

No small man

Noriega not an ordinary defendant

During the opening argument of Manuel Noriega's trial Monday, the lead prosecuting attorney pointed at the ousted Panamanian dictator and called him a "small man in a general's uniform."

The prosecutor, Michael Sullivan, also likened Noriega to police officers paid off for their silence by Colombian drug lords. He called Noriega "just another crooked cop."

The rhetoric seems to be aimed at diminishing Noriega's position as the former leader of another country. Prosecutors probably hope to make him out to be just another accused criminal.

But Manuel Noriega is far from ordinary. His trial, which is expected to last for several months, sets a new standard on the world scene.

Never before has the leader of a country been charged with receiving payments for ignoring drug shipments.

Never before has one country invaded another for the purpose of arresting an accused criminal.

Never before has one country tried the former leader of another after a military-backed ouster.



Brian Shellito/DN

laundry and arms shipment duties.

But the trial carries the complexities of Noriega's former relationship with the United States. Panama was supposed to be an ally. Our leaders were supposed to get along.

Although Noriega's defense waived its opening argument until after the prosecution has presented its case, the defense may argue that U.S. intelligence officials knew and supported Noriega's involvement with Colombian drug cartels.

Allegations also have surfaced that some of the money Noriega was supposed to receive for his involvement was diverted to help contra rebels battle the Nicaraguan army. Other allegations include the possible taping of Noriega's private discussions with his attorneys.

Even if such allegations are false, the conduct of U.S. officials concerning Noriega remains shaky at best. At worst, such conduct violates international law.

The invasion of Panama alone could raise questions over appropriate search and seizure procedures. If Noriega were a U.S. citizen, his rights may have been violated in more ways than one.

But he is not a U.S. citizen. The crimes he is accused of did not happen on U.S. soil.

In the trial of Noriega, the United States is playing jury on the world court without receiving such authority. Even if Noriega is guilty of aiding drug trafficking, the controversial role the United States government has taken in trying to bring him to justice cannot be overlooked.

Just as Noriega is no "small man," the actions of U.S. officials cannot be diminished for the sake of a guilty verdict.

—J.P.

Noriega is charged with receiving a minimum of \$10 million from a Colombian drug cartel for allowing shipments of cocaine to pass into the United States. Prosecutors say he released vehicles used for smuggling and protected drug flights through Panama. He is accused of performing other money-



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WALTER GHOLSON

African-American past ignored

Jack Gratus, in his book "The Great White Lie," says most Caucasians seem unable or reluctant to understand that the traumas of the past live on in the present and that the racial conflicts of today have their origin not in the mists of antiquity but in a specific period of history.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that too few people realize how the horrors of that period "scarred the soul and wounded the spirit of the African-American."

But what Gratus and King did not say was that until the period of early African history in America is documented, the United States will continue to be plagued by racial conflicts.

In the interest of conflict resolution, let me make a small contribution to a monumental task.

In 1564, Sir John Hawkins set sail from England in the flagship *Jesus* with Queen Elizabeth's blessings. He was on his way to Africa for slaves, having proved earlier that trade in this human cargo brought high profits.

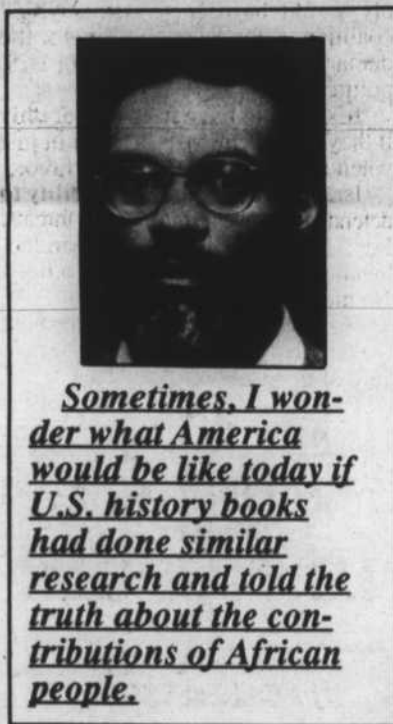
In 1619, Gov. John Rolfe purchased 20 Africans for the colony of Jamestown, Va. These men and women were children of the first Africans kidnapped by Hawkins.

They had no recollection of their ancestral culture because they had been taken from their parents at birth, trained in agriculture and domestic work and sold to a Dutch slave merchant.

Some later became indentured servants and eventually purchased their freedom. That was the beginning of the "Negro" in America, a person with no knowledge of his or her heritage and culture.

The exact number of Africans brought to America could only be estimated. W.E.B. Dubois said in "The Suppression of the African Slave Trade." But United States census reports indicate that by 1860 more than 4 million African-Americans were enslaved in the United States.

Despite historical lies suggesting that these slaves were treated fairly, recent evidence indicates that most remained hostile toward their kidnapers. U.S. history books refuse to document slave uprisings, but modern research documents thousands of



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attempts at freedom.

Historians also fail to tell the story of African women raped by Caucasian men suffering from jungle fever. The subject of miscegenation is never discussed.

Because all Africans were considered slaves and most Caucasians free, in cases of mixed ancestry, each state had its own definition of who was "Negro" and who was Caucasian.

In Virginia, any person with one-fourth or more African blood was a "Negro," but if that person's African ancestors were too remote, they were by law white.

About 372 years after the first Africans were enslaved here, many Americans still struggle with the puzzle of what to call these people who never asked to immigrate.

Fortunately, African-American scholars have done their research and are able to trace their roots.

Many children of early African-Americans were taught about their origin and culture by their elders. And these stories have been passed down from generation to generation. One such story became a widely acclaimed book and television special. It was called "Roots."

"One of the African forms most

resistant to European culture is the folk tale," John Blassingame says in "The Slave Community."

Anthropologists, folklorists and African scholars have traced some of these tales directly to Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania and Nigeria, Blassingame says. Many stories are the same as those of the Ewe, Wolof, Hausa, Temne, Ashanti and Ibo people of Africa. One is the tale about the tortoise and the hare.

Many American students also have little or no knowledge of the contributions of Africans to the progress of industrialized America.

Portia James, in her book "The Real McCoy," documents a wealth of inventions created by African-Americans.

Charles Christmas invented a press for baling hay in 1880, Henry Blair invented a seed planter in 1854, Lewis Temple revolutionized the whaling industry with the introduction of the toggle harpoon, Norbert Rillieux invented an efficient vacuum-evaporation system for producing sugar and Garrett Morgan invented the first gas mask and the first automatic traffic signal.

Elijah McCoy invented the first automatic lubrication device for locomotive engines — hence the saying, "the real McCoy."

There is not enough space in this column to present the entire story of a people that, despite the hardships of their early history, accomplished a great deal while they kept the flame of their heritage burning. But there is ample data available to justify the pride they should have in their heritage and in their ancestors.

Sometimes, I wonder what America would be like today if U.S. history books had done similar research and told the truth about the contributions of African people. Maybe it would have saved Michael Jackson from the mental illness that made him pay for a Eurocentric face lift, chemically straightened hair and skin lighteners.

The money could have been better spent financing African-American history courses at universities suffering from budget cuts and misinformed college students.

Gholson is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Present columnists boring compared to past years'

Has the quality of the columns gone downhill this year or is it just me? And why are there three times as many with even less to say? I'm sorry that some of the decent columnists had to graduate.

I used to enjoy reading the DN columns that made me think in a different way, or at least made me have some type of emotional response. To me, columnists should not have to apologize for the way they think about some subject. If they do, it simply shows that they didn't think about what they were writing in the first place. Or it might simply show that the writer has no backbone to take criticism. Columns should not be rambling diatribes related to some juvenile movie. At least if they are, there should be some intelligent point

at the end.

Columnists are supposed to write to speak people's interests and to get students motivated about some subject, possibly strongly enough to get them to write their own letter to the editor. Maybe that's why there are so few letters from students this year. A debate about vegetarianism from students would be more refreshing than some of the articles have been lately.

As columnists, you write to and for the students and faculty, not for your own pride in wanting to see your words in print.

Please don't take this criticism too negatively. Just take it to heart.

Tim Spitzberger
sophomore
chemistry

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