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Opinion

Trump Wages War on Obama's Legacy in First 100 Days

There was the proposed massive budget cut to the Department of Housing and Urban Development; the incessant rhetoric about a rise in crime in the nation, that lacked evidence to back it up; the threats of a renewed war on drugs. There was even a failed attempt to bully Republican lawmakers into passing a flawed bill that sought to roll back the Affordable Care Act, a law that provides healthcare to millions of Americans.

This was President Donald Trump's first 100 days in the White House. Trump didn't win a single legislative achievement during his first 100 days. For policies that impact the lives of African Americans, it was just as perilous as you thought it would be. During the 2016 campaign, Trump often described the Black community as a monolithic, stereotypical caricature. Trump used the types of violent stereotypes one parrots after they've binge-watched 11 seasons of "Law & Order," but have never actually been to an inner city.

So, much of what Donald Trump focuses on is about undoing the accomplishments of the first Black President of the United States. The obsession with "alternative facts"

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and the erasure of President Obama's legacy continues to be the core focus within the Trump Administration.

Days before his 100th day in office, Trump's spokesman Sean Spicer blamed President Obama for the fiasco surrounding Gen. Michael Flynn, a loud supporter of Trump during the 2016 campaign, was fired by Trump as National Security Advisor on Feb. 13 and ended up holding the position for the shortest time in U.S. history (24 days) after it was reported Flynn lied to Vice President Pence.

“Much of what Donald Trump focuses on is about undoing the accomplishments of the first Black President of the United States

Trump's Attorney General Jeff Sessions, perhaps the most dangerous federal official for African Americans, sought to revive the "War on Drugs," a set of policies that disproportionately impact-

ed African Americans in the 1980s and 1990s.

"We can wish that we could just turn away and reduce law enforcement," said Sessions in 2016. "But I do believe that we're going to have to enhance prosecutions. There just is no other solution."

During a trip to Richmond, Va., on April 11 Sessions said: "We need to say, as Nancy Reagan said, 'Just say no.' Don't do it...We can reduce the use of drugs, save lives and turn back the surge in crime that inevitably follows in the wake of increased drug use."

None of this should be a surprise to the Black community. Sessions comes from Alabama where incarceration is high art. Placing humans in cages is Alabama's leading industry. At 70, Sessions is a stark reminder of another era. He's also a reminder of how old, failed policy is difficult for so many to break away from. With so many Republicans embracing "smart on crime" policies, Sessions is determined to star in the movie "Groundhog Day" on federal crime policy.

The inmate population in the U.S. rose from 500,000 in 1980 to 2.2 million in 2015 and has made the U.S. No. 1 in the rate of incarceration in the world. When there's an uptick in law enforcement, do more police show up in Manhattan or the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C.? Of course not. A quick glance at the stop-and-frisk statistics the ACLU tabulated in New York City over a ten-year period, in an effort to identify the communities that experienced the greatest number of interactions with police after an elected official (in that case former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani) decided to "get tough on crime," tells the story.

Pastor Darrell Scott of Cleveland, a Trump supporter, held a summit on gang violence in Washington D.C. on April 18. The focus was on crime in Chicago and Trump Administration officials attended. Did they introduce or invite any policy proposals to address any of the underlying issues that plague some of the predominately Black neighborhoods in the Windy City (i.e., high unemployment, high poverty, poor schools)? Not quite yet.

Read the rest of this commentary at
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B-CU Grads Protest Betsy 'DeVoid' in Epic Fashion

Why I'm Proud of the B-CU Grads that Protested Education Betsy 'DeVoid'

I could not be more proud of the students at Bethune-Cookman University (B-CU) than if I had raised them myself. Responding to the university's very late selection of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos for the spring commencement speaker, graduating seniors chose to turn their backs on a woman who described HBCUs as "pioneers of school choice." The students' repudiation of DeVos' very right to be present was well coordinated; the protest reflected their ability to be sophisticated, not reactive, when confronted with a speaker that epitomizes the very refutation of their HBCU education. It is my hope and dream that these students can continue to operate in formation, as they oppose oppression.

I don't know how DeVos (hereafter referred to as "DeVoid," as she is devoid of good sense, history, literacy, and even courtesy) came to be B-CU's commencement speaker. I suspect that the White House (Omarosa Manigault) made a call to offer an administration speaker and they went for it. Maybe Trump Whisperer Manigault's new hubby, Florida Rev. John Allen Newman, has some ties to the college and he saw this as a

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way of burnishing his wifey's credentials as a HBCU savior. Maybe there is a bunch of Black Republicans on the B-CU board of directors standing in the wings and hoping

“Betsy “DeVoid,” is no Mary McLeod Bethune

for goodies from "45." Truly, this is all speculation but, most of the time, commencement speakers are secured months before graduation. This speaker was thrust on students and their families just ten days before the ceremony.

For most students, speakers are the sideshows, not the main deal in commencement, unless the speaker is someone like President Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey, Denzel Washington, or Viola Davis. White folks might prefer Tom Hanks, Meryl Streep, Wolf Blitzer or Sheryl Sand-

berg. Commencement speakers are expected to spout uplifting platitudes, offer sage advice, maybe share a private challenge, and wish the graduates well and do it in less than 20 minutes. Students are sitting at the edge of their seats, not because they are waiting for the punchline, but because they want their degrees.

What was B-CU President Edison Jackson thinking? In his printed statement on May 1, he said, "The legacy of Dr. Bethune is that she was not constrained by political ideology, but worked across all parties to support B-CU. Moreover, students are directly impacted by funding dollars that are dispersed through the Department of Education. B-CU receives \$4 million annually through Title III, which supports teaching, research and infrastructure. Additionally, Title IV impacts the ability of B-CU students to receive federal financial aid, overall influencing the ascension of Bethune-Cookman University students."

Maybe President Jackson thought he was making friends by inviting DeVoid to speak at B-CU's graduation. Actually, he made a spectacle of the graduation by inviting

a woman who had already disparaged HBCUs with her ignorance. And he did it in the same week when her boss, "45," said (and then quickly reversed himself) that he was not sure that some federal provisions for HBCUs, such as the HBCU Capital Finance Program, are constitutional.

It is odious that DeVoid has received an honorary degree from B-CU. What has she done to earn it? According to President Jackson, "Through Secretary DeVos' life work, her contributions extend far beyond her home state of Michigan. Secretary DeVos has supported educational opportunities for students in over 25 states and supported Central Florida through several philanthropic efforts: 100 Black Men of Central Florida; Jones High School, and the Parramore neighborhood located in Orlando to name a few. Secretary DeVos is a graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich. She is the wife of community activist, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Dick DeVos, where they have four adult children and six grandchildren." This earns her an honorary degree? Really?

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