

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

Media Retreats from Iraq

Networks execute their own withdrawal

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

Ho-hum. The war. Such a bore. After six years, the media is fatigued with the story. As a CBS news producer put it: "One guy in uniform looks like any other guy in uniform." Yeah, so why cover that?

And, indeed, America's three big TV networks have quietly been executing their own staged withdrawal from Iraq. The evening newscasts of ABC, CBS and NBC - where the great majority of Americans say they get their "news" -- have massively scaled back their coverage of Bush's ongoing disaster in the desert.

In the first half of this year, the total time devoted to Iraq by all three networks was only 181 minutes - out of approximately 11,000 minutes of airtime available.

Is nothing going on over there? No, nothing's happening - unless you count the constant deaths and maimings of American troops, the shelling out of three billion of our tax dollars every week, the everyday

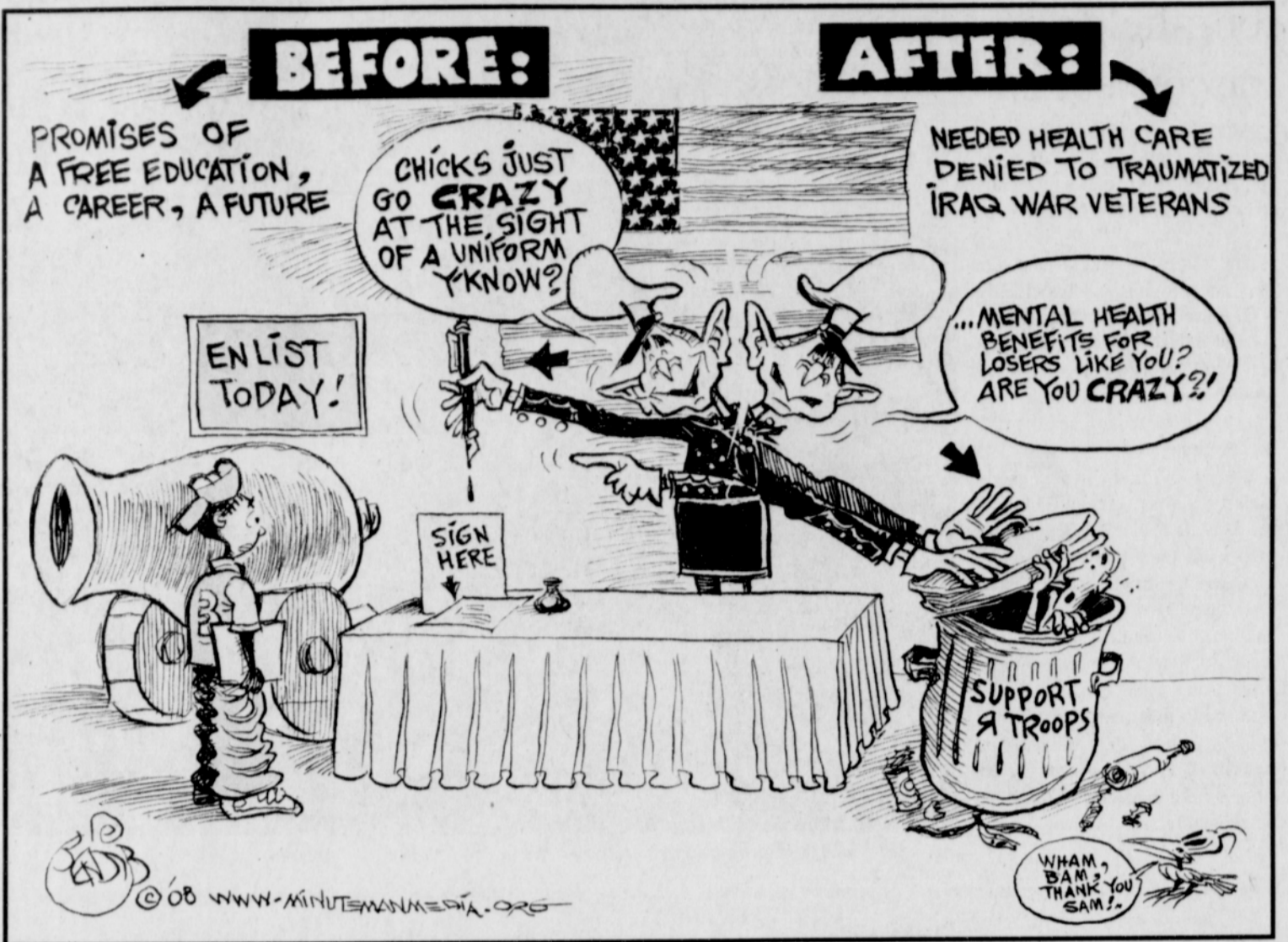
arrogance of America's corporate mercenaries, the squandering of our country's integrity and reputation, the endless deaths of Iraqi civilians, the collapse of civil society, the bitter sectarian divides, the move by Big Oil to grab Iraq's reserves of crude, and the administration's ceaseless use of censorship, propaganda, and lies to control the news from Iraq.

Gosh, you'd think that enterprising journalists might pull a story or two a day out of that soup. But doing so would require - what do you call them? Oh yeah, reporters.

CBS, however, no longer keeps even one full-time reporter on the Iraq beat. Meanwhile, none of the networks has a full-time reporter in Afghanistan.

The conglomerate owners of the networks gladly spend tens of millions of dollars to bring a single TV show or movie to the public. But cover the war? That's too expensive - and it's not nearly as fun or profitable as a sitcom.

Jim Hightower is national radio commentator, writer, public speaker, and author of *Thieves in High Places: They've Stolen Our Country And It's Time to Take It Back*.



Confronting Race Bias in America

BY BENTLEY DE BARDELABEN

Recently a Washington Post-ABC News Poll was highlighted on washingtonpost.com indicating that three in ten Americans admit to having a race bias, while nearly half suggested that American race relations are in bad shape. As a person who has conducted diversity workshops for many years, I am troubled that the American public consistently oscillates regarding racial prejudice versus maintaining regular forward momentum away from it.

Moreover as a professional communicator, I am even more uneasy when reading the phrase "admit to having" within the context of this poll. Whatever their reason, how many people are not openly acknowledging their feelings of racial prejudice? If known, how would that information affect the outcome of the poll? Also with that known information, would the poll depict six in ten Americans or perhaps even nine in ten Americans?

Yet in a previous Post poll it had been reported that there was overwhelming public openness to the

idea of electing an African American to the presidency. Nearly nine in ten whites said they would be comfortable with a black president. While virtually six in ten whites said they would be "entirely" comfortable with it.

Furthermore, a largely determining cause related to how the conversation of race has been regularly elevated within our society

Rarely is it reported that an important contributing factor within this multilayered topic is the role of systemic, institutionalized racism.

has to do with who's "driving the bus" carrying a race message and what's the outcome of the race message with which the driver(s) hope the riders walk away. Would fear of those "not like us" be the intended goal? What about a message which promotes hope and unity among diversity? Or perhaps a goal merely confusing the public

regarding race issues would be enough?

Rarely is it reported that an important contributing factor within this multilayered topic is the role of systemic, institutionalized racism. During the last two decades, a race message was perpetuated implying that all anyone had to do was pull themselves up by their bootstraps by focusing on a goal.

teach that human beings operate out of a psychological system based upon either love or fear. Within the system where love is the guiding principle, human beings see their connectedness. They understand their inter- and intra-dependence and that individualization is taught as a false illusion of the ego mind.

However, within a system where fear reigns supreme, humans view themselves individually separate from one another. They are thereby capable of objectifying others or of setting up false paradigms where one group views themselves as greater, better or more entitled than "those people". Furthermore, I teach principles of negotiation, the importance of patience, deep listening skills, and the significance of grace, which are set within a context of building cultural proficiency. Unfortunately these are not usually the skills taught school aged children. However, if the goal is that we transcend race bias, then now is the time we begin.

Bentley de Bardelaben is the United Church of Christ Minister for Communications.

US and Europe Owe Africa

Past promises fall flat

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

At their most recent meetings, the Group of Eight or G8, agreed to spend \$60 billion to fight disease in Africa over five years and reaffirmed commitments to double aid to the continent.

The G8 is an informal forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The leaders of these nations meet regularly to discuss global issues.

In the past, the group promised large sums to fight poverty and improve health conditions in Africa, but only a small portion of those pledged dollars have actually been paid out. There needs to be more than lip service given if real change is to happen in Africa.

The U.S. and the United King-



African governments were sanctioned for practices that were seen as undemocratic by western standards. These sanctions often crippled already struggling economies.

Indeed, all of Africa's problems cannot be blamed on colonialism and slavery. But, had African countries been able to control their natural resources - gold in Ghana, for example, or diamonds in Sierra Leone - the continent's outlook may not be so bleak.

Many Middle Eastern countries, by contrast, were largely able to control their oil resources and have, as a result, moved themselves into a position of power at the global table. Africa was never given that opportunity.

Knowing this, the United States and the United Kingdom should lead the G8, ensuring they keep the promises the group has made. Such leadership is needed.

Hopefully, the next U.S. president will not wait until the end of his term to take a stand on aid to Africa.

dom should lead the way, making sure they and the others do as they say. Considering the havoc these two nations have wreaked on the continent, it is the least they can do.

Years of British colonial and neocolonial policies stripped many African nations of not only their natural resources, but also their ability to create an infrastructure that would support future growth and development.

The western slave trade also took its toll on the continent; tribes were forced to capture and sell one another in exchange for guns and other items introduced to the continent by traders.

Guns were especially important: without them, entire tribes would surely be forced into slavery. Even after the slave trade ended and many countries gained their independence, they were still subject to the western rule and politics. Local

Critics of the G8 Summit say the promised funds from the recent meeting are nothing more than a repeat of an earlier promise, including a \$30 billion commitment from the United States. It has been reported that, in 2006, the G8 as a whole delivered only half of promised aid. Their spending in 2007 amounted to less than one third of what they committed.

President Bush, attending his last G8 Summit, seemed especially determined to make sure the group keeps its promises. Hopefully, the next U.S. president will not wait until the end of his term to take a stand on aid to Africa and will work to make sure the G8 Summits lead to action.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

shop online

NEW SEASONS MARKET

NOW DELIVERING

Your favorite neighborhood grocery store now delivers groceries right to your home or office.

www.newseasonsmarket.com
you click. we deliver. (or pull up for pick up)

Subscribe! 503-288-0033
Fill Out & Send To:

The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208
subscriptions are just \$60 per year
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: _____
TELEPHONE: _____ ADDRESS: _____
or email subscriptions@portlandobserver.com