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Gerald O. Johnson CEO/PUBLISHER

Robert L. Johnson CO-PUBLISHER/GENERAL MANAGER
Herbert L. White EDITOR IN CHIEF

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OPINIONS

When violent chickens come home to roost

By Carl E. Briscoe Ph.D.
SPECIAL TO THE POST

The tragedy at Virginia Tech. was just that: a terrible tragedy. Similarly, the deaths on September 11, 2000 were tragic. Senseless death is always despicable regardless of where it takes place or whom it involves. On the day of each of these terrible events, approximately 180,000 people died in our world.

Most of these people were poor, exploited, people of color, and many of their deaths were avoidable. President Bush created a political spectacle of this tragedy in the same way he did with 9-11. He immediately took advantage of the nation's grief inciting emotional reactionary policy as a remedy. The problem, as I see it, is reacting in the model that we follow. In this situation we have a criminal, a liar and a murderer, a man with absolutely no conscience, speaking to the consciousness of the nation.

How is it possible that we are surprised by such tragedies? This is the most violent country in the world. We kill and steal whenever it sustains our advantage, and we have done this all over the world. We murdered well over a million men, women and children in North Vietnam - senseless killings, which had nothing to do with the outcome of the conflict, but did create enormous wealth for American bomb and airplane manufacturers.

Right now American troops are assigned all over Africa, not to help with water or infrastructure, but to kill any native attempting to interfere with American corporate development. America's policy after the 1991 Gulf War was murderous, and killed well over 300,000 innocent children of Iraqi citizens. The current insurgency by corporate interests has murdered well over 60,000 Iraqi civilians.

American policy, formulated by government elites, sponsored genocide against American natives; likewise this was done with natives in South America in the interests of the American Fruit Company and other corporate thieves. While I wouldn't dare blame slavery on the United States, America's "peculiar" institution was particularly emasculating and devastating to the slave and the progeny of those enslaved. The effects were so thorough; many of their offspring still prefer the "plantation" to freedom. There were a little over 16,000 homicides last year in this country. Between 1950 and 2006 this rate vacillated between 7,000 and 22,000.

Most homicides are committed on people who were acquainted with each other; often relatives, friends or associates - not strangers or pathological killers - as the TV media would have us believe. The current news frenzy regarding Virginia Tech deploys scare tactics obscuring the reality of systemic violence implicit in America's social history.

The point to all this is that there are social and political reasons for these tragedies. The case of 9-11 was a case of the "chickens coming home to roost." America had been financing death and destruction and participation in internee wars for corporate or business interests for the last 50 years. These actions almost always kill and murder innocent native populations.

Clinton's bombing of a Sudanese pharmacy and an Afghanistan village, killed hundred of innocent civilians. The reason we call murder for political interests collateral damage is because it obliterates the responsibility of human agents and legitimizes murder. Virginia Tech wasn't an isolated event, and while this is of no consolation to the loved ones of those killed or wounded, what we need to do is look at our leaders and the retail agents for the wealthy; our legislators. More gun laws, more prohibitions, and better surveillance apparatuses (they work two ways) will not stop the violence so endemic in this country.

As a black man living in America my biggest fear is not the criminal but the local police. The biggest killers in America are the police, and they love to kill "negroes" (look at the comparative statistics, between whites and blacks on arrest rates for identical crimes, capital punishment by race, and shootings by race).

There is no way to prevent another Virginia Tech incident. Implementing stricter gun laws, restrictions on college entrances, psychological screening, restrictions on Asians, or the continued search for a criminal genetic code, will not solve the problem. The problem is with our examples, the people we follow and the culture promulgated in the institutions designed to maintain this autocracy.

CARL E. BRISCOE Ph.D. writes on crime, policy, international relations, social movements, and politics.

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Making the Chinese Connection

Let me get this straight. We have a Chinese furniture company labeling one of its sofas "N-Word Brown." We have a Chinese sculptor b e l i n g a w a r d e d the rights to carve the proposed \$100 million Martin Luther King Memorial. And while Master Lei Xinyin is carving the MLK stone, his Chinese brethren will continue carving out a large piece of Africa by developing the land, purchasing the oil, and selling Africans everything they want and need. What's wrong with this picture? To most black folks in America, it seems the answer is obvious: Nothing.



JAMES CLINGMAN

The sofa issue could be mitigated by the possibility that in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, from where the sofa was shipped, the N-word could be just an effort on their part to emulate a colloquial U.S. expression. The Chinese are capitalists; they want the money. I can't believe they would intentionally do something to alienate what might be the largest consumer group in the world in terms of disposable income. I don't know; they may have thought the N-Word was a term of endearment; some black folks do.

Nonetheless, the "N-word Brown" sofa fiasco will have a brief shelf life and will soon fade into the annals of "shock news" stories. Purchases from China will go on and we will be back to business as usual in a month or so. Whatever the case, I can give the Chinese furniture label a free ghetto pass this time. Now if the color of the MLK memorial is done in lush tones of N-word Brown, I will definitely have a problem.

Nice segue. Let's talk about this MLK memorial. I don't know if you saw the article written by one of the country's most renowned artists, Gilbert Young. The article, titled, "A Chinese Martin Luther King?!" (<http://www.kingsours.com>) expresses Young's outrage at the lack of a black designer (The Roma Group, <http://www.roma.com>, was selected for that) and a black sculptor to complete the project (Lei Xinyin was elected for that \$10 million honor).

As a result, Gilbert Young says, "So let's see," that leaves the digging and hauling, which in some folks' eyes may be appropriate because this nation was built on the backs of blacks. I, for one, am not willing to bob my head and grin over the fact that some Black subcontractor will be employed to move the dirt. Nor am I willing to allow my children's children to visit a memorial that will not reflect African American art and culture and artistry."

Black people are always busy trying to be "inclusive" with our projects while, at the same time, we are being "excluded" from projects controlled by others. I don't know what's up with those in charge of the MLK Memorial, but I gotta go with Gilbert Young on this

one. He questioned the travesty of justice in having the "national treasure of China," Lei Xinyin, that's Communist China, sculpt the center piece of the most important African-American monument, in recognition of the most important African-American movement in the history of the United States. A movement that never could have taken place in China. Maybe they should put the memorial in China, especially since some of the quotes to be inscribed on it speak directly to the oppression in that country.

I must be missing something here, because it just does not make sense. Uh oh, I thought of something Booker T. said, "Beneath everything lies economics." Could this be about the money? Of course, it could. Another nice segue. China boasts the world's second-largest cache of foreign exchange behind only Japan; it is on pace to set its reserves soon clomb past \$1 trillion. China virtually controls the U.S. and has made significant economic headway in Africa, especially during the past 25 years. Consider the trade deficit with China, the rise of the Euro and the fall of the Dollar, the manipulation of the Yuan by the Chinese, the escalating oil consumption by China, and the sheer power ensconced in China's 1.3 billion consumers. They tell me even the stone for the MLK Memorial will be imported from China!

Since China loves black folks, according to Yang Zhou, a hotel manager in Shera Leone, who said, "Africa is a good environ-

ment for Chinese investment, because it's not too competitive," and when you consider the economic impact of doing deals with China, especially among the heavy-hitters who have already donated millions to the MLK Memorial, the dots get connected.

But let's get back to black folks. If we want to make a Chinese Connection, then let's do it, but let's do it with some leverage. To simply channel profits to them at the expense of black artists, designers, all in the name of inclusion and the flimsy rationale of Dr. King being "international" in his reach and in his message, will not give us the leverage we need to build our own Chinese connection, one that will benefit our children prior to benefiting everyone else's.

When I saw Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson crying alligator tears at the groundbreaking of the MLK Memorial I thought it was in remembrance of MLK and what he did for us. Maybe I was wrong; could their tears have been in response to the most of the funds being collected for the memorial going to China rather than to black folks?

As usual, black folks get to participate in the emotional side of things, putting shovels in the ground, making speeches, and crying, while other folks stay in the background waiting for the money to start rolling out. We get excited about the sizzle, and they dine on the steak. Stop the madness and Bring Back Black! (www.bringbackblack.org)

JAMES CLINGMAN is a syndicated columnist.

Will environmental justice be left to just us?

Clean air without limiting growth in communities

When it comes to environmental management discussions become confusing, accusatory and usually end up with no conclusion. It is good that the subject of global climate change is entering the national debate for the upcoming presidential election. This time both parties will elevate the importance of the matter and, perhaps, we can start to make a noticeable change in how we treat Mother Earth and the air we breathe.



HARRY ALFORD

It is imperative the costs are shared equitably and that no group, nation or race pays the big price while others slide by. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is busy at work drafting a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that would consider adopting a new, more stringent National Ambient Air Quality Standard for Ozone. But first, let's not get confused. We are not talking about global warming that is often the first fanatical thing one thinks of lately when you mention the word Ozone. Here we are talking

about smog that in part is created from combustion sources such as factories and vehicles and other daily human activities. EPA is under a court order to issue the Proposed Rule by June 20, 2007.

So what happens if EPA sets a more stringent standard for Ozone and more-over, who should care? Well, a lot of things happen that can and probably will impede growth and economic development. All small and minority, especially black-owned businesses, should care most of all.

We are on the upstart. We have the fastest rate of growth in the number of businesses and dollar sales. Finally, we are getting it together and it appears that outside sources such as environmental hysteria is going to challenge our new growth.

The last time EPA lowered the Ozone standard many areas of the country were classified as non-attainment, thereby triggering a process requiring states to develop emission control strategies to bring areas into attainment by a certain date.

The air is not the only thing that impacts the health of those that live in areas that are designated as non-attainment for Ozone. Without good jobs driven by economic growth, how does one pay for healthcare and a decent standard of living?

The air is clean and is getting cleaner all the time. EPA has been instrumental over the years in ensuring cleaner air for all Americans. Oh, how I remember those awful smoggy days in the Los Angeles basin. Our lungs burning and eyes watering non-stop.

For example, between 1970 and 2005, total emissions of the six principal air pollutants dropped by 53 percent. Moreover, the ozone levels have dropped 20 percent since 1980. But one can argue that we are approaching the crossroads of diminishing returns.

How clean is clean and at what price? We can no longer tolerate a "regulate and punish" mentality driven by a "lower is better" theory of environmental activism that goes well beyond protecting public health with an adequate

margin of safety. Science based on what is "potential" harmful is dangerous. EPA is obligated to discharge its duties under the Clean Air Act to ensure that the Nation's air quality standards are protective of public health. In that spirit, we should support EPA's decision to include policy options in the Proposed Rule that consider a more stringent Ozone standard.

But we should also insist that EPA include among the range of policy options to be considered in the proposed rule an option to retain the current Ozone standard. To do otherwise would pre-empt the issue of whether revision of that NAAQS for Ozone is appropriate at this time.

When EPA issues the proposed rule, it will formally frame the debate for the public comment process. If it doesn't include consideration of the current standard as a policy option, the opportunity to do so will be forever lost and the burden of compliance with a more stringent standard will fall to the local communities and the small and minority and black-owned businesses that operate and provide livelihoods within them.

If EPA forgoes this opportunity, it will not be environmental justice, it will be left to just us.

HARRY ALFORD is co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce, Inc. Website: www.nationalbcc.org.