

OPINION

# We're Still Not Colorblind

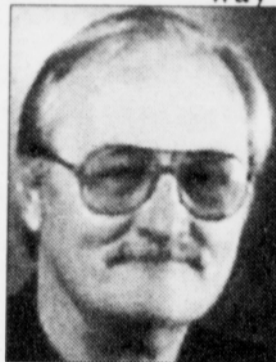
Racism as American as apple pie

BY DONALD KAUL

Tea partiers get upset when you call them racists. "We're not racists," they yell. "We're God-fearing Americans who don't like Obama's socialist, affirmative-action ways. We just want freedom from government interference in a colorblind society."

So you say, "What about that time a bunch of you lined up at the Capitol and yelled racist epithets at black congresspersons as they went into the building?"

"It never happened," the tea partiers shout. (When they're not yelling, they're shouting.) "Show us the clips. There are no videos of the alleged incident. It never happened."



Well, they've got a point. Everything that happens these days seems to be recorded on somebody's camera and find its way to YouTube with startling rapidity, yet there are no pictures or recordings of the incident at the Capitol.

Maybe it didn't happen. Maybe the congresspeople misheard. The protestors could have been yelling "Freedom for Niger," or something like that.

Right-wingers like Glenn "Loony Tunes" Beck have taken up the partiers' cause with a counter-attack, charging the black legislators and their allies with "reverse racism."

I don't know exactly what that means but I'm guessing "Nyah, nyah, you're another" is close to it.

It is my considered opinion that they are both right. Tea partiers are racists. So are African Americans who object to tea partiers.

Racism is woven into the very fabric of our society. It's written into the Constitution, our founding document, which for purposes of representation and taxation counted black people as three-fifths of a person. (Indentured white servants were counted as whole people, but not blacks.)

We practiced chattel slavery here for nearly a century after we became a nation and abandoned it only after a brutal civil war. For the next 100 years or so, most of the country indulged in some form of racial segregation.

And we're not racists? All of a sudden we're colorblind? Come on, get real. Racism is as American as apple pie. There's no reason tea partiers or their playmates should be exempt from it.

As further evidence I offer a column by Charles Blow of The New York Times. Blow writes about polls he's found interesting, complete with charts and graphs. Recently he laid out the results of a Quinnipiac poll on

attitudes toward President Barack Obama, broken down by race and ethnicity.

For example, the poll asked people whether they would vote for Obama if the election were being held today. Eighty-seven percent of African-American respondents said they would. This compared with only 49 percent of the Latinos interviewed.

Whites? A mere 28 percent said they would vote for the president this time around.

That remarkable gap is repeated in the poll on a variety of issues. Does the respondent approve of the way Obama is handling the presidency? Ninety-one percent of the blacks say yes as against 37 percent of the whites.

Oil spill? Seventy-two percent of the blacks said Obama was handling it well, only 37 percent of the whites thought he was. On foreign policy the score was 72 to 38.

Latinos tended to be divided evenly on most questions, the exception being illegal immigration,

on which only 38 percent thought he was doing a good job. That compares to 28 percent of whites who like what he's been doing.

All of that would suggest that people's views of Obama's presidency are being colored by color, so to speak.

What clinched it for me, though, was the question: "Do you think that Barack Obama has been a better president than George W. Bush?"

Only 37 percent of the white responders thought he had been.

George W. Bush! Who ran the economy into a ditch. Who took us to war in Iraq on a false premise. Who fiddled while New Orleans flooded. Who some scholars consider one of the two or three worst presidents in our history. That George W. Bush.

And two-thirds of the white people in this country think he was better than Obama.

That's racism, baby.

OtherWords columnist Donald Kaul lives in Ann Arbor, Mich.

# Blood Diamond Atrocities

A destructive market exposed

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Diamonds are a girl's - or rapper or baller's - best friend; this we know. But, these precious stones are also at the core of some of the greatest atrocities known to man.



"Blood diamonds" or conflict diamonds, as they are called, are diamonds mined in war zones and then used to fund violent militias; they're most common in Africa, where about two thirds of the world's diamonds are produced.

As governments and organizations around the world have

become more aware of 'blood diamonds' and the roles they play in war, actions have been taken to limit their appearance in the marketplace. We too can and should do our part to make sure any bling we might buy is conflict free.

For three years, former Liberian president Charles Taylor has been on trial for, among other things, sex trafficking, murder, and recruiting and using child soldiers. Taylor allegedly used blood diamonds to fund these crimes. The

case has attracted international media attention and has even involved testimony from international supermodel Naomi Campbell who received blood diamonds from Taylor's men in 1997.

Taylor's case is important because it illustrates very clearly the destruction and terror that blood diamonds, once they're sold - can bring. Thankfully, much has been done around the world to try to curtail the trading of these stones.

In 2001, the U.S. passed laws that prevented rough diamonds from Sierra Leone and Liberia from being imported into the country. In 2003, the Clean Diamond Trade Act was passed and signaled the U.S.'s participation in The Kimberley Process, a U.N. mandated certification system that prevents conflict diamonds from entering the marketplace. Today, over 99 percent of all diamonds certified through process are from conflict free sources.

Though this is an impressive fete, a tiny number of blood diamonds are still sold - knowingly or unknowingly - by jewelers, usually small, independents sellers.

Ask your jeweler or reseller to provide documentation certifying the diamonds are conflict free. If they cannot do that, look for another jeweler. This seemingly small action is a big step in helping shutting down the blood diamond market and hopefully bring an end to these unthinkable acts of torture.

Greg Mathis is a former Michigan District Court Judge and currently is a syndicated television show judge.

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