

**The  
BLACK  
C o M M e n t a t o r**  
Commentary, analysis and investigations  
on issues affecting African Americans  
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*Issue 167 – January 19, 2006*

*Bruce's Beat*

*Does 'Black' medicine work for whites?  
Bush regime an 'equal opportunity destroyer'?  
Is BC 'harshly leftist'?  
by BC Associate Editor Bruce A. Dixon*

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Real journalists, the way we used to hear it explained, are called to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. They provide citizens with the useful and empowering information needed to comprehend the world and stand up for their own interests. *BC*'s own Margaret Kimberley is a real journalist. Her June 23 Freedom Rider column, "[RX For Black Hearts](#)" highlighted the corrupt practices used by the drug company Nitromed to get its questionable product Bidil to market, including the claim that it is somehow better for African American patients. The column sparked the following email from an empowered reader:

Dear *BC*,

My cardiologist recently prescribed the medication Bidil for me. I am not African American. I take it three times a day and seem to experience an adverse reaction. The next time I see my physician I will be interested in discussing the information referenced by Ms. Kimberley in her Freedom Rider column "RX for Black Hearts" with him. Is there anything new you can tell me that I should relay to my doctor?

Dear Sir,

*BC* continues to be honored by the solid and continuing contribution that Margaret Kimberley makes to this publication. Next to the cover story, [Freedom Rider](#) generally draws more readers than any other *BC* feature.

## The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

Prescribing physicians and trusting patients are at the business end of the tainted process that is the drug business. It can't hurt to let your doctor know that you are an informed consumer with reasonable questions, not just about the efficacy of the particular drug prescribed, but about the integrity of the process that put those drugs on your doctor's prescription list and maybe even with the idea that health care should be a commodity instead of a human right. If the questions Ms. Kimberley posed and the information she provided are valuable to you, why not share them with your physician?

While real journalists are few and far between, you can find lazy, disinforming pundits on every cable channel and blog. Last week's Cover Story called out James Taranto, editor of the Wall Street Journal's online opinion page, OpinionJournal.com. Taranto agreed with the conclusions of a survey by Dr. Michael Dawson, featured in a January 5, 2006 BC Cover Story ("Katrina: A Study – Black Consensus, White Dispute"), that whites and blacks had widely divergent views of the role race played in the disaster. However, Taranto's online WSJ opinion piece contended that, as long as blacks persisted in disagreeing with white opinion, they would remain – and deserve to remain – politically marginalized. **BC's response**, "**BC** vs. The Wall Street Journal" generated more reader emails than we could ever publish, but here is a representative sample.

Reader LL wrote:

I greatly appreciate your commentary on the WSJ's willful ignorance concerning the issue of race. When one looks at Mr. Dawson's findings and the regressive media's attack on the black consensus, one has to conclude that 62%–80% of whites live in a bubble, created for the purpose of maintaining the status quo. The WSJ like many other publications wants to give its readers what they want – a colorblind society where individuals have no one else to blame but themselves.

Dear LL,

Willful ignorance, besides being an oxymoron, is hard work. Just ask your president.

The corporate media's job is to create and sustain a civic narrative, an ongoing story about life in 21st Century America, that reinforces and justifies things the Way They Are. The Black Consensus is a standing repudiation of the validity of the tale they tell, and therefore a big problem. For the most part, corporate media acknowledge its existence only indirectly, going to ridiculous lengths to deny the obvious reasons for its existence.

For instance, at the beginning of the invasion of Iraq, when pollsters noted that African American sentiment, across lines of gender, class and generation was uniformly antiwar, sober establishment pundits advanced the ridiculous rationale that lopsided black antiwar sentiments were due to the fact that the war was identified with Bush, and black people hated anything that had to do with Bush. Amazing. We are presumed to have no historical memory, and exist in no historical context that might make us more doubtful than white Americans of the messianic premises and racist practices of Uncle Sam overseas. Such is the stuff of denial. Evidently, that is the distorted view from inside the bubble.

bd

Taranto's ahistorical, self-involved and self referential screed, attributing racial ill will in large measure to white resentment at being "discriminated against" by affirmative action, provoked more than one reader observation on the nature of white privilege in today's America.

## The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

Reader GD writes:

Excellent analysis of the WSJ fool, Taranto. In Ira Katznelson's new book, *When Affirmative Action was White: an Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America*, he goes a long way toward clarifying some of the recent origins and workings of white privilege and black disadvantage. The author details the racist legislative imperatives that hampered Black wealth attainment while shoring up white wealth, through deliberate policies at the national, state and local levels. Congratulations again on this piece.

GD

Dear GD,

I have not yet read the book you cite. But from looking at reviews of it, I can see that the argument reviewers say the author makes is a valid one that has been made before. Institutionalized racism in this country has enabled many ostensibly race-neutral laws and programs in the public and private sectors to function in ways that replicated and reinforced white supremacy, that conferred whites unearned advantages and penalized not just individual African Americans, but whole communities, black people as a class.

Thanks for reading Black Commentator, and for bothering to write us. Maybe I'll pick up the book.

bd

Several readers were prompted by the **BC** vs. WSJ story to put their \$50 on the line, and help to guarantee our future existence. We deeply appreciate subscriptions, and take this opportunity to beg for a few more. Freedom ain't free.

Some other readers wrote just to assure us that they are indeed out there. One whom we will not name writes:

Nice item on the WSJ. There are a few of us here at DJ [Dow Jones & Company, owners of the Wall Street Journal] who understand these issues and how important they are. Keep up the good work.

The only fully truthful thing in the OpinionJournal.com article that prompted **BC**'s response was his observation that **BC** is "harshly leftist" in outlook. We took it as a sort of compliment, as did some others.

Dear **BC**,

Great article. What exactly is a "harsh leftist" one wonders? A leftist who is actually a leftist as opposed to a marshmallow? I hope for the day when the white consensus embraces the black consensus and we have a decent humane world.

AD

Dear AD,

The white consensus embrace the black consensus? It'll never happen.

## The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

The very existence of the state of mind and social privilege we North Americans have learned to call "whiteness" is the root of the problem. When the descendants of Europeans learn to stop thinking like American white people, i.e., entitled to dominate and decide for the rest of the world, and embrace their own and everyone else's humanity instead, we will finally have arrived. In the long run I am certainly hopeful. But you know what else they say about the long run. In the long run, we'll all be dead.

bd

In *BC*'s [January 5, 2006](#) cover story, "Katrina: A Study, Black Consensus, White Dispute" we used the response to three questions lifted from an extensive survey of comparative white and black attitudes and political positions.

Huge majorities of Blacks agreed that the federal government's response would have been faster if the victims of Katrina in New Orleans had been white (84 percent), and that the Katrina experience shows there is a lesson to be learned about continued racial inequality (90 percent).

A couple of readers took exception to the way *BC* presented one of Dr. Dawson's questions.

Dear *BC*,

I suspect that the feds would have moved much quicker if the abandoned population were not POOR. Would they have abandoned a Black neighborhood with Condi, Powel, Gates, Cosby and other non-poor Blacks for five days? Would they even have wanted to instantly gentrify (steal) their land? Would they be evicting and bulldozing their land right now?

About 20% of the abandoned victims were in fact white. And although the media did the usual divide-and-conquer trick of portraying some white victims as "good" and the Black victims as "bad," the feds et al *still* abandoned the *poor* white folks and are evicting and bulldozing their homes too.

I urge readers to join or donate to Common Ground in New Orleans who are fighting to save the poor Black neighborhoods for the people and to stop the corporate vultures who have invaded them. Even a few days volunteering will help. Contact them at [commongroundrelief@gmail.com](mailto:commongroundrelief@gmail.com).

PG

Another reader:

Dear *BC*,

Maybe you mean, "had the victims all been white"? But the wording seems to imply that few, if any, were. Please, the victims of Katrina in New Orleans and all along the Gulf Coast were of all races and ethnic groups who reside here: Black, white, Asian, Latino, Arab. People of all social and economic levels were displaced, drowned, electrocuted, crushed by falling trees or died by their own hands in despair. One thousand and twenty seven of us have perished, by the latest count. Old people, young people. Elderly white people who would not or could not leave their homes. I read today about a middle aged Caucasian woman drowned while trying to lift her dog into a canoe.

## The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

All of us were hurt by the storm and the government's response has been dreadfully slow to help anybody. Why is it said that FEMA stands for, "Federal Employees Missing Again"? FEMA trailers have only just begun to show up to house people who have been living in tents and wrecked fishing camps and homes without roofs a full four months after the storm, and these people are white as well as Black. Landlords will bulldoze houses rather than rebuild; and thousands of their tenants are white. Katrina was an equal opportunity destroyer and clearly this administration is, too.

DF

We at **BC** think both these readers have a valid point about the facts on the ground. We like facts at **BC**, wherever we can find them, and welcome email from our readers. We read it all, and answer most of it, though space allows us only to print a few.

Please send your correspondence to BC Associate Editor Bruce A. Dixon at [Bruce.Dixon@blackcommentator.com](mailto:Bruce.Dixon@blackcommentator.com).