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OTHER VIEWS

MORE LETTERS ONLINE The Chinese-made products that have harmed American consumers recently are the inevitable consequence of allowing a country the 'comparative advantage' of not having safety and environmental regulations," writes Darin Gilley of Pacific. "Without the costs of safety included in their products, they have an advantage over domestic firms that must comply with our safety and environmental laws." Read and talk about this letter and more letters online at STLtoday.com/letters.

Monday • Josh Goldberg, Paul Krugman
Tuesday • David Brooks, Maureen Dowd
Wednesday • Bob Herbert, David Ignatius
Thursday • Kathleen Parker
Saturday • Ellen Goodfellow
Sunday • Charles Krauthammer, Leonard Pitts

DEMOCRACY

Blacks should be outraged – and vote in massive numbers

Chances are you didn't hear it, but on Thursday night Sen. Hillary Clinton said, "If HIV/AIDS were the leading cause of death of white women between the ages of 25 and 34, there would be an outraged outcry in this country."
Her comment came on the same day that a mainstream majority on the U.S. Supreme Court threw a brick through the window of voluntary school integration efforts.
There comes a time when people are supposed to get angry. The rights and interests of black people in the United States have been under assault for the longest time, and in the absence of an effective counterforce, that assault only has grown more brutal.
Have you looked at the public schools lately? Have you looked at the prisons? Have you looked at the regions of unemployed blacks roaming the neighborhoods of big cities across the country? These jobsless African-Americans, many of whom are, are so marginal in the view of the wider society, so insignificant, so invisible,

they aren't even counted in the government's official jobless statistics. And now this new majority on the Supreme Court seems committed to a legal trajectory that would hurt blacks back to the Jim Crow era.
When's the outcry? When's the line in the sand that the prejudiced portion of the population is not allowed to cross?
Clinton's comment was not made at a forum of Democratic presidential candidates at Howard University that was part together by Tavis Smiley, the radio and television personality, and broadcast nationally by PBS. The idea was to focus on issues of particular concern to African-Americans.
It's discouraging that some of the biggest issues confronting blacks — the spread of AIDS, chronic joblessness and racial discrimination, for example — are not considered mainstream issues.
Sen. John Edwards offered a disturbingly bleak but accurate picture of the lives of many young blacks: "When you have young African-American

men who are completely convinced that they're either going to die or go to prison and see absolutely no hope in their lives when they live in an environment where the people around them don't earn a decent wage when they go to schools that are second-class schools compared to the wealthy suburban areas — they don't see anything getting better."
The difficult lives and often tragic fates of such young men are not much on the minds of so-called mainstream Americans or the political and corporate elites who run the country. More noise needs to be made. There's something very wrong with a passive acceptance of the degraded state in which so many African-Americans continue to live.
Smiley also is organizing a forum of Republican candidates to be held

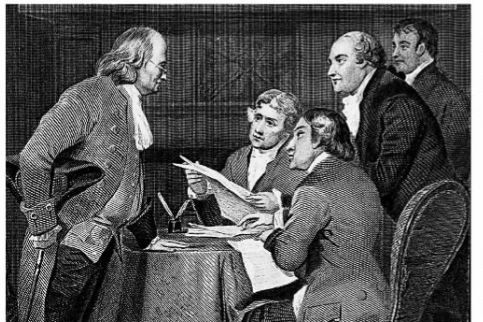


BOB HERBERT

in September. I wholeheartedly applaud his efforts. But if black people were more angry, and if they could channel that anger into political activism — first and foremost by voting as though their lives and the lives of their children depended on it — there would not be a need to have separate political forums to address their concerns.
If black people could find a way to stand together in sky-high turnout on Election Day, if they showed up at polling booths in numbers close to the maximum possible turnout, if they could set the example for all other Americans about the importance of exercising the franchise, the politicians would not dare to ignore their concerns.
For black people, especially, the current composition of the Supreme Court should be the ultimate lesson in the importance of voting in a presidential election. No branch of the government has been more crucial than the judiciary in securing the rights and improving the lives of blacks over

the past five or six decades.
George W. Bush, in a little more than six years, has tilted the court so radically that it is now, like the administration itself, relentlessly hostile to the interests of black people. That never would have happened if blacks had managed significantly more muscular turnouts in the 2000 and 2004 elections. The war in Iraq would not have happened, either.
There are, of course, many people, black and white, who are working on a vast array of important issues. But much, much more needs to be done. And blacks, in particular, need to intervene more directly in the public policy matters that concern them.
In the 1960s, there were radicals running around screaming about black power. But the real power in this country has always been the power of the vote. Black Americans have not come close to maximizing that power. It's not too late.

OUR LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS



The committee chosen to draft a declaration of independence for the American colonies is shown at work in this 19th Century engraving. Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Philip Livingston and Roger Sherman, left to right, submitted their draft to the Continental Congress July 1, 1776. On July 4 the United States of America was born. Post-Dispatch file.

A declaration of principles

Celebrating more than fireworks and backyard grills.

By Terrence Freeman
Two hundred thirty-one years ago a band of radicals rejected the authority of King George III and started a revolution that transcended the borders of his birth. Fifty signers were affixed to this revolutionary declaration; six came later.
Inspired by Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence responded to economic, religious and political grievances and fears of what a distant tyrannical government would do and could inflict — and, in fact, already had inflicted — on ordinary citizens. Jefferson didn't think there was anything particularly novel about its contents.
The sentiments and even some of the language could be found in the writings of Thomas Paine, George Mason, John Locke, Algernon Sidney and a host of others.
An intransigent King George III was determined to enforce colonial obedience. He personified all that was wrong with British dominion over the colonies.
Once a year with colors, flags, fireworks and backyard grills we celebrate the conviction of these rebels who refused to pass quietly through history. Who were they?
These advocates and agitators were scientists, lawyers and physicians. They were carpenters, battle veterans, farmers, clergy, merchants and inventors. Many had been schooled in the finest schools of Europe. Some had inherited wealth; some had made their own fortunes. They were democratic republicans and federalists, future presidents and parents of presidents. They were intense political rivals, and some later would be indicted for alleged criminal activities and removed from office.
The signers ranged in age from the 20-year-old Edmund Randolph to the 70-year-old Ben Franklin. We know about

the exceedingly wealthy populist John Hancock and the multi-dimensional thinkers Jefferson and Franklin, who had no formal education beyond the age of 10.
There was the quiet abolitionist George Wythe, a college dropout who later would become the first professor of law in the United States and count James Monroe, John Marshall and Thomas Jefferson among his students. Wythe freed his slaves, provided for their support and was murdered by a family member after Wythe announced his intention to will part of his property to his former slaves. Elbridge Gerry would leave us the term "gerrymandering" by redistricting Massachusetts to favor his democratic-republican party.
Through compromise, these imperfect men of principle excluded a condemnation of slavery. This incomplete declaration would wait 72 years for the Declaration of Sentiments written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and 87 years for the largely symbolic Emancipation Proclamation.
The signers were white men of means but in their way still diverse. They wrestled with the same temptations of modern politicians. Some would die wealthy men and some as paupers. What they had in common was the determination to risk life, liberty and property to take a stand against the injustices they saw around them. Somehow, they got past grudges and forged a transformational document, knowing that debate would continue.
The Declaration of Independence was not written, of course, for a holiday. It was written for and with purpose. It is a statement that the people of America refuse to suffer tyrannical govern-

ment. It is a promise that there are consequences for abuse and usurpation. It is a reminder that there is always work to be done. It is an encouragement to recalculate these ideals in the course of all human events.
A revolution that began in thought and words led to action and change. For generations, the Declaration has been an inspirational defense of human freedom and dignity for billions of people around the world. In theory, if not completely in execution, they got something profoundly right.
It would be tragic if, at least, frustration or greed turned us away from its — and our — founding principles. We must never live in a time without radical voices, without dissenting opinions, without challenges to power... and without compromise.
In the 21st century, we should affirm that all men and women are created equal and endowed with certain unalienable rights that governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed and that these truths are self-evident. It should be just as evident that a unitary, theocratic or imperial presidency is inconsistent with these ideals.
I consciously choose to celebrate the Declaration of Independence as an inspiration and a legacy with promises and challenges remaining. If the holiday does not remind us of this, then it is just another day for barbecues and fireworks.

Terrence Freeman of Spanish Lake is an engineering professor at St. Louis Community College. A national program director for 100 Black Men of America, Freeman has served as a consultant and lecturer for churches, community organizations, schools, industry and law enforcement agencies.



Terrence Freeman

IRAQ

The firefighters' approach to the Iraq inferno

Sometimes you just have to let a fire burn.
George Shultz, a former secretary of state who was trained as an industrial economist, is said to have made that remark about labor negotiations that have reached an impasse. There is a growing sense among Americans that we must apply this concept to Iraq.
But how far should we let the Iraqi fire burn and at what cost to the rest of the neighborhood? And how do we keep our own troops trapped inside the building?

Iraq has become a bloody collection of nameless victims — so I will try to personalize a particular Sura and Shiaite caught in the inferno.
The Sura is Foad al-Gaoudi, a former governor of Ashar province and one of the six tribal leaders who were killed last week by a suicide bomb at the Mansour Hotel in Baghdad. For the past four years, members of the al-Gaoudi family have been trying to find a way out of the Iraqi nightmare.
They have appeared frequently in this column, sometimes by name, sometimes anonymously; they have risked everything to save Iraq from the intimidators.
The Shiaite is Ammar al-Halabi, who is taking command of the largest Shiite party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, because of the illness of his father, Abdul Aziz al-Halabi. In April 2005, I spent a morning with Ammar when he made his first trip to the United States. I will never forget his description of visiting the Lincoln Memorial and looking up at the face of the man who kept America together during the carnage of its own civil war. He wants to save his country, too.

In the end, Iraq will stand or fall because of decisions made by the Gaoudis and Halabis and other people like them. But what should Americans do at a time when respected politicians such as Sen. Richard Lugar are voicing the nation's deep frustration with the war — and the sense that we may have to let the fire burn itself out?
Maybe we should think like firefighters. They try to save every life they can, but they don't take crazy risks, either. When a fire is really roaring, they don't stand in the middle of the inferno. The potential loss of life is too great, and the likelihood they can stop the fire is too small. So they make strategic choices: They try to contain the blaze, letting

it burn out in the red-hot center while hosing down nearby buildings and constructing firebreaks that can check the spread.
What's unimaginable is that a firefighter confronting a dangerous blaze would simply roll on the hoses, jump in the engine and drive away, consequences be damned. He may be furious at the people who caused the fire and frustrated with the fire engine company that let it get worse. But those are not reasons for abandoning the scene.
The firefighting analogy is imperfect, but it conveys two points that are worth considering as the national debate deepens over what America should do in Iraq.
First, it's increasingly clear that, despite President Bush's surge of an additional 30,000 troops into Iraq, U.S. forces cannot stop the sectarian violence there. I hope that Iraq's Sunnis and Shiaites can reach an accommodation. But if they can't, America at some point soon will have to decide if it is in a situation where, as Shultz said, you just have to let the fire burn, while doing everything possible to rescue those who are trapped.
Second, the red-hot fire in Baghdad doesn't mean that America should withdraw its troops entirely from Iraq. That's just too dangerous when the risks include a sectarian war that could engulf the Middle East, a humanitarian crisis that could include millions of refugees and an oil price that could spike to \$10 a barrel.

A "firehouse strategy" would make triage decisions. It would deploy U.S. forces so that they aren't caught in the middle of collapsing walls and blazing timbers. It would emphasize the training of Iraqi forces to fight the blaze. It would build firebreaks as the disaster doesn't spread to other rooms in the Iraqi house.
Most of all, a firehouse strategy would try to keep this sectarian blaze from jumping national boundaries. U.S. and Iraqi troops can create buffers by moving significant forces toward Iraq's borders to help keep Iraq's neighbors out and to prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from exporting terrorism.
This nation is so angry about Iraq that we sometimes forget what would be obvious if it were a four-alarm blaze in a nearby city: Some fires do have to burn, but leaving the scene isn't an option.

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DAVID IGNATIUS

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An Iraqi youth mixes as a U.S. military's forces fighting vehicle burns in Baghdad Monday.

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