

At least Geraldo will try to be even-handed

By Dennis Schatzman
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Say what you want about controversial talk show host Geraldo Rivera, but from my vantage point he is one of the precious few megamedia stars that will respond to reasonable requests to cover pertinent black issues.

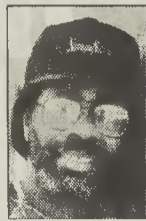
I'll be the first to say that I am not the easiest journalist to get along with. I can be very vitriolic; sometimes I can even be nasty, particularly in print.

Several weeks ago, I launched a missive at him, Charles Grodin, Gloria Allred and other nationally syndicated talk show hosts daring them to devote as much time to the CIA/crack cocaine controversy as they do to the never-ending O.J. Simpson double murder/wrongful death saga. Much to my glee, Rivera and his capable staff responded to my challenge. And he was the only one of the big boys to do so. What a guy.

On Sept. 30, I was invited on his "Rivera Live" show to discuss two topics near and dear to my heart: fairness and accuracy in the media coverage of the Simpson issue and the role of the CIA in the dealing of crack in the inner cities to raise money for the Nicaraguan Contras during the 1980s.

Rivera gave me the opportunity to tee off on a journalist I sat next to during Simpson I, the first trial. That

man, Jeffrey Toobin, has a book out, "The Run For His Life, The People vs. O.J. Simpson." In my opinion, it will go down in the annals of history along side of artistic endeavors like D.W. Griffith's epic movie "Birth of a Nation" and Charles Murray's recent book on black inferiority, "The Bell Curve."



Schatzman

Toobin's book depicts nearly every Black person involved in the Simpson saga as either stupid and ignorant (the black jurors), cheaters (Simpson at playing cards and on his wives), pompous, arrogant and sleazy (Johnnie Cochran) or incompetent (Christopher Darden). His only compliments were given to Simpson's sisters, whom he described as women with grace in the face of snide attacks from reporters and other ne'er-do-wells, and me.

The author gave me the dubious honor of being the only journalist who set the controversial agenda on the Simpson case for all of Black America. Based on what he said about every other black person connected with the case, however, I'm not so sure if that was a compliment or not.

Toobin paints the police as men who were darn near as pure as the driven snow, incapable of planting evidence in this case. Never mind that one of the lead detectives has a history of planting evidence in other cases.

As for Robert Shapiro, he is to be pitied for being ousted from center stage in the case, according to Toobin.

I could go on, but what's the point? Much of this book is based on unsubstantiated rumors (Cochran believed all along that Simpson was guilty), cheap shots (former juror Tracy Kennedy's feet stunk, and Darden used to shoplift when he was in college) and out-and-out lies (the evidence against Simpson was "overwhelming").

I even got a chance to tweak Toobin on the other issue of the day - the CIA's alleged involvement in drug trafficking.

On the very last page of his book, Toobin mentions that he was a co-prosecutor in the case, U.S. vs. Col. Oliver North. I found it peculiar that Toobin could be so adept at being able to spot a "murderer" getting away but could not see that Oliver North, President Reagan's ace-booncoon on the Iran-Contra missions during the 1980s, was tangentially involved in drug dealing.

Toobin's overlooking of the drug connection affected me in two ways. First, in an interview he had with me, published in the July 18, 1995 edition of New Yorker Magazine, I told him of my onetime battle with cocaine abuse, specifically crack cocaine. For him to overlook North as a possible major courier or conduit for couriers, insulted me greatly when I read of his involvement with the North case in his book. It let me know that he really doesn't care what happens in the real world.

DENNIS SCHATZMAN is a Los Angeles-based freelance writer.

Letters to The Post

Let's get together

Unity is a by-product of linking the thought process of a common interest. It can be found by being open-minded and stepping out of oneself to gain freedom in understanding that the world will go on with or without you, in addition to realizing that you can attain all that you want by giving others what they want.

It is the acknowledgement of total awareness that without others nothing can be accomplished. It is a place where one can find peace and harmony provided that all parties are spiritually fit and have a vision and wisdom to realize their dreams.

For us it's only words spoken and not acted upon. We must stand strong and take a profound action in putting together our lives through the process of being bold enough to realize and accept the fact, of the utmost importance of being associated and fine tuned to develop a plan of action that puts us all in one accord, never forgetting to place God first in our affairs, always being reminded of our own life source which is family.

We must make an effort today to stand strong, take action, know to fight the enemy, which in our case is division. We must be diversified in our thoughts, but committed to unity in our actions. We must no longer engage in single mindedness. For if this is the action or process of living we choose, we lose. There's not a single form of achievement that can be accomplished without the give and take process. But today we have a choice, do we go it alone? For the statement still stands, "together we stand and divided we fall."

What goal would you like to attain today? If it can be conceived it can be achieved. With unity of mind, body and spirit the burden is lifted and singleness can be defeated, if we know and place our thoughts and actions to the benefit of all. Where do you stand today, in unity or in singleness. The latter only creates fear, despair and loneliness?

TODD ALEXANDER
Charlotte

A classy affair

On Saturday, Oct. 5 at the Museum of the New South, The Charlotte Post honored a group of women that had been recognized during Women's History Month '96. This classy affair was typical of what The Charlotte Post is about.

The decorations (Christmas motif) and the warm hospitality contributed to a good time being had by all. I am grateful that I was one of the recipients.

Our fair city is fortunate to have The Charlotte Post. Here's to continued excellent reporting.

DAISY SPEARS STROUD
Charlotte

Cause of AIDS

The scriptures tell us in Acts second chapter that when Peter preached that the love of God was available to all people, he instructed them to "repent" so that their sins would be forgiven (chapter 2, verse 38). It is commendable that the community will finally be dealing with the horror of AIDS in the upcoming AIDS seminars. It would be cruel and unloving if, as the message of God's love is presented, we were to forget that the unwillingness to repent of sins and destructive lifestyles is the foundational cause of AIDS.

God is a loving creator, and as such, cannot allow the sins of homosexuality and premarital sexual activity to go unpunished.

BLAINE MACK
Charlotte

What's on your mind?
Send your comments to The Charlotte Post, P.O. Box 30144, Charlotte, N.C. 28230 or fax (704) 342-2160. You can also use E-mail - charpost@cit.mindspring.com

Church burnings are no surprise to faithful

By Joseph Broadus
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Few events in recent memory have ignited the African-American community's imagination like the recent rash of church burnings throughout the Southeast. The burnings fueled fears (shared by many in the Black community) that the renewal of respect for human dignity that began with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was coming to an end. This catastrophe seems to be echoed in the decisions of recent Supreme Court decisions to limit affirmative action as well as the profound conservatism noted in recent polls and elections.

In an age when victimization has become the prime cultural archetype, the church fires are further evidence that racism subjects Black Americans to a unique suffering - unshared by other ethnic groups in the United States. Indeed, no one can doubt the agony experienced by the violent destruction of churches which are the center of life for individuals and their

communities. As it has been long felt, a church is a living link with neighbors, history, and God. Attacks on so essential an institution often brings sadness, confusion, and even rage. In the case of the recent assaults on Black American churches, however, the burnings have brought something unexpected - a greater sense of community.

If the arsonists intended to encourage hatred and despair, they have discovered the difference between mere material reality and the super reality of the Kingdom of God. The events have been transformed by an outpouring of virtues including charity. Once isolated from other peoples in the comfort of the familiar, parishioners have come together and found strength and greater faith. Church members were renewed like a Phoenix from the ashes of these fires. If the most concrete life of a church was its building, truer reality is now discovered in the link that exists between members of a larger faith community.

Among the spiritual lessons

learned was that what makes a church is human beings - not a people defined by race or place. The parishioners of the burned down churches are now defined by the grace to undo these shameful things and also the joy of discovering that others care. The walls that come down are not just the ones that burned down. The walls that once separated God's people have also fallen. The walls in the human heart that made Sunday morning the most segregated hour have crumbled.

Church burning is not a new phenomenon nor is it limited to the Black community. Instead, church burnings are a persistent tragedy. Interestingly, church burnings are seldom observed or commented on by the mainstream media. It was only the race of the parishioners that made the recent epidemic of church burnings visible to the elite culture of press and politics as a serious problem.

Did anyone notice 1980 with its record of over 1000 church fires? Has anyone noticed the hundreds of church arsons since then? Indeed, these crimes of

hate have often been ignored in the past. Why has the media ignored this particular kind of hatred? If racism is to blame, it must be their profound distaste that secular society has for what it view as remnants of an older, and largely worthless, order based on faith. Some even argue that the bias against faith has not only made the fires merely visible, but also inevitable.

Does it surprise anyone that the same people that stripped prayer from the public schools (in the name of freedom of religion), stripped religious symbols during religious holidays from the public square (in the interest of sensitivity), and barred the consideration of alternative creation theories from public schools, have been singularly disinterested in church burnings? This is the same elite policy makers that have amused themselves by insulting communities of faith with such mockeries as The National Endowment for the Arts' public funding for soaking crucifixes in urine.

The ugliness of this crowd's bigotry is reflected in films and

books where the religious are

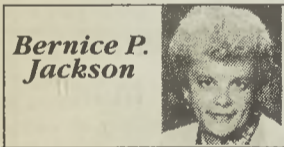
always fools or fiends. It is not surprising then, if isolated and unhinged individuals are responding to this culture of hate by venting themselves on the archvillain of these cultural elites.

Immediate police action may deter some arsonists, and rapid community response may restore some church buildings. The treatment of the disease, however, demands deep introspection and determined effort will rid the nation of the curse of anti-religious bigotry.

It takes more than matches to burn a church. It takes hatred and contempt. Elite commentators have been all too quick to attribute these qualities to strangers on the right. A little introspection about their own contributions to such hatred and intolerance might become a starting point for seeking freedom not in the smoldering ashes of noble institutions, but in the dignity of the human person.

JOSEPH BROADUS is a law professor at George Mason

Stopping the violence among our young people



Once again I was confronted by the pictures of the pain. Once again there was the plaintive cry of a mother who had lost a son to the violence, the television cameras showing the family's tears and the photographs of a young man who should have had his whole life ahead of him.

Once again, the mother's plea that no other mother have to suffer the loss of a child to the

violence. The lost of a young man who might have discovered the cure for cancer or been the one who makes peace in the world a reality.

Once again there was the television story of the silent march in Washington, D.C. being held to protest gun violence. Tens of thousands of shoes of those killed by guns lined up near the Capitol, making us realize how many Americans are dying every year to the violence.

Ten children are murdered every day in this country. Many others are injured by guns. Violence is such a part of the lives of so many children in our nation that nearly half say they know of weapons in their schools and

nearly three fourths are aware of physical attacks on students. Most of them know where to get a gun.

Children are fearful for their lives and planning their funerals instead of their graduations or proms. The violence is all around us and threatens to engulf us like a whirlwind. But we can do something about it.

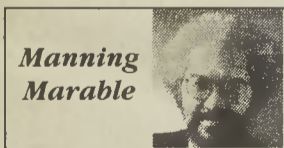
On Oct. 10 thousands of students across the nation were asked to respond to the "Day of National Concern about Young People and Gun Violence" which is being sponsored by the U.S. Senate. Anyone concerned about gun violence can help make this day a success.

On Oct. 10 students across the

country were asked to sign a pledge that they will never carry a gun to school, will never resolve a dispute with a gun and will use their influence with their friends to keep them from resolving disputes with guns.

Schools, community groups, churches and mosques are being encouraged to hold special programs about guns and violence. The goal of the pledge is "to try to turn around the culture in which young people exist, by having them take action that, with their collective voice, demonstrates to the country that a crisis situation exists and that we must end the violence," said Sen. Bill Bradley, sponsor of the Senate bill.

Changing racial politics and the new world order



As we face yet another presidential election year, African Americans once again must confront the dilemma of voting for the "lesser evil."

As of this writing, Clinton seems assured of being easily reelected. Although clearly superior to the reactionary Republican challenger, Robert Dole, Clinton nevertheless is the most conservative Democrat to occupy the White House in generations. We cannot begin to develop a progressive strategy for black empowerment in this era of political conservatism, unless we understand the global forces toward inequality which form the foundation of the cur-

rent crisis.

The "New World Order" was proclaimed by former President George Bush, upon the fall of the Soviet Union and Communism. Throughout the entire world, governments and political parties shifted to the right. Even relatively liberal parties such as England's Labour Party moved toward the political center.

"Globalization" of corporate capitalism and information revolution have rapidly transformed the nature of work and the character of production. As traditional industries disappeared, and as agricultural production globally moved from labor-intensive to capital-intensive methods, millions of working people were displaced. Hundreds of millions of Third World people migrated from rural areas to cities, and from their own countries into

Western Europe and North America, in the struggle for survival. Third World countries with socialist and labor parties had few options except to adopt neo-liberal, capitalist policies. These massive transformations in the structure of the global economy and labor force have generated a sharp increase in income inequality and greater class stratification. The real wages for working-class people have steadily declined, and job insecurity now increasingly affects middle-class households as well. In our central cities, millions of jobs which could sustain families have been destroyed. In communities like Central Harlem today, there are 14 job applicants for every available job in the fast-food industry. Members of families confined to the poorest neighborhoods for several generations

have never had the experience of a job in their lives.

When large numbers of people cannot obtain employment, the quality of life for the entire community suffers: grocery stores and retail establishments close down, social institutions like churches and schools are weakened, the quality of housing deteriorates, and the level of violence connected with crime inevitably increases. Conversely, the same global economic forces have concentrated vast wealth in the hands of a small privileged elite, which is also increasingly multinational in character.

In the United States, these economic trends created the political space for an extreme version of conservatism to triumph. In the early 1980s, this reaction was symbolized by the administration of Ronald

Reagan. Reaganism was in many ways the mirror opposite of the New Deal: government was the problem, not the solution. Federal programs were abolished; industries were deregulated; affirmative action and environmental laws were not enforced; the capital gains tax was significantly reduced, and taxes on corporate profits virtually disappeared.

African Americans are challenged by a new "race/class hierarchy" which defines the politics of non-European and oppressed people throughout the world. Our challenge is to build an alternative political movement which grasps the dynamics of global conflict, as well as our conditions inside the US.

MANNING MARABLE is Director of the Institute for Research in African American Studies, Columbia University.