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Opinion

OP-ED: Biden Deserves Credit Not Complacency

We all have heard the popular expression, “give credit where credit is due.” After hearing numerous critics over the past 18 months, it is refreshing to see President Joe Biden finally getting the credit he deserves for what is one of the most productive starts to a presidential term in recent history.

The Financial Times’ Associate Editor Ed Luce recently wrote an opinion piece entitled, “The unexpected triumph of Joe Biden: Recent legislative successes suggest a good political system in good working order, but complacency is misplaced.”

Mr. Luce made the case for why President Biden’s star is rising, but warned that despite his impressive legislative record, voters may not give him the credit he deserves because too many people respond more to style than substance. I agree with Mr. Luce’s assessment. Our media-driven culture seems to rate words and deeds that generate headlines over those that make headway. Joe Biden, and those of us who support him, prefer putting people over politics.

When President Biden took office, the country was in the grip of a global pandemic. Businesses were shuttering, schools were closing, and peo-



Congressman
James E.
Clyburn (D-SC)
House Majority Whip

ple were dying. The country needed leadership. Unfortunately, we had a showman at the helm when a statesman was needed. Forty-five was pre-occupied with scoring political points and securing media hits. And when voters were given a chance to ex-

“Despite his impressive legislative record, voters may not give him the credit he deserves

press themselves, by a margin of nearly seven million votes, they chose statesmanship over showmanship.

Joe Biden was sworn in on January 20, 2021. On that day, the country’s unemployment rate was 6.4 percent. COVID-19 was infecting 193,030 Americans a day and people were dying at a rate of 3,167 a day. From day one, Biden focused on shoring up

the shaky foundation left by the previous Administration.

On March 11, 2021, less than two months after he took office, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) into law. It accelerated the American economic recovery by putting money in people’s pockets, getting children back in school and lifting nearly half of them out of poverty.

The ARP also prevented evictions and foreclosures for millions of America’s families, kept hundreds of large businesses open and reopened thousands of small businesses. It helped stem the deadly rampage of COVID-19 by expanding testing and access to vaccines. Republicans put their politics over people’s needs and voted unanimously against this legislation. Democrats put people over politics and started building a foundation for the country’s recovery.

The second corner of Biden’s foundation came on November 15, 2021, when he signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This legislation made historic investments in our crumbling and outdated infrastructure. It invested in high-speed internet, clean drinking water, a resilient electric grid, re-

placing lead pipes, making a down payment on clean energy transmission, and charging stations for electric vehicles. These infrastructure investments are creating jobs and strengthening critical links in our supply chain.

During all of this, President Biden nominated the first Black woman to the United States Supreme Court, a Black woman to the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, and 26 other Black women to various federal courts, more than the combined total of all previous Presidents.

President Biden continued working, away from public view, to help get the final two corners of his foundation solidified, and on August 9, he signed the CHIPS and Science Act into law. This third corner of his platform restores America’s standing as a global science and technology leader by providing the resources and tools needed to make more products like semiconductor chips here at home. It will create good-paying jobs, invest in building a more diverse workforce, and bolster our supply chains.

The fourth and final corner of the Biden platform, the Inflation Reduction Act, passed the Congress with every Democrat voting for it.

Read the rest of this commentary at
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When Statues Die

In recent years, people have begun to spend more time contemplate the meaning and significance of statuary. Statues of perpetrators of Europe’s colonial expansion and racist legacies began to tumble in the United States and England as descendants of colonized and enslaved people of color brought attention to the human misery afflicted by those who likenesses dotted urban parks and courthouse lawns.

As statues of widely recognized racists such as Christopher Columbus were brought down from their pedestals, so too was the artwork venerating lesser-known racists such as the surgeon J. Marion Sims, known as the “father of modern gynecology.” He advanced his medical knowledge by performing surgery on enslaved women without the benefit of anesthesia. In 2018, his statue was removed from New York’s Central Park.

A great deal of attention also has been given to the statues of traitors who fought for the Confederacy. Their statues were erected to proclaim and maintain white supremacy throughout the southern United States. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, at least 114 Confederate monuments were re-



Oscar H.
Blayton
Guest Columnist

moved from public spaces between 2019 and 2021.

But as we witness the removal of statues meant to glorify white supremacy and western culture, we need to

“Their statues were erected to proclaim and maintain white supremacy

go beyond removing toxic reminders of past evils. We need to understand that statuary is a tool, and as any tool, it can be used for good as well as evil.

Since humans first shaped images out of mud, clay or wood, their work has been a form of communication. Even to this day, every artist who creates a statue is trying to communicate something. Perhaps they are trying to communicate with a deity to appease a force greater

than themselves. Or they are trying to communicate with other people, as was the case with the white supremacists who wanted Black people to know who had the power to control their lives. Or they are engaging in an exercise of self-expression, releasing an energy and an emotion from within themselves that they need to send out into the universe. But for whatever reason a statue is created, none is created within a sociocultural void.

Many museums, government buildings and other public and private places are filled with statuary. And in order to appreciate these works of art and understand what they are and what they are trying to say, we need to understand who made them, what the artist was trying to say and why.

An inquiry into the existential nature of any piece of sculpture and how it is situated in its culture may help us not only to understand that work of art and the culture that created it but also give us a deeper understanding of ourselves as well.

It took this nation more than 100 years to realize that Confederate statuary was a form of racist political communication that was so success-

ful over time, it came to be viewed as a type of religious communication honoring nobility and sacrifice. But with a re-examination of the history of these markers of stone and bronze, Confederate statuary is widely denounced now as having been created as a form of hate speech, an understanding which led to their being removed from public view.

With the removal of these statues, their messages die with them.

But there is another way in which statues die. They die when they remain in view but are stripped of their meaning and context and the viewer has no inkling of what the artist was trying to communicate, or to whom.

Currently, an exhibit in Philadelphia at the Barnes Foundation explores, in part, African art in a sociocultural void seized by white collectors and Western museums. The exhibit, a five-screen black-and-white film installation titled, “Once Again ... (Statues Never Die),” was curated by Isaac Julien, a brother who has been made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for his artistic achievements.

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