

## Anger, love fight for freedom

Show me an African American who isn't mad at the white race and I'll show you a schizophrenic. Not to worry, though. It's a curable ailment. All we have to do is stop hating. Being mad is OK. Hating is not.

Show me an African American who loves the white race and I'll show you another schizophrenic. Not to worry, though. There are cures for this ailment, too.

All Clarence Thomas has to do, for example, is stop loving. Liking white people is OK. Loving them is not.

Just kidding!!! Clarence Thomas probably doesn't love white people that much. And he's no schizophrenic. David Duke loves white people. He may be paranoid, but he's no schizophrenic.

Some would accuse me of loving white people too much and of being schizophrenic. Who am I kidding? But if I am one of the African-American schizophrenics, I could only kid one of me at a time. While one of me is laughing, the other must be crying.

That's what it's like for the two of me. One of me says "Burn, baby, burn!" The other of me says, "We shall overcome ... someday." My angry side doesn't buy that crap. My softer side says, "Be patient!" My friends say, "Who are you talking to?"

Some African Americans are more schizophrenic than others. I have one friend who I doubt has ever really been mad at the white race the way I have. I don't think he's very schizophrenic.

Anger about past injustices doesn't just cloud the thinking. Sometimes it's entirely justified. In America during the 18th century, patriots must have been angry as hell at England. Thinking about



**E. Hughes Shanks**

that, my softer side thinks that African Americans should mellow out since discrimination is no longer legal — a major defeat of oppression.

My angry side is more logical. Once the British were defeated, anger about past oppression of the colonies subsided.

However, African Americans have never really defeated their oppressors. Our anger may have subsided to a point, but we have no choice but to continue to tolerate varying degrees of oppression. The difference is that England is no longer oppressing America, but many people (of all races) feel oppression of African Americans is still going on.

While one of me is comforted by the strains of The Black National Anthem, my other self shouts "Black Power" with raised fist. Sometimes there isn't any real middle ground, just a lot of switching back and forth between one attitude and the other. In a way, I feel sorry for well-meaning white people. They never know what side of us they're going to get. They never know what mood we're in.

One side of me says the civil-rights movement stopped short. The same side says that peaceful demonstration doesn't make people free and that Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I have a Dream" metaphor is

flawed. In order to dream, a person has to sleep. I think people ought to stay wide awake. Especially African Americans and Native Americans.

My angry side is mad at white liberals who often seem to be saying, "We understand. It's terrible what happened to your people. It's OK to be mad. But don't be mad at us. We're on your side." I could scream!

The other side of me says that the civil-rights movement stands as an unparalleled nonviolent triumph over evil. The same side agrees that the freedom African Americans enjoy today would not be possible otherwise. My angry side says that there are no acceptable degrees of freedom. It says that everything that African Americans suffer from is because we are direct descendants of a population of enslaved people. That side says that only those who died in slavery are free. The rest of us are expatriated opportunists.

As I watch the Russian Army invade Grozny, my angry side comes out. My angry side says the Chechen fighters are right to fight to the death. It's true that if African Americans had fought to the death for freedom, I wouldn't be here. But that side of me still regrets that they did not. What greater honor is there than to die for freedom?

My other side says, "Whoa, wait a cotton-picking minute. Of course civil rights are important enough to die for, but don't die unless you have to." That side of me says that freedom is not a "now" kind of thing. Freedom isn't automatic. People aren't free just because of some law. These things take time.

"We shall overcome ... someday," as the song goes. Maybe.

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## Congress should cut PBS life support



**Cal Thomas**

The Public Broadcasting System is battling to remain on taxpayer life support. It has flooded its own airwaves with self-promoting montages of its best programming that conclude with the rhetorical question, "If PBS doesn't do it, who will?"

None of the spots shows excerpts from any of PBS' most controversial programs, including some that have promoted left-wing and one-sided views on domestic and foreign policy issues. PBS wants us to think that pulling the tax-revenue plug will cause the immediate death of Barney and Big Bird — and that's the tragic image they are trying to sell.

When PBS' parent, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, was established in 1967, television was a "vast wasteland" with little programming that could be said to benefit culture or intellect. One could argue that it has gotten worse in the ensuing 28 years. But the point about PBS and its federal funding is not its content (one-sidedly liberal and offensive as it sometimes is). The point is whether one television network should receive federal subsidies, especially with the proliferation of commercial cable networks that offer cultural and children's programming at least as good or better than PBS'.

Cable channels now outspend PBS on programming that PBS says is essential to its mission. The Disney Channel spends \$120 million a year on children's programming, compared to \$36 million at PBS. CNN spends \$164 million on news and public affairs. PBS spends \$63 million. Other private cable channels — such as the Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel, Nickelodeon, Bravo, American Movie Classics and Arts & Entertainment — offer children's programming, documentaries, classical music, even opera. There would be no cultural wasteland if PBS went off the air tomorrow.

PBS programs make a bundle of money for those selling licensed merchandise, only a small percentage of which flows back to PBS. Shouldn't the people cleaning up on the sale of Big Bird and Barney toys, T-shirts and sheets be required to share more of that money with PBS before the taxpayer has to pony up? A new PBS policy requires that the network receive a "share" of profits made from selling merchandise related to a program, though this does not apply to the Children's Televi-

sion Workshop, which produces "Sesame Street," because CTW predates PBS. CTW has gross revenues of more than \$100 million per year.

PBS also generates millions of dollars of income through privately sponsored programs and commercial sales.

The Heritage Foundation's Laurence Jarvik, who has studied PBS funding and programming, says, "PBS is a money machine that doesn't need federal dollars to survive."

More than 70 major public television stations now sell national commercial spot advertising, which earns the stations more than \$2 million annually. The president of Public Broadcast Marketing, Inc., which sells the advertising, told the show business trade newspaper Variety that PBS stations could sell \$50 to \$60 million of advertising annually within five years. While PBS has always denied it allows advertising on the network, there is little difference between a 15-second "underwriting credit" and a 15-second commercial.

Jarvik recommends replacing the federal subsidy for PBS (which is estimated to grow to \$1 billion by next year if Congress fails to act) with a publicly held stock corporation that would allow commercial advertising. That way, if programmers wanted to produce material trashing traditional values and promoting the supposed joys of a socialist society, they would be subject to the same market forces required of all other commercial programming.

If government funds cannot promote religion, why should they be used to promote a mostly one-dimensional point of view on PBS?

Whether those ideas are good or bad is not the point. PBS can easily survive, even prosper, following a cutoff of federal funding. The network has served its purpose — and Congress should acknowledge that, give it an award and close the purse strings.

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## Hand-me-downs fit purpose

After all these years, I have discovered a hidden benefit in doing this job.

It came in a letter from a nice lady who lives in Arizona.

She had read an old column about my wife's disgust with my winter overcoat, which is 17 years old and has threads hanging from the sleeves and collar, mud and soot stains, missing buttons and holes from cigarette burns.

Other than that, though, the coat is structurally sound and fends off the wind as well as it did the day I bought it.

And it doesn't smell bad, except in the summer, when I don't wear it anyway. Like most of my clothes, the overcoat is old and raggedy because I like old, raggedy clothes. Also, I don't believe in wasting money on something new when something old does the job just as well.

In the case of clothing, the purpose is to prevent me from walking around naked. Old clothes do that just as well as something designed by a skinny Italian guy with one name.

And when I wear my old overcoat, panhandlers never approach me. If anything, they say: "Hey, I got here first; go hustle the next street."

When she read about my overcoat, the nice lady in Arizona sent this letter:

"I have been a widow since 1990. All this time I have been trying to find a good home for my husband's beautiful and seldom worn overcoat.

"Would you please accept it in memory of my husband, who was a very kind, gentle and peaceful human being.

"Please do not divulge my name, as I live alone and it could jeopardize my safety."

The letter arrived in a box. With



**Mike Royko**

it, neatly packed in a plastic garment bag, was a splendid, blue-black overcoat that appeared to be made of the finest soft wool.

As the lady said, it had seldom been worn and looked new. It was finer than any coat I have ever owned.

I slipped it on and it fit perfectly. Her husband and I must have been the exact same height and weight.

Just then, two female co-workers dropped in. They immediately oohed and aahed, as womenfolk do when looking at spiffy garments, and said: "What a gorgeous coat ... where did you buy it ... how dressy ... looks like cashmere."

I showed them the letter. They sat silent for a while, then one said: "You aren't going to wear it."

Of course I'm going to wear it. Perfect fit. The deceased must have been a fine figure of a man. Why wouldn't I wear it?

Looking queasy, she said: "Well, he's, you know, it belonged to someone who, you know ..."

"He's dead," the other one said. "Don't you think there is something kind of morbid about wearing clothes that belonged to someone who died?"

I thought about that for a moment or two. Then I pointed out that in this country's wealthiest communities are great mansions and estates that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Wouldn't it sound odd if an heir said: "I cannot live in this 24-room mansion with stables, dining hall, billiard room, tennis courts, and 10 full Johns because it belonged to my father and his father before him and my great-grandfather, who build it with money he stole fair and square."

Or if an heiress said: "I will not accept this pearl necklace, the diamond earrings, the sapphire brooch, the platinum bracelet or any of the other baubles because my mum wore them and I would feel a bit morbid."

No, the rich are practical in such matters. That's why they stay rich and get richer. Waste not, want not. And that, incidentally, is why the Arabs are in such a sad pickle today.

"What do the Arabs have to do with it?" they asked.

The answer is obvious. Back in the old days, they used to bury guys like King Tut with their valuables. They'd put the poor mummy and his jewels and money and credit cards in a tomb inside a pyramid. How dumb could they be? They could have held an estate sale and cleaned up. And look at all they lost in compound interest over a few thousand years.

"But that coat belonged to someone you didn't even know. It might be different if it belonged to someone in your family."

True, but is it my fault that he didn't have any relatives with the same sleeve length?

They looked unconvinced, but one of them said: "I hope that you write her a nice thank-you note."

Of course I will. There's something I wanted to ask her about anyway.

"What?"

I wonder if he had any ties.

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**Ed Gamble**