

OPINION

The Truth Will Eventually Set Us Free

Media flunks WikiLeaks 101

BY WILLIAM A. COLLINS

Maybe we were fortunate that the U.S. press chose to print any WikiLeaks disclosures at all. Given the media's generally supportive stance of unilateral American foreign policy, it could have simply said, "We're not interested."

Luckily it did better than that, but not much. The media reported articles of minor diplomatic embarrassment with glee, but let matters revealing serious U.S. government perfidy or brutality slide.

Take Honduras. There was always strong suspicion that the state and defense departments had quietly supported the military that overthrew the populist president. Natu-



rally, our media never noticed. It has always taken a dim view of liberal presidents. But then WikiLeaks provided chapter and verse of our involvement. Still no coverage.

An even deeper diplomatic cesspool bubbles daily in the Middle East and Pakistan.

The United States has conducted illegal warfare in Yemen and Pakistan for some time. Our authoritarian allies there and elsewhere have long engaged in brutal repressions in the name of anti-terrorism. Much of this calumny WikiLeaks has now revealed.

Yet the press considers it a non-issue. Even the graphic video of an American helicopter gunning down Iraqi civilians in Baghdad generated little media investigation or follow-up.

Unfortunately this ho-hum response to the most significant disclosure of government impropriety

since the Pentagon Papers hardly comes as a surprise. The press tends to share Wall Street's perspective and back Washington's interventionist foreign policy.

To wit, my local paper just headlined an Associated Press story, "More Positive Signs for Economy." It's as though unemployment and foreclosures simply don't exist in the media's parallel universe.

The messages behind the protests at last summer's arrogant G-20 summit in Toronto received the same "blind-eye" coverage. Much ink was consumed recounting damage to property, mounting arrests, and dismissive comments by world leaders. Any parallel analysis of the destructive wealth-heavy economic policies promulgated by those leaders landed on the cutting room floor.

Media support of our various wars is equally plain.

Just before Christmas, hundreds of military veterans and supporters gathered in the snow in front of the White House to protest the war in Afghanistan. More than 130 vets were arrested. That probably wasn't as painful an ordeal as their basic training. But in our society, willingness to risk jail time for one's beliefs marks a real commitment. Nonetheless most of the mainstream media, including The New York Times, didn't report a word.

Conservatives are more blessed. They don't need to get arrested. They hold a rally and earn front page coverage. Check out the tea party. By contrast, a liberal coalition convened last summer's U.S. Social Forum in Detroit. More than 20,000 people debated issues and conceived strategies. Somehow, the cat got journalists' tongues on that one, too.

So don't expect WikiLeaks' dramatic revelations to lead to change in the short run. Since the mainstream media is a co-conspirator in our nation's corporate pro-war culture, the tide of domestic disgust with wars rises very slowly. But abroad, it ascends far faster, and pressures are mounting internationally for us to behave ourselves, as we have recently been forced to do in Egypt.

Don't hold your breath, but don't give up either. Just watch Al-Jazeera English, which you can only view on the Internet unless you live in Toledo, Ohio, or Burlington, Vermont, or Washington, D.C.

The truth will eventually set us free. Meanwhile, I nominate Julian Assange to be Man of the Year.

OtherWords columnist William A. Collins is a former state representative and a former mayor of Norwalk, Conn.

Black America's True Religion: Optimism

Getting through tough financial times

BY LEE A. DANIELS

There they go again. Don't they know any better? African Americans as a group continue to be battered worse than any other Americans by the nation's three-year-long-and-counting economic crisis. In both stand-alone and comparative terms, from the top to the bottom of the socio-economic ladder, they've suffered a severe loss of the little wealth they possessed and have almost no protection against a future economic shock.

For example, their unemployment rate, now at 15.7 percent, has been in double digits (nearly double that of whites) since the Great Recession began three years ago. They're more likely than whites to be trapped among



the long-term unemployed; and the housing and foreclosure crisis has pushed the black homeownership rate down to its level of 15 years ago and left more than 20 percent of African American homeowners in danger of losing their homes.

And yet, in a survey released last month, blacks by a large margin declared themselves – in sharp contrast to whites – full of optimism about their financial standing for the present and the future.

The survey, conducted by the Washington Post, the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University, found that 85 percent of blacks are "optimistic" about their future, compared to 72 percent of whites; that 65 percent feel "financially secure;" and that 59 percent of blacks believe that "when it comes to the

availability of good jobs for American workers ... the best times are yet to come. Only 40 percent of whites think that is so.

Latino Americans, though less confident than blacks, are also markedly more optimistic on most measures than whites.

The survey marks at least the fourth time in the last year that a major study has reached the same conclusion: blacks (and Latinos), though significantly worse off than whites, are significantly more optimistic about the country's future and their own.

The survey marks at least the fourth time in the last year that a major study has reached the same conclusion: blacks (and Latinos), though significantly worse off than whites, are significantly more optimistic about the country's future and their own.

So said a study by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, faculty members at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. So stated a white paper on the impact of the Great Recession released in June by the Pew Research Center, and a January 2010 report also released by Pew.

The title of the latter – "Blacks Upbeat about Progress, Prospects" – accurately reflects the psychological state of the majority of black Americans now, despite the economic devastation they've endured and are likely to face for years to come.

In articles on the findings of the previous studies, I've dismissed assertions made by

some that blacks are simply misperceiving the seriousness of their predicament. These studies' other findings indicate blacks are fully aware of how unequal and precarious their economic standing remains.

Further, the Pew survey of January 2010 reported that more than 80 percent of blacks, compared with about a third of whites, believe that racism remains a significant factor in American life. Nonetheless, the surveys also found that blacks, and to a lesser extent Latino Americans, feel that under a Democratic administration, they have a chance for improvement.

In other words, blacks aren't in a swoon now that the President of the United States is a black American. Instead, I've explained it as a matter "equanimity" born of historical experience and "faith."

Those explanations apply to the findings of the Washington Post-Kaiser-Harvard poll as well. They stem from the most sustaining root of black Americans' society—their profound religiosity.

The last finding of the Post-Kaiser-Harvard poll revealed that 83 percent of blacks (compared to 50 percent of whites and 61 percent of Latinos) count "religion or faith in God as very important in helping them get through tough financial times. They lead one to conclude that, whatever their denomination, black Americans have an over-arching common religion: optimism.

Lee A. Daniels is Director of Communications for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.

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

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208
\$60.00 for 6 months • \$110.00 for 1 year • \$200.00 for 2 years
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

or email subscriptions@portlandobserver.com