

Flashbacks of the Civil Rights Movement

Government should stop neglecting inner-city residents

by Melissa Freels
Co-Editor-In-Chief

Flashbacks of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s have surfaced all across America as Los Angeles recently turned into a war zone.

Following the verdict in the Rodney King trial on April 29 (the four officers on trial for beating King were acquitted), violent riots began in South Central L.A. The riots, like those in the 60s, addressed equal rights--or so some say.

Believing that the officers were acquitted because they are white and because King is black, South Central L.A. residents--mainly consisting of minorities--took to the streets. They expressed their anger and resentment by looting L.A. stores, by killing people, by beating people and by burning down buildings.

By Monday, May 4, nearly 50 people had been killed, nearly 2,000 were injured and more than 3,000 were arrested. Damage to the city was estimated at \$200 million.

When asked why, many of the rioters refer to the King trial, but there is much more to it. The verdict in the trial was simply "the last straw."

Residents of the inner-city are rioting and protesting after years and years of unhappiness. The city of L.A. is home to more than 3 million people, a number that is growing all of the time. Consequently, the tension in the city grows each time the population grows. No one--not even the government--has tried to fix the problems that have surfaced in the crowded city.

On Friday, President Bush spoke to the nation about the situation in L.A. The violence was "not about civil rights," he said. "It's not about the great cause of equality that all Americans must uphold. It's not a message of protest. It's been the brutality of a mob, pure and simple."

That mob, however, is a mob created by American society and government. America's apathetic views toward residents of the inner-city have created the violence in L.A.

In South Central L.A., residents feel as though they have already hit the bottom--they can't go any lower. So what's the harm in rioting? What do they have to lose?

The sad thing, however, is that they have lost something. The rioters have killed their very own

neighborhoods and even some of their own neighbors. Now, many of them are forced to start over.

"What hurts the most is that they are destroying our neighborhood . . . How can we make our future if today is gone?" one woman in L.A. told a reporter for *The Oregonian*.

Now is the time for government officials to do things right. Instead of neglecting the residents of the inner-city, the government needs to become actively involved in rebuilding the city.

Cleaning up the city and telling the rioters to "go home" won't solve the problems. The roots of the problems grow very deep. Cleaning up the surface will not help. It will take a lot of effort to help South Central L.A. The government needs to take an active role in improving education for inner-city youth. The government needs to improve the living conditions of the inner-city. The government needs to get involved. Neglecting the residents and hoping that they will keep to themselves obviously has not worked.

Instead of investing in foreign countries, and providing aid for other countries, the American government must invest in America and America's future.

Feelings of disgust from verdict

by Edwin R. Murphy
Staff Writer

All across this nation people of conscience are gathering and marching to express their feelings of disgust, betrayal and outrage. Did this stem from the single incident of the Rodney King verdict? I think not!

The wide span of this collective civil disobedience is a statement to those in power, both corporate and government, that the greed, corruption and misguide national priorities must stop.

Officially, the propaganda hammered into our social fabric sates that our problems, in this country, starts with you and I. This is a petty diversionary tactic which hides the real problem, that being the looting of America.

To people who find this chaos and violence a surprise, I can only say, . . . Hello? If this is news to you, it is only because you have clenched your mental input orifice shut. The writing has not only been on the wall in neon, all your life, it has been in this paper, in your classrooms, in this city's media and most blatantly of all, in your own mind, however deep you have buried it.

"It is not only the right of the citizenry to civilly disobey the laws which are not in the best interest of the people, it is their duty!" Thomas Jefferson in speaking of the U.S. Constitution, "It

is this power that this country has been founded on and it will be this power that will prevent abuses by the duly elected of this new government."

This country was established on ideals of freedom and respect that were developed during a time of repression, misrepresentation and unfair taxation.

What makes our current situation so different?

These urgent messages of concerned awareness by many communities all across America seem to indicate a core identification with this obvious case of injustice. We are sick and tired, we are boiling silently or subconsciously, we are simply unified on one level or another, fed up with the bureaucratic perpetuation of self-interest sell-out.

The solution to this problem is not violence.

The lessons of 1776 have not been lost on the devious powers who right now threaten our very dignity as planetary citizens by the endless terrorism of powerful indifference to the needs of all life forms.

Any war we start, they will end, . . . except a war of knowledge and awareness.

My advice, think, feel and emancipate your mind.

"Those who would sacrifice a little freedom, for a little security, deserve neither," Benjamin Franklin.

Looting, burning and destroying takes away from credibility

by David VanKeuren
Photo Editor

Rage, despair, destruction, violence. Sounds like something from a bad movie? I wish it was. Instead I (and probably you also) saw all this carnage broadcast live from Los Angeles via your local news station. I'm sure that I'm not the only person disgusted by what I saw.

So what caused all this turmoil? Well, the excuse is outrage over the acquittal of four police officers in L.A. who were accused in unjustly and excessively beating Rodney King. The rioters claimed that they were victims of yet another racial injustice.

That's pretty interesting considering that in the last week rioters have caused more damage and injury to themselves and their communities than an innocent verdict for the officers ever could have.

It is really a shame. The poorer communities in Los Angeles had tried so hard to attract businesses to their area not only to make life more convenient, but to also create jobs and stimulate the local economy. Many businesses thought that opening in that section of L.A. was a losing proposition. Many of those companies were pleasantly surprised to find that they were actually doing

quite well, better in fact, than in other parts of L.A..

Now those businesses are gone. Destroyed. They were robbed and looted and burned to the ground. Businesses that supported the black community. Businesses that had nothing to do with the Rodney King case. These were businesses that were the source of incomes for many families in the area devastated by rioting. What's left? These places of work are not going to want to return to areas that they were in. They originally thought that it was too risky, a losing proposition to establish business in those neighborhoods. Last week, they were proved to be

correct.

Tensions between whites, blacks, Koreans, and Hispanics have reached a new plateau because of the rioting. Race relations have been set back years due to the random attacks on people just because of their color. People who had nothing to do with the Rodney King case at all. Rioters have taken a good reason to protest and twisted it to suit their own greed and hatred.

The acquittal of the four police officers accused of beating Rodney King may have been a bad move, but that is for the courts to decide. Peaceful protests are a good

way to let the government know what public opinion is. To just loot and burn and destroy every building and person that you see is not. It takes away from any credibility the riots may have had when people actually are getting in line to rob a store or beat up a person. What does it prove? Nothing. What does it accomplish? Continued distrust between races in an age where people should realize that all of us are equal and we should unite as brothers and sisters, not as people of different tribes and colors. The beating of Rodney King affects all of us, and we should all come together to settle problems in a peaceful manner.

Compiled by Tracy Hobbs

Campus Views

Photos by Vivian Johnson

Do you feel that the riots emerging from the Rodney King trial were justified?



Brooks Phillips

"I think that the riots are justified because police officers need to realize that there is a need for human rights."



Danielle Davis

"Innocent people got killed because they were in wrong place in the wrong time."



Shelia Isaacson

"No, I don't think the riots are justified. They didn't gain anything. It was really worthless and senseless."



Ruth Rippey

"The manner they are going about to get their point across is not solving anything. Two wrongs don't make a right."



Debbie Fullard

"I think they have the right to express their opinion, but I don't think that violence is the answer."