

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community
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Let's stop celebrating Juneteenth

Now that the dust has settled on all the unnecessary celebratory nonsense surrounding the newly discovered Juneteenth holiday by mainstream America, let's inject some realism.

I'm not criticizing anyone who had a cookout, a luncheon, or who attended a festival or a parade to acknowledge this sad moment in America's history. I agree with how comedian D.L. Hughley summed up the day: "America is the only country where you ask for justice and get a holiday." I'm all for recognizing Juneteenth, but I stop at celebrating it.

So, now we're supposed to be grateful and ecstatic that our ancestors were given free-ish like freedom after being brutalized, held in bondage, denied basic human rights and forced to perform duties like farm animals for centuries. Should I be grateful that a modicum of reluctant humanity was shown by people who should've never put another human being in that position to begin with?

It reminded me of all the ridiculous hoopla over the Black Panther movie. Skin folks opened their wallets, poured money out and acted like the fictional Wakanda really existed. I didn't read where the movie studio put any profits back into the Black community. Black actors are shut out of consideration for movie roles and awards, and most skinfolk don't know where their ancestry began in the real Africa.

Back in 1992, I led a month long protest at the only movie theater here in Salisbury because they refused to show movies with Black themes. Free-ish.

We commercialized and ruined this important day with feel good celebrations, but did little to create an understanding of why it was significant. Every news program from local coverage to the national spotlight seemed so giddy with excitement to report on the day, it bordered on insincerity and pandering. I wonder if the same celebratory spirit would've been well received if the focus was centered around the horrors of the Holocaust. The Trail of Tears or the U.S. Japanese internment camps?

I would've much rather seen coverage of the educational seminars and focus group panel discussions about the generational psychological and economic impact slavery has had rather than watching people gorging on hotdogs, cotton candy and downing Rum while sitting around smoke filled grilling areas. Most conscious people associate with place more emphasis on the passage of the 13th Amendment as it has more adult teeth than the baby denticles of the present celebration. Although the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, there were loopholes that were exploited as free-ish Blacks could be arrested and placed back into a new modified form of slavery as punishment for a crime. Where are the celebrations for this important tangible piece of legislation that actually changed the course of history?

We act as if Abraham Lincoln was the hero savior of all things dark in skin hue, but he actually cared more about saving the Union than freeing Black people. Just more lies my elementary through high school teachers told me. I read an angry comment where someone who doesn't look like me asked when Whites would get their holiday?

Well, I'll be happy to swap you the murderous slave trader Columbus we were force fed to believe actually discovered this land. Another melanin deficient commenter worried how Americans would now be forced to choose between celebrating Juneteenth and Independence Day. Does no one believe in that whole walking and chewing gum thing anymore? Americans are more concerned with choosing between groceries and medications each month than holiday loyalty.

Since that free-ish moment back in Texas, from 1865-1877, during the Reconstruction period, 2,000 free-ish Blacks were lynched. The mainstream news salivated over the centennial anniversary of the Tulsa race massacre recently. For weeks, the top of every newscast led off with some angle capturing that horrific day.

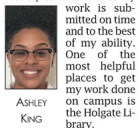
Weeks later, Tulsa is as forgotten by mainstream America as that murderous day has been for decades. As many misguided souls partook in the celebratory spirit last week, forgotten were the other Black cities across this Country that burned alongside of Tulsa. Let us forget the hundreds who were killed in Cofax Louisiana in 1873; Wilmington, N.C. in 1898; Atlanta, Georgia in 1906; Elaine Arkansas in 1919; Rosewood, Florida in 1923 and several others too painful to recall. Couple that with the horrors of the civil rights era and the modern-day police lynchings of unarmed Blacks today, and ask yourself if actually celebrating Juneteenth is worth it.

I'm giving everyone fair warning. If there is one Juneteenth car, mattress or clothing sale, or if I see a Juneteenth KFC chicken wing special, I will be the top story on CNN come next year's holiday.

Kenneth L. Hardin lives in Salisbury, and a member of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Biden helping students get on track

As an English major at Bennett College in Greensboro, I have always taken my academic career seriously to ensure that my work is submitted on time and to the best of my ability.



ASHLEY KING

One of the most helpful places to get my work done on campus is the Holgate Library. Before the pandemic, I spent an average of 25 hours a week in the library reading, writing, planning or simply enjoying my quiet escape from the outside world. The library provided unlimited resources and silence that allowed me to concentrate on completing my assignments quickly and efficiently.

Since I've transitioned back home for virtual learning, I've found it very

difficult to complete simple assignments because of the change in my environment. Being a daughter, sister, and full-time college student is a task, especially when everyone in your household is COVID-19 positive at the same time. Staying on top of assignments while also looking after your family is demanding. At home, I've also noticed that I experience frequent moments of disinterest and boredom when completing schoolwork—a stark contrast to my studying habits at the Holgate Library.

Transitioning from seeing my professors every day to looking at them through a computer screen was a change I wasn't anticipating it to be so hard. As a "zoomer," or Gen Z student, electronics and social media should be my strong suit. But, after being completely virtual for over a year, I can barely re-

member what an in-person class looks, feels, smells, and sounds like.

Thankfully, this coming fall will be different. I was able to receive two doses of the Moderna vaccine easily and have now fulfilled the vaccination requirement for my study abroad travels next semester. I'll be going to Rome, Italy to study English and Political Science—being fully vaccinated makes me feel safe and motivated heading into this formative experience.

As a student who is ready to get back to in-person classes and enjoy life milestones, I couldn't be more excited and grateful that life is beginning to get back to pre-pandemic normal. From working to ramp up and testing and implementing a successful vaccine campaign in North Carolina and across the country, it's clear to me that these changes were made pos-

sible by President Biden's leadership. The Biden-Harris administration understood that the first step to getting kids back to school and back to a sense of normalcy was getting the virus under control.

Although it's been a difficult year spending an entire year of my undergraduate studies in a completely remote setting, and I've missed the Holgate Library, I'm proud to be closing the chapter on virtual learning, by maintaining a 3.9 GPA as well as two fellowships. As life returns to normal and President Biden helps get North Carolina and our country back on track, I can't wait for all that's in store as I continue my studies at Bennett College.

Ashley King of Rocky Mount is a rising senior at Bennett College majoring in English and political science.

Repel the attack on voting rights

The far-right attack on voting rights is fierce. And the unwillingness of some Senate Democrats to challenge laws that allow a Re-



BEN JEALOUS

publican minority to block voting rights bills is making some of us wonder whether we can turn back the tide of voter suppression.

7As the Black Voters Matter Freedom Ride and Tour makes its way through Southern cities including Nashville, Atlanta, Columbia, Raleigh and Richmond with the final stop in Washington, DC, we must redouble our efforts on three fronts on what we know will be a long road ahead to defend democracy from the cynics and the skeptics.

Yes, a long road. Democracy in the U.S. has always been a work in progress. It is always under attack. It must always be defended and strengthened.

When the Constitution was written and ratified, "We, the people" didn't apply to most of the people. After a bloody civil war, the Constitution was amended so dramatically that historian Eric Foner has called it "the second founding." But without the political will to enforce those amendments, Reconstruction gave way to the

brutality of Jim Crow, voter suppression, and legally enforced segregation. It took decades of struggle to defeat Jim Crow through Supreme Court rulings and passage of civil rights and voting rights laws.

Like the post-Civil War amendments, the victories of the civil rights movement changed history. But they didn't change human nature. They didn't bring an end to the struggle for justice and equality. Racism and discrimination took new forms, were institutionalized in new ways.

The flood of voter suppression laws being passed this year builds on an earlier wave of voter suppression laws being passed in the Supreme Court's conservative days with which the provisions of the Voting Rights Act. And those laws are part of an even broader attack on genuine democracy that includes extreme racial and partisan redistricting and laws and court rulings that have allowed a flood of big money to overwhelm our election system.

This corruption of our democracy harms us in concrete ways. It keeps power in the hands of those who resist efforts to reform the system in equities in our society and economy.

I understand why some people look at this corruption and the power de-

voted to upholding it and think there's just no way to defeat it. But our country's history, and specifically the history of Black people in America, is a history of struggle against impossible odds, a history of overcoming resistance and backlash.

We have proven that we can win when we fight strategically and make progress whenever we have the opportunity. Right now, with President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris in the White House, and Democrats holding majority power in the House and Senate, we have an opportunity we cannot afford to waste.

There are three urgently important steps Congress must take this year to defend voting rights and strengthen democracy: the late Rep. John Lewis, who for decades the conscience of the Congress, had his heart and hands in all three of them.

The first is to pass the For the People Act. It would overturn new state voter suppression laws and eliminate the worst abuses of redistricting and big money in our elections. John Lewis authored its voting rights provisions. It is urgently important to pass the For the People Act now to prevent massive voter suppression in the 2022 and 2024 elections.

The second is to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights

Advancement Act, which would protect against future voting rights abuses by restoring its enforcement mechanisms.

The third is to grant statehood to the District of Columbia and give its 700,000 residents full voting rights and voting representation in Congress. The District of Columbia has a higher percentage of Black residents than any other state, which makes their disenfranchisement a fundamental civil rights violation and a betrayal of basic democratic principles. John Lewis was a champion of D.C. statehood. He saw the disenfranchisement of D.C. citizens as a moral wrong.

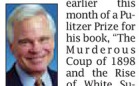
The For the People Act, John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, and D.C. statehood are a pro-democracy trinity. To keep faith with the voters who put them in power, especially Black voters, President Biden and congressional Democrats must seize the moment to turn back attacks on voting and democracy. And honor the voting rights legacy of John Lewis, we must all continue to make our voices heard and make "good trouble" on behalf of voting rights and democracy.

Ben Jealous is president of People For the American Way in Washington, D.C., and former national president & CEO of the NAACP.

A North Carolinian in Afghanistan

President Joe Biden has ordered the troops in Afghanistan to be home by September.

Why does one North Carolina man promise to continue his work there?



DAVID ZUCCHINO

David Zucchino, winner earlier this month of a Pulitzer Prize for his book, "The Murderous Coup of 1898 and the Rise of White Supremacy," lives in Durham. He plans to keep working in Afghanistan "until the bitter end."

Why? Zucchino, a former reporter for the Raleigh News and Observer and Los Angeles Times, currently writes about Afghanistan for The New York Times. He explains, "I am fascinated by the place. I've been going there for 20 years and we're at a really pivotal moment in Afghanistan. I was there for the tail end of the invasion and been going back and forth. I don't know how many times since then. I know a lot of people there, been to a lot of places there and really care about the country. I want to be there when things shake out, and later this year I think we're going to see some big changes."

In a May 6 article for the Times, Zucchino summarized the 20-year history of American involvement in Afghanistan, concluding, "A combat mission that has dogged four presidents—who reckoned with American casualties, a ruthless enemy and an often corrupt and confounding Afghan government partner—is at last coming to an end."

Coming to an end, but not yet at an end, as Zucchino explained in two Times' articles earlier this month.

In a June 5 article, Zucchino relates the story of Afghan air force Maj. Naïem Asadi who had been in hiding with his wife and daughter, age five, for seven months. The Taliban had threatened him, posting his photo online with instructions: "Find him and kill him."

After initially being turned down for a refugee application for permission to enter the United States, Asadi was granted a "humanitarian parole" by the

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Asadi and his family have safely relocated to the U.S. aided by Kimberley Motley, a North Carolina-based human rights attorney.

But his story raises questions about other Afghan pilots, many of whom could be targets of the Taliban. Lt. Col. Jalaluddin Ibrahimkhal, an Afghan Air Force spokesman, stated, "It's a pity. He did this to escape from serving his homeland" and that others were now more likely to "make excuses and escape."

Zucchino writes, "Many pilots and soldiers have been threatened by the Taliban. Most can only dream of relocating their families to the United States."

Another group of Afghans whose service to Americans puts them at risk are those who served as interpreters.

In a June 10 Times article coauthored by Najim Rahim, Zucchino quotes former interpreter Shoabullah, "I get phone calls from the Taliban saying, 'We will kill you' - they know who I am and that I worked for the Americans."

Zucchino continues, "Now, as American troops depart and Afghans experience a growing sense of anxiety and despair, the visa applications have taken on renewed urgency."

With the Taliban taking advantage of the U.S. withdrawal, many former interpreters say they are more likely than ever to be killed.

Zucchino reports that more than 18,000 Afghans are awaiting decisions on their applications, for Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) according to the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. "Many say they are seized by dread, fearing they will be denied, or approved only after they have been hunted down and killed."

The fates of Afghan military and interpreters will be only two of the many stories Zucchino will report as the American military withdrawal continues and after its completion.

D.G. Martin hosts "North Carolina Bookwatch," Sunday 2:30 p.m. and Tuesday 5 p.m. on PBS North Carolina. The program also airs on the North Carolina Channel Tuesday at 8 p.m.

CIAA adds Boyd and promotes Baxter

Boyd City State graduate, will be directly responsible for managing the digital and social media strategy for the conference and generating exposure through live and on-demand content.

Baxter will continue to oversee the public, media, and community relations efforts for the conference and its 14 championships to include social media, branding, marketing/sponsorships, and other areas.

His new responsibilities include working to identify and establish strategic relationships with external partners that are mutually beneficial and help enhance the conference's brand and visibility.



Boyd