

EDITORIAL

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Democracy or Conformity?

This week's editorial is by Nithi Klinkosum, one of WCC's most distinguished history instructors. It was originally published in the Winston-Salem Journal and Sentinel.

Democracy or Conformity?

Having been living in America for a decade and a half, both as a student and as a teacher, I have become "Americanized" in many respects. Perhaps the enjoyment of watching the great American sport, football, is one such fact. Secondly, the idea of individualism which has been passed on to me by the educational system of this country is another.

I am sure that millions of Americans witnessed the 1969 Super Bowl game this past Sunday; and many of them may also have witnessed the half time activities, "America Thanks." America has a lot to be thankful for... her freedom, her role in world affairs, and above all, her democracy. The halftime theme moved me to write to you concerning particularly the freedom of the minority groups of this nation, be those groups black, red, or yellow. This freedom I refer to concerns also the right of individuals to worship as they believe.

Does a minority really have the right to worship in this country? Constitutionally, I would say "yes." But in practice, how many really have to suffer and endure the indirect actions of the so-called democratic spirit of the established institution in this country? How many citizens who belong to the minority ethnic

backgrounds are discriminated against not because of their inability to perform but because of their color and beliefs. Many deeds are done in the name of the Prince of Peace; also many injustices are done against those who do not belong to His established church. Perhaps the medieval crusaders were kinder than the present day Sunday Christians in that they faced their enemies face to face; the twentieth century Crusaders attack the believers of other faiths by means of economic pressure.

I can truthfully speak by virtue of my own raw experience with the so-called soldiers of Christ. I was asked of my belief and subsequently dismissed from a former teaching position. Many readers by now think that I belong to the current "flower generation." This conception is much to the contrary. I was born and reared with the World War II generation in Thailand—a land that saw the coming of both friends and enemies; a land in which 85-90 per cent of the population are Buddhists (a religion that talked of peace and love five hundred years before the coming of Christ!); a land that welcomes missionaries of all faiths to her country and to her temples to speak of peace and love; a land that teaches her sons and daughters the love of freedom, self-respect, and the respect for others and their beliefs. I had heard of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and the Statue of Liberty long before I came to know America personally. I had

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And Then You Ask Why...

From the beginning of time, in any given society, there have been the "haves" and the "have-nots". That is to say, that some people, either by birth or other means, have more wealth, power, a higher position, or in some other way have a hold over other classes of people in the society. This hold or control can be literal, as military control or even outright ownership, or it can be control by prejudice and discrimination, the more cruel of the two.

For purposes of this article, the Negro in America will be used as the prime example to illustrate the thesis. The Negro has been controlled in both of the aforementioned ways by the white society in America. At first, in the colonial days, the American Negro was a slave, mere chattel to be bought or sold much as a cow or horse. His only purpose in being alive, according to the white man, was to work on his plantations. A slave could not legally marry, own property, vote, testify in a court, or move about without permission. Also, he was not permitted to learn to read and write. The white master had control over his Negro slaves to the point of life and death.

With the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862, Abraham Lincoln allowed the Negro to gain his freedom, freedom not to be free, that is. A paradox? Yes, but most definitely true. While the white man no longer had the literal life over death control over the Negro as master to slave, he still had economic and discriminatory privileges which were, in many ways, the worst of the two. The Negro found himself uneducated and bewildered in a world full of people ready to rape his wife and take his money, ready to curse his color and steal his land, and also ready to deny his rights that are guaranteed to all men.

After the slaves were freed, the whites still claimed superiority. There was still the threat of physical violence if the Negro asserted himself too much, and many "legal" steps were taken to keep the Negro in his place. One of the larger problems created by the freeing of slaves was their vote. The white establishment knew that by the laws of the day, which were that any free man could vote the Negro could vote and make his presence known. So they began passing "grandfather laws" in many Southern states to stop the Negro vote. These laws stated that only persons whose grandfathers had been allowed to vote could vote now. The newly

freed slaves' grandfathers could not, of course, have voted previously because they were slaves. Therefore, the Negro could not vote and this major tool to gaining equality was lost. Also, the whites came up with an "equal but separate" philosophy in dealing with Negroes. This meant separate housing, separate buses, trains, rest rooms, laundries, churches, even separate Coke machines. This doctrine was even condoned by the Supreme Court for a time.

In more recent years, many forward strides have been taken by the American Negro. Theoretically, he is just as free and equal as any man. He can go to the school of his choice, on paper; and in general, he is no longer a second class citizen, also on paper. However, in practice, the converse is most often true. The Negro is often forced to go to sub-standard schools, use out-dated books discarded by white schools, he cannot live in certain sections of town, and his color still seems to determine his employment. An example of the latter is that the ratio of master's and doctorate degrees among Negro school-teachers and educators is disproportionately high, the reason for this simply being that they know they must have a superior education and training to get a job. They also know that if they are lucky enough to go to college that they must go as far as possible, because they further realize that in order to be considered equal, they must actually be superior.

There are many people who try to nationalize the plight of the American Negro by saying that he will not help himself, that, if given opportunities, he will just let them go without even trying to take advantage of them. These people are just taking the example of a minority of the Negro population and are also forgetting that there are many times more "poor white" welfare breeders than Negro, and are trying to sweep the whole situation under the proverbial "rug" of indifference.

Why should the American Negro be expected to take second best and like it. Why should he wait on the white man to come to his rescue? If he waits until the white man "allows" him equality, the Negro will be the second class citizenry another three hundred years. Why? The white man stands to lose if the Negro is equal. Therefore, regardless

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The Cougar Cry

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