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- Music reviews
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Racism is Alive and Well Online

You can run, but you can't hide from racism. I was preparing to write a column on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the trade agreement that President Barack Obama wants to fast track through Congress. I considered tackling the Planned Parenthood kerfuffle, as Republicans are targeting a most important women's health provider for political purposes. But a friend sent me a link to a photo uploaded by Atlanta native "Geris Hilton" with a string of comments that simply turned my stomach, and I realized that the TPP would have to wait. (It isn't going anywhere until January anyway).

Hilton, whose legal name is Gerod Roth, worked at the Polaris Marketing Group in Atlanta, Ga. There he took a selfie of himself and a coworker's child and posted it on Facebook.

When one of his "friends" asked why the child was running around the office, Roth replied, "He was feral."

The dictionary defines "feral" as "relating to, or suggestive of, a wild beast", and "not domesticated or cultivated - wild," or "having escaped from domestication and become wild." Excuse me?

Roth's own daughter hangs out at the office at the end of the day. She plays with the adorable boy whose innocent little face attracted the most "feral" comments from Roth's intellectually challenged Facebook friends.

From one "friend": "I didn't



Julianne Malveaux
NNPA
Columnist

know you were a slave owner."

Others commented about selling enslaved people another suggested that Hilton "send him back," because they are "too expensive."

Sydney Jade is three-year-old Cayden's loving, caring and hard

and wrote about the incident and subsequent firing on Facebook. I am among those who think it should have taken less than two weeks, but they deserve credit for taking action instead of hiding behind the "free speech" argument that many make to defend their racist employees. The Root reported that others who made offending comments about Cayden were also fired from their jobs. Yes!

Gerod Roth is one of those pouty little racists who has now described himself as the "victim" in this matter. He "has been targeted", he says. He whines that his remarks were taken out of context.

He had neither the grace nor the good sense to say, 'I'm sorry and I'm out of order', and then shut up. Instead, he tried to cover his insensitivity up

working mother. Gerod Roth knew this, but he never corrected his "friends" who described the child as abandoned and worse. Jade, started using the hash tag #HisNameisCayden on Twitter to affirm her child's humanity and to reject the caricature that Hilton portrayed. She has received an outpouring of love and support from cyberspace.

Thumbs up to company executives at the Polaris Marketing Group, who fired Roth about two weeks after his offending selfie

He posted an "apology" that was several paragraphs long attempting to "explain" how he happened to post the selfie in the first place, suggesting that young Cayden actually asked him to take the picture.

He had neither the grace nor the good sense to say, "I'm sorry and I'm out of order", and then shut up. Instead, he tried to cover his insensitivity up.

Next thing you know, there will be a group of folks rallying around Roth who some would describe as

nothing more than a child molester for his callous exploitation of his coworker's son. Those who railed against this incident will be told this occurrence is isolated.

The late, great writer Bebe Moore Campbell once wrote an essay about "race fatigue," about the many ways she was tired of seeing, living, talking and writing about race. She wrote about ignoring slights she might once have challenged, tamping down an anger that might once have been volcanic. In that particular essay, she wrote about seeking a peaceful respite from race matters. We all seek that respite, those days when we don't have to think about the indignities of both institutional racism and the micro-aggressions that are difficult to quantify. We seek, but we don't find the respite when cyberspace reveals life as both gritty and grand.

While Roth is little more than gas in the wind, not even a footnote in our nation's history, he merits attention, because there are so many more of him, lurking out there, fracturing peace because they are so hateful. Who calls a child "feral" and then describes himself or herself as the victim? And who, in the light of this kind of nonsense, says we live in a "post racial" space?

Julianne Malveaux is author and economist based in Washington, DC. Her new book "Are We Better Off? Race, Obama and Public Policy" is available for pre-order at www.juliannealveaux.com.

Salute to Rev. Jackson on his 75th Birthday

Seventy-five years ago a freedom fighter was born in Greenville, South Carolina. His name is Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr. and I need to say something about this brother that I have known and worked with for decades in the ongoing Civil Rights Movement in the U. S. and in the overall freedom struggle internationally.

Too often, particularly among Black American leaders, we are too quick to say something negative about each other, and too late to say a positive word about that leader while they're still alive. Yes, I am talking about Black unity among Black leaders. It's a subject or a call that is rarely mentioned today. Why?

Some would argue that the division or lack of operational unity among Black American leaders today is a symptom or byproduct of centuries of racial, economic and political oppression. I believe that is partly true. But on the other hand, disunity is not something that we are born with. It is socially generated. My point here is simply to remind all of us that we need more unity not just among our leaders, but we also need more unity in the Black American community in general.

I was in Detroit, Michigan recently to attend the 16th Annual Rainbow PUSH Global Automotive Summit on Oct. 8, 2015 on behalf of the National Newspaper



Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr.
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Publishers Association (NNPA). Sister Glenda Gill, another strong freedom fighter and the Executive Director of the Rainbow PUSH/CEF Automotive Project made sure that the audience was made

I have been a firsthand witness to the remarkable, game-changing leadership and irrepressible spirit of our brother leader

aware that the day was Rev. Jackson's 75th birthday.

As I watched and listened to the Rev. Jackson take the podium at the kick off reception, it brought back many positive memories of the past. I have been a firsthand witness to the remarkable, game-changing leadership and irrepressible spirit of our brother leader. Although I was just a little younger, we both had the privilege and awesome pleasure and responsibility to work with the Rev.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in the 1960s.

At the automotive summit in front of industry corporate executives, Rev. Jackson challenged everyone to understand that there is a difference between winning freedom and establishing equality, in particular economic equality and equal opportunity to fulfill one's true God-given potential in life. Rev. Jackson stated, "Rainbow PUSH will continue to engage with the auto manufacturers to protect consumers and continue the quest for equity and fairness."

communities remain in poverty.

Thus, the quest today for economic equity and parity should be priorities for all our national organizations and movements. I also remember when Rev. Jackson decided to run to be President of the United States in 1984. His campaign became both a political and spiritual crusade to lift the aspirations and hopes of millions of people across the nation as part of an emerging Rainbow Coalition. The Reverend Wyatt T. Walker and I were the national clergy coordinators for Rev. Jackson's 1984 political empowerment campaign. "Run Jesse Run" became the proud theme for millions of people who were crying out for freedom, justice and equality.

The truth must be told. Rev. Jackson's 1984 campaign opened the door wider for the subsequent, successful historic political campaign that led to the election of President Barack H. Obama in 2008. During the past 60 years we have made progress, but we still have a long way to go to fulfill Dr. King's dream. We all should be vocal and grateful that Rev. Jackson is still on the case with outstanding leadership.

We thank you, Jesse Louis Jackson, Sr. We salute you, we respect you and may we work today to raise up a new generation of freedom fighters who know what it means to advance the cause of freedom and equality for all.