

Forum

Film images of blacks harmful

Two men who never saw each other symbolize one of the most tragic but least-clearly explained problems that confronts fair-minded people today.

One is a 73-year-old white man who spent 36 years behind bars in Kentucky and chose jail instead of freedom. When released, he asked to be locked up again. He said he rejected freedom because he didn't "fit-in." His daughter told reporters, "He can't cope with the outside world and adapt to society's way of thinking." He felt "at home" in jail.

The other man is an 18-year-old black college freshman hoping for success in mainstream America. He said he will keep and spread his ghetto speech, his rap music and other values rejected by most employers and most educated people. He argued that standard English is "white folks' talk" and that Nat Cole, Duke Ellington and Bill Cosby were "Oreos — black outside but white inside." He said the blues, rap music and ghetto speech, including profanity, were his racial heritage. He felt threatened and uneasy when physically or psychically away from the ghetto. He tends to ghettoize his environment.

Both men are prisoners. One returned to his physical confinement. The other chose a mental confinement and carries his prison wherever he goes. The old man's time is almost gone — his life a waste. The young man's life is about to be wasted also — unless he frees himself from two mental traps. The first trap is his believing that whatever is "white is right." A black pair of shoes, he would argue, is inherently better than a white pair of shoes simply because it is black.

David Duke probably would argue the opposite, totally ignoring quality and looking only at color.

The second trap is his confusing the concept of race (one's physical features) with the concept of culture (one's learned values and behavior). Guilty of the same

negative stereotypes of blacks, churning up memories of Willie Horton, unwed teenage mothers and welfare families.

These stereotypes and coded insinuations are false. Government statistics show most welfare recipients and unwed teenage mothers are



MINORITY REPORT

By JAMES E. ALSBROOK, Ph.D.

stereotypical thinking that misleads white racists, he foolishly believes his own culture and values are inherent in all blacks.

He made the same error Morley Safer made on "Sixty Minutes" when Safer said Arthur Ashe had "the white man's politeness and manners," thereby implying that good manners were characteristic of only white men. Safer had confused "race" with "culture" and was a victim of stereotypical thinking. Ashe and millions of other blacks do not fit the popular, ignorant stereotypes used as a convenient, handy-dandy, one-size-fits-all image of black people.

Just as the 73-year-old man was physically confined and psychologically conditioned by the mental quirks, preconceptions and stereotypes he learned in the ghetto. If stereotypes misled the sophisticated Morley Safer, they can work their way into the belief systems and thinking patterns of millions of others much less sophisticated.

Right-wing politicians, rattle-brained talk-show bigots and empty-headed riffraff are reinforcing

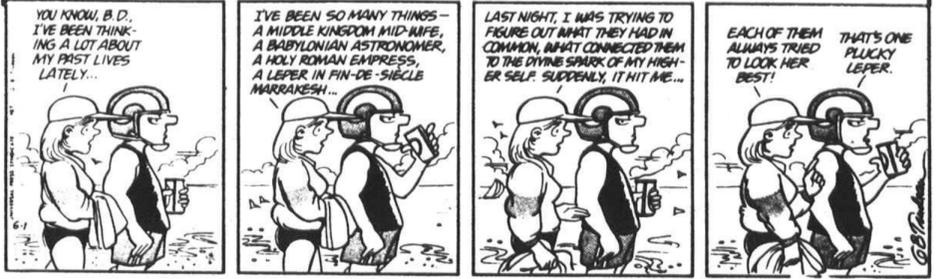
white. But the stereotypes hurting blacks persist. Perpetuating stereotypes damages blacks and confuses millions of American people ranging from the 18-year-old black student to educated people like Morley Safer. Black servicemen including my brother, a pilot in the 99th Fighter Squadron, reported that their assignments overseas were made more difficult because foreign people had seen and believed negative theatrical images before the actual black servicemen arrived.

This is why blacks and whites together must oppose and condemn hurtful, misleading stereotypical productions such as "Mo' Better Blues," "Porgy and Bess," "The Color Purple," and "Brewster Place." Stereotypes abounding in these shows confuse many in addition to Morley Safer and the black student.

They are sugar-coated poison, promoting in whites a false sense of superiority and in blacks a false sense of inferiority. They provide false excuses for double standards America uses and exports across the world.

Doonesbury

BY G.B. TRUDEAU



Why Haitians seek new lives

The people of Haiti have lost faith in their government to provide them with the basic human needs, such as food, jobs, and security. They are in despair, and see no end to their suffering. For many Haitians, their homeland represents nothing but misery, with little hope for remotely making ends meet.

It's not surprising for those who have followed the havoc that has wrecked Haiti for more than forty years, to understand the reason behind the exodus to some promised land. The problem is that Haitians are not coming to a land promised to them,

poverty. Not even Haiti. About the size of Maryland, it occupies an area of 11,000 square miles. It is blessed with God-given vegetation, abundant food, and water. Its main cash crop is sugar, and some cocoa and cotton are sparsely grown. Haiti's per capita income per year is \$350. A good number of people who used to cultivate and harvest food and cash crops have left the country, or have been killed or maimed by the government or its troops. Haiti's problems are compounded by overpopulation. The country is home to six million people, all scrambling for a piece of hab-

the ruling family installed his 17-year-old son, Jean-Claude Duvalier, as president of Haiti. Under "Baby Doc," as he was later known, the rich became richer, and the poor became poorer.

In 1986, Haitians took matters into their hands. They stormed government buildings, organized strikes, and demanded a new government that addressed the development of the country. The will of the masses, the opposition declared, must be given paramount importance. In April of that year, with the assistance of the United States, Jean-Claude Duvalier fled the country and went to France where he sought and was granted asylum. Military intervention to reinstate President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, elected last year, is impractical. Haiti has no oil, nor is she a strategic U.S. ally. Bush will order military action only if he's far behind in the polls. The Organization of American States (OAS) will not intervene militarily without U.S. leadership.

In Haiti, some citizens support Aristide, while others are against him. Some say he is out of touch with Haiti's current problems. To many, his promises of prosperity, if elected, have resulted in more poverty for the masses.

Haiti's main problem is that of leadership, not lack of resources. The people of Haiti should be given an opportunity to determine whether or not they want Aristide as president. The force shouldn't come from external governments or pressure. Haitians know their conditions best, and only they are in a position to make that decision. Meanwhile, Aristide should rescind his support for punitive measures against his motherland. Conventional wisdom questions the good will and character of a man who advocates hardship for his kith and kin.

GUEST COLUMN

By DR. MAURICE ODINE



as the Cubans do. It's been argued that the Haitians are denied entry because they are black. Racial overtures are, usually, not taken graciously by those whom such charges are made. Sometimes, though, facts prove the point.

A few months ago, a Cuban helicopter was "stolen" from that country, and landed in Miami airport, with thirty-two Cubans on board. They were well received by government authorities. In fact, some of them were handed cordless telephones to talk to other Cubans in the United States.

According to Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY), this wouldn't happen if the refugees were white, from say, Europe. He believes that President Bush is afraid to lose Florida in November by allowing the Haitians in, whom they believe, will adversely affect the state's bumpy economy. Haitians, the administration argues, are fleeing poverty.

itable land within the 11,000 square miles. Family planning would be most welcome, but the U.S. has cut off contributions to the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA).

Don't blame Haitians alone. In 1957, Haiti elected its first president. Historians recount that Francois Duvalier was aided in his election by the C.I.A., in order to avoid victory by the opponent who has thought to be sympathetic to communities.

Once in power, Duvalier became a dictator. He set up a personal army, "Ton ton Makoute," to protect him and his family. The uniformed unit was changed with identifying and exterminating Duvalier's opponents. His iron hand earned him the nick name, "Papa Doc." Committed atrocities were widely reported, but nothing was done to destabilize Duvalier. When Duvalier died in 1971, Haitians thought democracy and freedom had finally come to their land. They were wrong. No sooner had Duvalier died than

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