legally murky issue. Creating the scenario for a crime when one wouldn't ordinarily exist is understandable if you're trying to bring down international drug trafficking rings, but its way out of line for someone like Simpson.

That is, unless, you're out to get him. Let's face it. America has been out to get Simpson since 1995. Sadly, with the help of bad judgment on his part, Christmas may have come early for those who'd convicted him in their minds before a jury rendered its verdict.



## Greedy trample on the needy

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

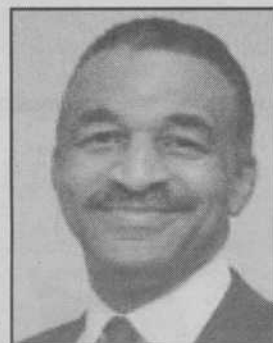
"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income." — Ecclesiastes 5:10

In recent history, there has been no better time than now for us to see the chasm between the so-called have's and the have not's. We are witnesses to the biggest rip-off since the Great Train Robbery. As if Halliburton and all the rest of the Iraq war crooks were not enough, the bar has been raised even higher now with the housing/mortgage/banking crisis.

A couple of years ago folks were making so much money, via unethical and illegal means, so much so that they must have thought their gravy train had no caboose. Now they realize that the light at the end of the tunnel was that of an oncoming train.

I have long been amazed at the arrogance of the powerful, and the greed they display in their endless quest for filthy lucre. Anything goes. No holds barred. No rules. No ethics. Many of those who benefitted tremendously from their financial shenanigans, making billions of dollars along the way, are now wringing their hands and whining about how we have to fix the problem that they created.

Yes, we do need to fix the problem, but all indicators point, once again, to the fact that the needy will suffer because of the misdeeds of the



JAMES CLINGMAN

greedy.

How long do you think this country will be able to get away with the way it treats and mistreats those most in need? How long will we last under corrupt, money-grubbing, profit-at-any-cost shysters and politicians who couldn't care less about our children's future? How long will America survive, perched high upon its throne of world leadership, if it continues to arrogantly thumb its nose at "the least of these"?

Over the past decade, we have seen some of the worst behavior by some of the worst characters, perpetrated upon those who can least afford another financial blow in their lives.

Greedy corporate executives who rape and pillage their companies, get away with their dastardly acts with a bundle of cash in their bank accounts, while the needy watch their 401-K's deflate. Greedy political insiders cut deals and structure contracts that fatten their pockets while the needy try to figure out to pay the rent and stay warm this winter.

If these are not signs of

societal decadence in its highest form, I don't know what is. Right now, no one, virtually no one, is running this country. George Bush is an afterthought to most folks in Washington and around the world now; Cheney is living out his "bunker mentality," and only God knows where he is; Cabinet members are shopping their resumes to find that next job; and Congress is too busy with one-upsmanship, as they jockey for position in the next administration. In other words, brothers and sisters, we are definitely on our own.

The greedy are certainly sticking it to the needy, and most of us feel like there is nothing we can do about it. Well, there are things we can do about it. We have to muster up the will to act on basic economic principles to protect against economic predators and the hazards of being dependent on folks who have no interest whatsoever in our well-being.

That old adage, spoken and implemented by our elders, "Do for self," rings even truer now. Black people are at the mercy of those who own the resources of this country and the world; we are too dependent upon the largess of folks who only see us as a group to pacify and dismiss; and while the elitists among our people continue in their reveling and conspicuous consumption, much of which is mimicked by our youth, collectively we are caught in a downward spiral of economic despair.

In light of the tremendous amount of resources we have at our command, both financial and intellectual, we can do more for ourselves by working closer together and sharing those resources with one another.

Black people across this country should set up bartering groups through which goods and services can be traded instead of being purchased with U.S. dollars. It

(See Clingman, Page 9)

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.  
900 East Charleston Boulevard • Las Vegas, Nevada 89104  
Telephone (702) 380-8100  
Email: lvsentinelvoice@yahoo.com

Contributing Writers:  
Shirley Savage  
Lés Pierres Streater  
Kanika Vann

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

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