

opinion/editorial

Problems of refugees indicative of other social ills

Relatively hard times have hit the United States recently, and our people face difficult problems. The energy crisis is real—dollar-a-gallon gasoline is no longer feared, it's here. Inflation is making the weekly grocery bill climb higher and higher. Crime stories seem to fill the papers. The outlook is bleak for many.

And people are looking for answers to complex questions: Why is this happening? Why is this happening to me? Why is this happening now? And, what can I do about it?

Answers are hard to come by. No

one really knows what is happening or why, and this leads to feelings of frustration and hopelessness. In this light, it is not surprising, it is even human, when people start blaming those around them for their problems. After all, if someone or something can be blamed, if there actually is a reason for those problems, there is hope of solving them.

Perhaps those desires to blame someone, that need to find a solution is the basis for the recent animosity and hostility demonstrated towards the Indochinese refugees

in several metropolitan cities.

Two weeks ago, refugee families in Denver left their housing project apartments after fights, bottle and rock throwing incidents with neighboring chicanos. Last month in Seadrift, Texas, an American was killed and boats owned by refugees barred after an argument. Tensions had been high as Vietnamese fishermen were accused of undercutting the prices of their American counterparts.

Most of the problems are occurring in low-income neighborhoods where

blacks and chicanos seem to resent the help the refugees are getting from charitable organizations and the government. Other incidents concern fear for people's jobs. In Indiana, some refugees were laid off construction jobs because they worked too hard.

All of this may seem far removed from Lincoln, Neb. After all, all of this is happening elsewhere. But we should be concerned. The violence is a sign of problems, confusion and animosity that run deep in Americans and that cannot be easily erased.

Blacks must rally like ancestors did

My mother has always been fond of talking about her late father and his interest in baseball. I listened intently to her, as sometimes I think that I inherited my grandfather's interest in sport. That is, of course, until I got the details.

guest opinion

She told me about my grandfather religiously listening to baseball back in the 1940s and early 1950s. She also told me of the first television set in their rural east Texas area. That set attracted men for miles around on Saturday afternoons when teams took to the diamond. The men, however, didn't just watch any baseball game. Nor had they always been interested in baseball. These black men, my grandfather among them, became instant baseball fans when Jackie Robinson stepped into the major leagues and broke the so-called "color-line." Once Robinson did that, all one would have to do around Tyler, Tex. (or anywhere) would be to mention "Jackie Robinson" to a black man. That was a ticket to an instant conversation.

When my mother told me of the interest in Jackie Robinson, or, for that matter, any black person who managed to master a large undertaking, an important, perhaps frightening thing occurred to me.

We, as black people, have changed over the years. We used to be a people who celebrated the triumph of any one of us. A couple of generations ago, we knew that the victory of any individual was a victory for all of our people. We all used to share victories like Jackie Robinson's. This, in turn, strengthened all of us for more victories. We realized then that whether the achiever acknowledged it or not, his accomplishment was our accomplishment, and we all rejoiced in it.

We as a people have had many victories since 1947, but we don't celebrate them any longer. We no longer find achievement inspiring. Feelings of inspiration are replaced with beliefs that the successful among us will forget us. Instead of uniting behind the achievement, we often label the achiever as a "sell-out" and sell the achievement short. The pride that glorified Jackie Robinson had quietly expired by the time Thomas Bradley became mayor of Los Angeles. It was not to be found when Maynard Jackson became mayor of Atlanta, or when Patricia Roberts Harris became Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. Are we out of touch with our pride? I hope not.

Years ago, there was no question about "selling-out" because we rallied behind our accomplishments. We need to rally again. We have come far, but we have so very far to go. We must accent the positive and raise each other higher. There are still lessons from our parents and grandparents that we can learn as we struggle.

Hubert Brown

Editor's note: Hubert Brown is First Vice-President of ASUN and former president of the Afro-American Collegiate Society.



President's job more bother than fun

Last week the media thundered with the news that Sen. Edward Kennedy's family no longer objected to his running for the Presidency. This drove the Washington press corps to display their political acumen by predicting he could beat President Carter by issuing mimeographed handouts.

jerry fairbanks

I've never liked political predictions. You spread the newspaper on the kitchen floor to housebreak your puppy or switch off the TV after Walter Cronkite says "is" and forget them until they come true, at which time you're reminded the predictor got it right. If they don't, no one knows except the recycler.

Kennedy makes me wonder. He really could be St. Anthony tormented by a horde of demonic reporters, supporters and self-appointed election committees, or he could be Houdini biding his time to let the audience's tension build to a suitable fever pitch. But either way, he's not what I'm thinking about.

It's the Presidency itself. What man (woman, or child) with the sanity to stay out of a straitjacket and the intelligence to put the right shoe on the right foot would want it?

True, a president gets to live in a big house, travel at someone else's expense, and can look forward to a pension for life when his term ends—but so can a soldier who never rises above private first class.

The president gets a lot of attention—a few minutes every night on the national news, lots of space in the newspapers so he can fill a lot of scrapbooks—but so does Cheryl Tiegs, and all she has to do is wear something that doesn't completely cover her breasts.

When you consider all the grief a president has to put up with, it's obviously more bother than fun. A president is expected to mediate and judge between competing groups, like anti-abortionists vs. feminists, Israelis vs. the rest of the Middle East, the Northeast v. the Southeast vs. the Midwest, ad nauseum. And he's expected to make everyone happy every time.

The president draws more flak than a B-17 over Germany in 1942. From the cheapest tavern in the smallest town right on up to the highest levels of power, wealth and fame, Americans perform their daily duty and dump on the president. It has an honored place in conversation, just after whatever sport is in season and right before dirty jokes.

So why? Idealism often leads men to seek high office. The vanity of believing you're the last best hope of a world gone wrong appeals to the most ardent realist. There's the status of the job. One must admit being president commands more respect than paving streets.

And there's always the raw lust for power. A million civil servants, three million men in the army, enough nuclear warheads to make half the earth unlivable and even a bedwetter can feel like he has control over his life.

But it's still a mystery to me. I wouldn't take the job unless, say, the ante was raised to a cool million a year, no fewer than 10 public buildings are named after me and I get to write the history of my term in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. (This offer is negotiable.)

