

Forum

Thanksgiving: Speaking the truth

Yes, this is the season to give thanks to God for all of the blessings of life. For the overwhelming majority of the world's population, this is a time of profound hunger, pain and struggle for survival. To some in the United States, Thanksgiving is a traditional time for families to be together and to share a sense of gratitude for all the "good"

hawk" moves, we wonder if these sports fans are aware of the racial and cultural indignities that they are "acting out" toward the Native American community. Of course baseball, football and other sports fans should enjoy themselves, but not at the expense of the dignity of the Native peoples of this land and world.

a nation, face up more readily to the true history of the nation, the real positive potential of the nation will not materialize.

President Bush's exclamation of a "New World Order" seeks to obfuscate the truth of U.S. history. From the perspective of People of Color communities throughout the nation, before the issuing of a call for a new world order for the world, it would be better for the President to help establish a more just and equitable multiracial society here on the home front.

Given the fact of the rise in infant mortality, poverty, healthcare crisis, and other devastating conditions Native Americans are being forced to endure, the vast resources of this society must be reprioritized and redirected to help meet the needs of our Native sisters and brothers. Yet, we all still have something to learn from the Native American community. The issue of environmental justice is a good example. The industrial policies of our society are setting the framework for the destruction of the environment. No community has had more constructive experience in understanding the "sacredness" of the earth and the environment than the Native American community.

The general destruction of the ozone layer is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the future of environmental pollution and injustice. It is ironic but tragic that those in power may have to turn once again to the fundamental truths of Native American understandings of nurturing and protecting the environment in order to live into the next century.

Will those in power treat Native Americans with a greater degree of justice? We all need to be involved in this struggle because the ultimate fate of Native People will be the fate of all.

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By BENJAMIN F. CHAVIS JR.

things that have happened over a period of time.

For millions of Native Americans, the celebration of Thanksgiving in the United States is an annual reminder of the contradictions of American myths, values and the commercialization of these myths and values. On the eve of the 1992 quinquacentennial observance of the arrival of Christopher Columbus to the Western Hemisphere, it should be necessary to speak a word of truth concerning the circumstances of Native Americans in the history and life of this nation.

Although there are numerous references to Native American symbols and terms in sports, television, and in other levels of society, there is a very inadequate CIVIL understanding on the part of many Americans about the state of Native Americans today. The truth is that Native Americans have survived five centuries of oppression and genocide which is unparalleled in human history.

Every time crowds in the tens of thousands can now be seen on national television at sports events shouting, mimicking, and acting in a frenzy of so-called "tommy

Maybe Thanksgiving 1991 will give the nation another opportunity to express "thanks for the giving" of the millions of Native people who were forced to "give up" their lands and life in the birth and historical development of what is now "the most powerful nation in the world," in the view of President George Bush. Will our national elected leaders call the nation into a moment of "repentance" for the past and make a commitment for more fairness, respect, and reparational support of Native Americans? Will our national religious leaders call the communities of faith into prayer and acts of repentance for the "sins" committed against Native Americans?

The truth is that the future of the United States will not depend upon military might or industrial or even economic development as assured methods of maintaining "super-power status." But the future of this nation, we believe to a large measure, will depend upon a national commitment to revisit, rethink, and repent for the historic national sins of Native American genocide and African-American slavery. In other words, until we as

Haitians should not be forced back

Anyone with even cursory knowledge of what is going on in Haiti since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide was overthrown must understand why people are fleeing

Venezuela and Honduras only because a Florida appeals court is deciding whether to allow the Coast Guard to continue its practice of intercepting and repatriating the

I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Past this Statue of Liberty have come millions from other shores to find freedom in this country. Likewise, on the warm waters of the southernmost part of this nation have come millions of Latinos to enjoy the call of Mother Liberty.

Yet, Haitian refugees, poor, frightened black people fleeing for their lives, pose such a threat to this country that they must be intercepted at sea in order to keep them from basking in the warmth of liberty that is part of the fiber of this nation. There seems to be something terribly wrong and inconsistent here.

The only question seems to be whether these people have a legitimate claim for political asylum. Federal law says once refugees

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AGAINST THE GRAIN

By ROOSEVELT WILSON

the country, risking their lives and braving the waters in order to escape the current oppressive and murderous regime.

Yet, the U.S. Coast Guard is intercepting the boats and until three weeks ago was forcing the refugees to return to Haiti. Thousands of Haitians are still being held by the Coast Guard in Cuba,

Haitians.

In New York Harbor stands the "Mother of Exiles," who says:

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,

The wretched refuse of your teeming shore

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

Magic puts AIDS back in spotlight

Basketball great Magic Johnson wrote that he was "ignorant of the reality of AIDS. I hadn't paid attention to the statistics . . . hadn't

greatness, for Magic Johnson is clearly more than a sports hero.

He is a remarkable human being whose exploits on the basket-

much as ten years after the initial infection.

Despite the well-documented threat of the disease, the response by the government and the public has been inadequate.

Part of the reason is that for too many people, AIDS is a disease of homosexuals and drug abusers, and the identification with groups stigmatized by many mainstream Americans has acted as a brake on efforts to relieve the suffering and research the cure.

But the fast-growing rise in AIDS cases among heterosexuals like Magic Johnson is dispelling the fog of myth surrounding AIDS and could jolt society into more vigorous action.

For the fact is that AIDS has hit people in virtually all walks of life, from the famous to the unknown and it looms as one of the major health threats our society faces in the coming decade.

Everyone agrees that Magic Johnson's educational campaign about AIDS and the importance of

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TO BE EQUAL

By JOHN E. JACOB

paid attention to the figures showing that AIDS is a huge problem in the black community. . . . To me, AIDS was someone else's disease."

He had a lot of company. Most people have thought of AIDS — when they thought of it at all — as "someone else's disease."

Now, after the revelation that Magic Johnson is infected with the human immune-deficiency virus (HIV) that causes AIDS, we all know that it can strike anyone.

The outpourings of grief and sorrow that followed his shocking announcement were driven by more than admiration for his athletic

ball court are matched by his magnetic personality and his indomitable courage in facing up to his illness. It's typical of the man that he isn't going to slink off somewhere to sulk or to husband his strength, but instead will personally campaign to educate people about AIDS.

That's important, because there is widespread ignorance about the AIDS epidemic although nearly 200,000 Americans have had AIDS and 126,000 have died. Another 1.5 million, like Magic Johnson, may carry the HIV virus, which can develop into full-fledged AIDS as

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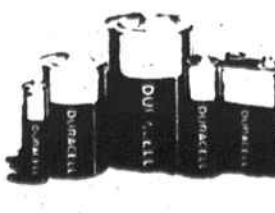
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