

Faulty Iraq evidence and an eager victim

WILLIAM RASPBERRY



When President Bush is asked whether he regrets attacking Iraq on what now turns out to be bad information, he always answers to the effect that the world is better off with Saddam Hussein out of power.

Which is no answer at all.

I can think of many world leaders (and even a few members of the Bush administration) whose absence from power would leave the world better off. But that does not justify turning thought into violent action.

The president wants us to forget this awkward truth: The justification he offered for attacking Iraq was not that Hussein was a bad guy

but (1) that he was contemptuously in violation of U.N.

resolutions and (2) that he and his weapons of mass destruction were an urgent danger to the United States — so ominous, in fact, that if we waited for more inspections and negotiations, it might be too late.

Former weapons inspector David Kay now says, to the obvious embarrassment of the administration, that he believes Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction when American bombers struck Baghdad almost a year ago. Does that mean that we launched the war on false pretenses?

No, in Kay's view, yes, in mine.



Bush

Kay explains that he thought at the time that the WMDs existed and were a menace. The problem, he has been at pains to say, is not Bush administration mendacity but failure of the intelligence apparatus. Bush, by that explanation, is not villain but victim:

Well, he was a most eager victim, practically begging for justification — any justification — for the war he was determined to have. He was only temporarily stalled when Secretary of State Colin Powell persuaded him to take the case to the U.N. Security Council. But the administration's chapter-and-verse accounting of how Hussein had violated U.N. agreements and directives did not produce a call for war.

The Bush administration was left with a single rationale: Iraq's urgent threat to

America.

Thus came Powell's Feb. 5 multimedia extravaganza before the Security Council. You may remember it.

"Let's look at one [satellite image]. This one is about a weapons munition facility, a facility that holds ammunition at a place called Taji. This is one of about 65 such facilities in Iraq. We know that this one has housed chemical munitions. . . ."

"Here, you see 15 munitions bunkers in yellow and red outlines. The four that are in the red squares represent active chemical munitions bunkers."

Again:
"At this biological-weapons-related facility, on November 25, just two days before inspections resumed, this truck caravan appeared, something we almost never see at this facility, and we monitor it carefully and reg-

ularly . . . five large cargo trucks appeared along with the truck-mounted crane to move missiles. We saw this kind of housecleaning at close to 30 sites."

Oh, and enough anthrax (one spoonful of which was enough to shut down the U.S. Senate in the fall of 2001) to "fill tens upon tens upon tens of thousands of teaspoons."

And this: "My colleagues, every statement I make today is backed up by sources, solid sources. These are not assertions. What we're giving you are facts and conclusions based on solid intelligence."

Well, not so solid after all, it turns out.

The question — to give Powell the benefit of the doubt Kay gives the president — is: Did the intelligence agencies serve the secretary of state a batch of cooked evidence?

Or was Colin, my personal hero, in the kitchen?

Does it matter? Perhaps the administration oversold the evidence. Perhaps the war was, in retrospect, too hasty, even unnecessary. But, hey, it happened, so let's just get on with it. What's the point of raking through the ashes of year-old decisions?

Maybe there is no point — if you believe, as Kay claims to believe, that it's all about failed intelligence.

But there is a vital point if you believe, as I'm increasingly inclined to believe, that the administration lied to us in calculated and quite deliberate ways. If that happened, if it still is happening, I want to know as much about it as can be discovered. After all, there's an election coming up.

WILLIAM RASPBERRY is a Washington Post columnist.

Some ways to help the homeless

By Courtland Milloy
THE WASHINGTON POST

Leaving a coffee shop in downtown Washington the other day, I was met by a homeless man with his hand out. "Can you spare anything?" he asked. I shook my head and kept moving; my stride stiffened to silence the loose change in my pants pocket.

I don't know why I gave the man such a cold shoulder. Perhaps if he had been farther from the coffee shop, giving me a chance to take a few sips, I might have been in a better mood.

Fortunately, not everyone's sense of charity is determined by caffeine, though I don't feel obliged to go into my wallet for every homeless person I meet.

At Eastern Market, I met a homeless man named Allen Jones, who made my decision to help a lot easier. In his outstretched hand was a copy of a newspaper called Street Sense, which is written, in part, by homeless people, and published by the National Coalition for the Homeless in Washington.

The paper costs \$1, and the vendor gets to keep 70 cents. Deal, I said.

"The people in this area are open-minded and very responsive to the issues of poverty and homelessness," Allen told me. "The first day I came out, I made \$50, and the next day, close to \$70. I'm looking to make a hundred."

What impressed me was his hustle. As Michael A. Stoops, director of community organizing for the coalition, put it, "People like the idea of homeless people working for living."

Allen says the money gives him choices he never had before: to rent a room from time to time, instead of being holed up in a shelter; to buy himself a meal, instead of eating whatever is being dished out a soup kitchen; to be a salesman instead of a panhandler.

By emphasizing employment, the coalition and similar groups across the country make the plight of the homeless seem less hopeless.

When Street Sense debuted Nov. 15, there were 10 vendors. Now there are 30. The word is getting around on the homeless grapevine: Being a salesman pays.

"The homeless people that I work with tell me that if you're out eight hours a day and ask everybody who walks by, you'll make about \$25 — if you're lucky," Stoops said. "And if they have a substance-abuse problem, after the first \$5, they're gone for the day."

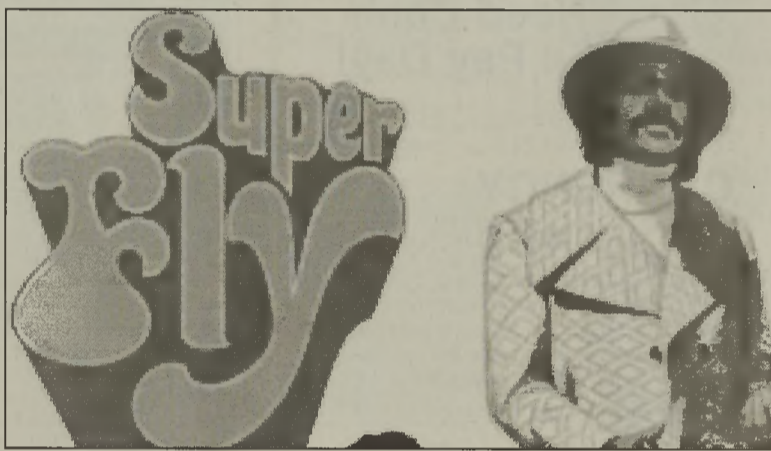
At best, that's less than half of what most street vendors earn. The current issue of Street Sense (Jan. 15-Feb. 14) features reports on the rise of homelessness in the District, the opening of a shelter on New York Avenue NE and the way homeless organizations handle the drop in volunteers after the holidays.

Allen, 46, is mentioned in a story about homelessness among ex-offenders.

"I was incarcerated 4 1/2 years [for robbery] and found it difficult coming out of prison and trying to get back into the job sector," he told me. "People seem apprehensive. But I'm being optimistic that the doors will eventually open."

Part of his optimism comes from lessons learned as a vendor. "Basically, we tell people to come in with the attitude that they can make a sale, that they can make money," said Fred Anderson, coordinator of vendors for the coalition. "I tell them to go out and enjoy themselves, greet people and smile even when they get rejected."

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Circumstances of 1970s movie hero still apply in 21st century

By Mansfield B. Frazier
CITY NEWS OHIO

CLEVELAND — The death of Cleveland-born actor Ron O'Neal, who is best remembered for his role as "Youngblood Priest" in the 1972 box-office hit "Super Fly," has caused a revisiting of that era — and indeed the whole culture that spawned that genre of "blaxploitation" films — by some local and national social commentators.

Sam Fullwood opined in a recent Cleveland Plain Dealer column that the film "hurt the image of black masculinity" and "marked the end of the civil rights movement." I, however, respectfully beg to differ with the esteemed Mr. Fullwood on both counts.

The "masculinity" issue he raises must have to do with the hairstyle and clothes of the main character, Priest, who wore his hair in a manner that was an outgrowth of a style called a "process," or "do," back-in-the-day. Many blacks from Nat "King" Cole's era (and even before) wore them with élan and pride. By the '70s the style had evolved into the longer version that Priest wore, called a "Jesus Christ" (for obvious reasons). Strange, but no one has ever called Jesus' masculinity into question due to His long hair, have they?

As for the threads, street hustlers simply took the flamboyant styles being worn by entertainers such as James Brown, Marvin Gaye, The Four Tops and the like and moved them from the stage into the audience. If anyone thinks that those styles were outrageous, just recall what white youths were wearing during the counterculture decade.

Fullwood states that the film "marked the end of the civil rights movement," as if "Super Fly" caused the end of the movement, which, of course, is utter nonsense. The movement, in fact, has never ended. While it will never again be as active as it

was during its nascent stage in the late '50s and early '60s, the movement slowed for two obvious reasons: One, we achieved the goals of school and public accommodations integration that were at the heart of the movement, and two, we lost our charismatic leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

If he had not been taken from us we would have more swiftly shifted our focus from demanding to have a seat in the front of the bus, to having jobs driving the buses, supervising others who drive buses, and having seats on the board of directors of the bus company. However, once we successfully integrated lunch counters in the South we discovered that the food was absolutely horrible.

I submit that the issue of economic empowerment that black churches are now just beginning to embrace would have been center-stage years ago if Dr. King had survived.

While I do agree with Fullwood's underlying premise that the most positive image for young blacks (and browns, reds and whites for that matter) to emulate is that of a Dr. King and other high-achieving men and women of color, all children are not going to be raised in circumstances that will promote the pursuing of the dream of equality in the same manner that Dr. King was privileged to utilize.

The protagonist in "Super Fly," like him or not, was a black entrepreneur, who, it could be argued, took the only route to success open to poor and undereducated blacks at the time. Even today we still see young black men standing on street corners looking for customers with one eye while looking out for "Five-Oh" with the other.

Fullwood sounds suspiciously like a player hater; but, as they say in the street . . . "Don't hate the player, hate the game."

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VAL ATKINSON



Gilmore in the Ag race now

If you're in your 20s, or if you've been in North Carolina less than 10 years, you're probably not familiar with the name Tom Gilmore.

Allow me to take a moment and talk about a friend of mine, Tom Gilmore. Tom is a Guilford County farmer; he worked with Ben Hooks and Coretta Scott King on affirmative action issues; he worked with Jesse Jackson to integrate the North Carolina Young Democrats; he introduced a bill to change the second primary law (which prevented many African Americans from taking office after they had garnered the majority of the votes);

Gilmore has been unwavering in his opposition to the death penalty; Tom and his family have been threatened by the Klan for his support of civil rights initiatives; and when Mr. Gilmore decided to run for agriculture commissioner he setup his campaign account at Mutual (a black bank in Greensboro). But this is not all that Tom is.

Gilmore wants to restore integrity to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and he wants the Department to look like North Carolina. Tom thinks that there's plenty of room to hire more African Americans in the Department of Agriculture and he intends to do so.

Gilmore is not a young man, but he ain't old either. As the late great Satchel Paige used to say . . . "Age ain't nothing but mind over matter; if you don't mind, then it don't matter". Tom Gilmore doesn't mind that he's a life long friend of Jim Hunt and that he has the support of community leaders such as Ben Ruffin (former and first black chair of the UNC Board of Governors) and Henry Frye (former and first black to serve as chief justice on North Carolina's Supreme Court. Tom's experiences are a plus.

North Carolina would be fortunate to have Tom Gilmore serve as the first elected agriculture commissioner after the reign of Jim Graham and the resignation of Meg Scott-Phipps.

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