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BRIAN STIMSON
Reporter

DAVID KIDD
Graphic Designer

MONICA J. FOSTER
Seattle Office Coordinator

JULIE KEEFE
SUSAN FRIED
Photographers



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Does the NAACP Remain Relevant?

Can you imagine Black Life in America if there was no NAACP? It seems that over time the group served a vital purpose for African Americans; but these days and across cultures, the NAACP is about as significant as “Members Only” jackets.

At the NAACP’s 101st convention, the head of the Kansas City branch got the organization’s members to pass a meaningless resolution urging people to “oppose the tea party.” Sadly, the resolution was deceitful and overly political. With the “Tea Party declaration” and other such tomfoolery abound, isn’t it time to address “the NAACP problem”? Black Americans have good reasons to be upset with the NAACP. But, in our considerations we should not be too critical of NAACP missteps. Let’s first admit that Blacks are often more comfortable criticizing the NAACP than affirming the work they do.

First, what role does the NAACP play in your life? With the declaration against the Tea Party, cries bellowed across America that the NAACP was “out of touch.” Not only was the “out of touch” narrative among White Conservatives, it resounded among masses of Blacks also. Not only is the NAACP in danger of losing its relevancy, attention is on the NAACP’s President and CEO Ben Jealous, and as to whether he has lost his way. Since taking the helm, in his efforts to highlight the NAACP, Jealous has just plain drawn the wrong kind of attention. In addition to the “exposing



BUSINESS EXCHANGE

William Reed

racism in the Tea Party” gambit, Jealous & Company showed awful decision-making awarding Colin Powell its highest Image Award;

the annual image awards. Jealous said: “This year’s NAACP Image Awards show was a great success. However, the advertising circulars that were supposed to appear in both the mainstream press and Black community newspapers only appeared in the mainstream (White) press.”

The advertising debacle sparked a firestorm of criticism from the Black Press. Ironically, Jealous is a former employee of the Black Press - former association executive director and editor of *The*

We all make mistakes, so even if Jealous and his NAACP cohorts were wrong on the resolution, Powell Award and acts that look like “Whites’ ice is colder”; we must also be careful to not be equally wrong in our rebukes of them. We each need to assess as to which side of the ledger do we fall regarding whether the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and United Negro College Fund: 1) promote racism or 2) take care of their own? Many of us are at a juncture as to whether we are race-conscious or “colorblind.” We are in moment where the national dialogue around race hinges around the fear of Whites being taken advantage of by people of color. Whether the discussion is Affirmative Action or immigration, it’s being suggested that Whites are the “true victims” of contemporary racism. This could not be any further from the truth. Black people remain disproportionately poor, locked out of quality neighborhoods and schools, and suffer from individual, structural, and institutional racism. While the election of Obama marked a watershed moment in coalition political participation, it neither erased nor filled-in the fault line of racial inequality.

Black Americans need to give more positive attention and reverence to the NAACP. Do you know (or care) who runs your local NAACP? For more of us to grow, we all should acknowledge and support the work the NAACP does.

Several strategic blunders have made people question the organization’s leadership

but it is an issue of an economic injustice to Black Newspapers that has caused the most concern over

Jackson Advocate. Jealous, like so many Blacks today, either forgot, or distains, where he came from.

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Jealous and his racial pride and consciousness. Advertising revenue maintains Black Newspapers and Jealous admits that “a grave mistake was made” when advertising inserts were placed only in White newspapers on the eve of

New York Beacon’s Publisher Walter Smith wrote in an editorial, “We credit leaders of the NAACP with good sound judgment and common sense at least. What were they thinking when this decision was made?”

Drug War: A Money Tree for Special Interests

Per BBC News, “[p]rotests in more than 20 Mexican cities against drug-related violence have been interrupted by news of the discovery of 59 bodies.” Since President Felipe Calderon called on the military to combat drug cartels in 2006, an estimated 35,000 Mexicans have been killed, “a sign” — according to the Mexican and U.S. governments — “of success in the fight against drugs.” Though Mexicans live in constant panic, daily kidnappings, mass graves and shootouts in the streets are, in Drug War Newspeak, the best indicators of progress.

However one personally regards personal use of illegal drugs like cocaine or marijuana, the prosecution of the Drug War perhaps ideally illustrates statism’s ruling class intrigues. The structural predicates for its continued existence are interwoven with some of the most powerful fixtures of the corporate economy, all milking it to line their pockets on the misery of ordinary people.

Just as violent crime mushroomed under alcohol prohibition, with Al Capone and his ilk proving an ideal counterpart for the organized crime of the state, so too has drug prohibition begotten international bloodbath. Even if we regard the rationales advanced by the Empire as genuine reasons for its Drug War, the results are strikingly disconnected from that pur-

C4SS

David D’Amato

ported reasoning. Ever increasing police spending, foreign intervention and domestic authoritarianism have been coupled not with any marked decrease in crime or the prevalence of drugs themselves, but in a murderous struggle, unremitting and constantly

to see some measurable “progress” toward the state’s goals.

And the truth is that the state’s goals are being met through the Drug War, which — like the War on Terror — is devoid of any clear, defining lines or enemy. Those goals, though, don’t match the intentions we’re meant to glean from “Just Say No” ads and the D.A.R.E. cops roaming the halls of the state’s K-12 education pens.

the green they care about isn’t marijuana. From top to bottom the Drug War is shaped perfectly for big government and for corporate interests, enabling the clandestine “security” apparatuses of the Empire to scout new outposts for neoliberal colonialism.

As Dan Russell argues in *Drug War*, “[T]he structural effect of the artificial value [of illegal drugs] has been to create, over the decades, an unbreakable symbiosis between drug-dealing and covert military intelligence. Each is the greatest strategic ally of the other.” The network of important interests surrounding the Drug War is, for market anarchists, an expected and characteristic instance of the kinds of relationships the state creates.

Institutionalized coercion around drugs — rather than the drugs in themselves — creates the extreme violence and crime we see in place like Mexico today. Only by subjecting these commodities to the mutual rewards of free exchange, away from the reach of the state, will the real criminals of the Drug War be overcome.

From private prisons to security, prohibitionists depend on drug dealers

swelling to new proportions.

For the state, serving the ends of the political class, what it is that the war is against is far less important than the fact that there is a

In the same way that traditional warfare means bankable profits for defense-related contractors in the fabled “military-industrial complex,” the Drug War is a reli-

he Drug War is a reliable source of income for the ruling class

war, something out there that enjoys the consumption of huge piles of resources. Given both the levels of spending on the Drug War and its putative justifications, we could expect, even assuming the utmost waste and inefficiency,

able source of income for the ruling class.

Everyone has skin in the game, from Wall Street banks and huge prison companies like Corrections Corp. of America and Geo Group to drug companies like Pfizer, and

C4SS News Analyst David D’Amato is a market anarchist lawyer currently completing an LL.M. in commercial law at Suffolk University Law School. His aversion to superstition and all permutations of political authority manifests itself at