

FORUM

How free
is freedom?

Jamika R. Burnette

Guest Columnist

According to the National Registry of Exonerations, out of 873 individual exonerations from January 1989 through February 2012, defendants collectively spent more than 10,000 years in prison for crimes they should have never been convicted of.

My question is, when will Calvin Michael Smith be free, and to what expense will he receive his freedom?

While current debates reflect falsities regarding bogus assertions of exonerating the wrongfully accused, Calvin Smith's

reality consists of a recurring nightmare. Stuck in a continuum of agony, he wakes up every day as an innocent prisoner suspended within the restraints of a system that erroneously accused him of a crime he didn't commit – a situation that appointed officials can fix, but have simply failed to do so. At the end of the day, everyone opposite of those prison walls can live a liberated lifestyle, but Smith is void that opportunity.

Being a free black man in America is a reference as paradoxical as Aphra Behn's mention of a "Royal Slave." Nothing is royal about any facet of being a slave, and nothing is free about being a black man in America's society.

Kalvin Michael Smith's case reveals social and political truths that amass

slavery-like elements, and divisions of mental, spiritual, and physical brutality – which result in anything but freedom. The elements of Smith's case allow us, as un-incarcerated citizens, to inspect the true trials of the human experience that is wedged within the webs of an abhorrent criminal justice system.

For centuries, America's done a fine job representing systemic oppression through the vices of European superiority and colonialism. These inherited concepts thrive as the paradigm of our justice system to this very day. Our "Injustice" system is simply an allegory of unprincipled, manipulative, evil behaviors and century-old trends that show us firsthand that the "system" just can't be trusted. Caught in a web of

socio-economic, cultural, and POLITICAL factors, Calvin Michael Smith's wrongful incarceration displays specifically how the African-American man is warehoused for consumerism, exploited, and commercialized based on the features of the institutions he belongs to.

So, is Calvin M. Smith a metaphorical illustration of modern-day slavery within a romanticized-turned-political justice system? Is he a prime example of the racism and the cruelties of modern slavery within the core of a social structure that promotes inequality among all disadvantaged and marginalized groups?

Our criminal justice system romanticizes freedom in the form of a freewill that is offered to us by elected officials, selec-

tively. For example, based on the institutions we belong to, a person can choose what schools his or her kids go to, where they live, or where they work, as they are "constitutionally free."

However, in all actuality, our freedoms are designated and assigned from a footing of racism and the unscrupulous, biased, and horrific exploitations of human lives. Our criminal justice system has the ability to make the horrid sound meek, and make our "freedom" seem less-restricting and racist than it really is. Unfortunately, Smith is a major, public example of what a marginalized human being in this society has to sacrifice for a large measure of freedom – his life. Calvin M. Smith

is not the "feigned hero." He is a true, human and very real hero of the masses. It's beyond time for justice. Free Calvin Michael Smith!

Jamika Rose Burnette, a native North Carolinian, has been a freelance writer since 2008. As a content writer, she creates informative articles for various websites while pursuing a Bachelors of Arts in English. She is also an active supporter for the Can-Do: Justice through Clemency nonprofit foundation that advocates clemency for all non-violent drug offenders, who are caught in the conundrum of the drug war. Burnette is continuing her studies at Salem College.

Republicans began
downward spiral by
blocking president

James B. Ewers Jr.

Guest Columnist

Democrats, Republicans and Independents – that this has been the most vicious and mean-spirited presidential campaign in modern day history.

New attack ads and unreasonable strategies were coming from one candidate's camp almost on an hourly basis. It is my opinion that the Republican Party has only themselves to blame for this political farce of a campaign that they have represented.

Republicans in Congress spent the past eight years blaming President Barack Obama for everything from the weather to the economy. They had a constant mantra of "no." No to healthcare, no to women's rights and no to education. These were only of a few of them!

Instead of trying to develop meaning-

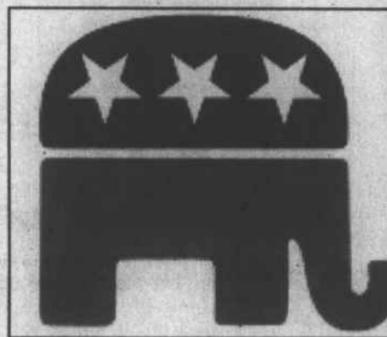
ful dialogues with President Obama, the Republican Party used "no" as their everyday response. President Obama used many approaches to try and establish a relationship with them but nothing worked.

I will use three adjectives and they are smart, black and male. Barack Obama fits all these categories. While they will never, ever admit it, many Republicans, not all Republicans, just could not take it.

Their privilege, their pride and their self-perceived power could not understand how a black man could become the most powerful person in the world.

Even some in our communities were against President Obama not because of his policies and proposals but because of his race. Unfortunately, too many African-Americans suffer from a crabs-in-the-barrel mindset. We simply do not want to see other African-Americans succeed. Sad.

So now for many months, the Republican Party has had as their presi-

"Shame on the Republican Party.
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dential nominee a man who gloats about not paying taxes, a man who demeans women and a man who questions the fundamental integrity of the voting process in this country. These are just a few of the truisms associated with the Republican presidential candidate.

Shame on the Republican Party. They should be thoroughly embarrassed. For example, the state of North Carolina has become the laughing stock of the country because its Republican governing body passed HB 2 into law. They want to legislate what bathroom its citizens can use. So if you are a Republican in my home state of North Carolina and you supported this law, then shame on you.

I am unbridled in my enthusiasm for what will happen on the night of Nov. 8. Somewhere between 10 p.m. and midnight, television stations across America will announce that Hillary Clinton will

become the next president of the United States of America. I can hear Martha Reeves and The Vandellas singing now, "They'll be dancing in the streets."

A few weeks ago, as President Obama talked about the Republican nominee's credentials, some people began to boo. The President's appropriate response was, "Don't boo, vote."

We must as rational thinkers and reasonable people vote in record numbers on Nov. 8 to ensure the victory for Hillary Clinton. We will be making history with each of our votes.

I am excited and I know you are. Get your snacks ready, invite your friends over because on Nov. 8, we will see Hillary Clinton become the first woman to become President of The United States of America.

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Bad Hombre



Tom Hastings

Guest Columnist

Watching the 2016 campaign is hypnotically akin to the gawker slow-down that affects traffic with the slightest accident. Rubbernecking the three most recent Trump offenses in any given week has given America an entirely new hobby.

*He might be insulting KIA Muslim American soldiers or their parents, as he did with Capt. Humayun Khan. That was brilliant.

Tack on his clumsy idiocy about John McCain, telling us that he, Trump, prefers pilots who don't get captured. Does he not realize he sounds like a sociopathic son of Saddam with these chickenhawk utterances?

*He might be mocking people with disabilities, as he did with reporter Serge Kovalski. That took courage. Trump, for all his bluster and pomposity, is a profile in pusillanimity.

*Inexplicably meeting with Enrique Peña Nieto, President of Mexico, without bringing up The Wall he's designed against all the rapists crossing the border now, The Wall that Trump decides unilaterally that Mexico will pay for.

Ineffable.

*He really fixed that when he called Pope Francis "disgraceful" for the Pope's critique of the proposed Wall. Just to continue with the Catholic vote, he managed to be the first candidate in memory to get booed at the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation traditional candidate roast.

*Perhaps his basket of deplorable comments about women in general and specifically. Maybe he's caught on tape bragging about his woman-gropeing. Donald! Basic Groper manners – get permission, then grope away. Calling Alicia Machado, the former Miss Universe, Miss Piggy. Women are



Chronicle file photo

loving you, Donald. Referring to Carly Fiorina, he said, "Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that?" (OMG, Trump, look in the mirror when you say that and same thing when you call someone a "nasty woman.")

*Luckily, he is on top of the refugees-as-terrorists-in-the-U.S. crisis. Oh, that's right. Zero terror

attacks by refugees inside the U.S. to date. Looks like they've all been vetted adequately, so far, despite his hysteria.

We could go on, but let's just leave it with a secret for The Donald: Oscar Wilde was brilliant, but your devotion to his erroneous dictum, "There is no such thing as bad publicity," is your political

undoing. You have your base of basket cases and that's it.

Michelle, you get four years off for great behavior, but we want to see you run in 2020. No one could heal this nation better.

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