

Opinion

Brian, it's time we set the record straight

My first reaction to Brian's column was that of a shrug-off. I patiently reminded myself that not many people are that simple-minded to swallow his elaborate distortion of facts hook, line and sinker. However, I could not help but notice that the guy is a senior history and Russian major at this great university; and the seriousness of the matter at hand soon dawned on me — here is a guy who is supposed to know better, and who, not very long from now, may find himself in Washington as an expert on this or that. The image of another budding Donald Regan stupidly arguing that American women would not like to give up their jewelry as a defense against trade embargo on South Africa flashed through my mind. I found it pertinent to put the record straight before someone starts to take Mr. Frederick too seriously.

Rasheed Ladapo
Guest Columnist

minded indeed to expect an adherence to the liberal democratic institutions hurriedly set up by the Europeans before they left by their African successors. Unfortunately, this is the position often taken by some Westerners. They, like Brian, conveniently avoid to look at the development of the past 25 years as a part of a continuum in which independence will not be seen as a historical dividing line. To them I say wrong. I also argue that the savagery displayed by the likes of Amin and Bokassa was only a rub-off of the greater savagery of their teachers and masters i.e. the European colonists.

Inter-tribal conflicts, dictatorship and repression are not, as some would like us to believe, restricted to Africa. The on-going bloody tribal war in Northern Ireland, the not too long ago attacks on democracy in Europe by the fascists and the fact that neither the Spaniards nor the Portuguese had proved any better to their own people that government should be based on consent not force, should awaken the likes of Mr. Frederick from their better-than-thou delusion.

While it is not my intention to take him up on all his distortion of facts, his assertions that famine in Ethiopia is attributable to the form of government there and that the ANC is a terrorist organization are nothing but balderdash. The situation in Ethiopia was caused largely by the drought but exacerbated by the civil war; while the history of the ANC shows an organization that pursued peaceful non-violence change for more than two decades but later resorted to armed struggle when all peaceful avenues closed to it.

Brian's article is a complete rehash of the same flawed line of reasoning that has repeatedly failed under critical analysis. Over and over again, apartheid apologists like Brian, the majority of whom are found in the West, are quick to naively argue that conditions in the rest of Black Africa are no better than that of South Africa. And they often buttress their position by citing the atrocities of the likes of Idi Amin and Mobutu.

Their argument falls on its face, however, when we patiently remind them that the culture of violence that they posited as characteristic of contemporary African nations was in fact an import of the "white" man and that the ascendancy to power of men like Amin was made possible by both the British and American intelligence agencies. While inter-state fighting had been going on in Africa long before the arrival of the colonists — an incidence not peculiar to Africa, for the Europeans too were slaughtering each other at that time — the level of violence and the barbaric destruction of lives on such unprecedented a scale was alien to us. Sometimes I marvel at the audacity of some Westerners to manipulate history. The simple truth is that, in spite of their efforts, undoctored historical studies had shown that for the most part the colonial state, just like the creation of the United States, was conceived and maintained by the free use of violence and brutal massacres.

A good case in point was colonial Nigeria — a country that was ignorantly described by Mr. Frederick as being ridden with "racial strife." In 1906, the British once again demonstrated their unequal barbarism by a ruthless suppression of the Satiru revolt in Northern Nigeria.

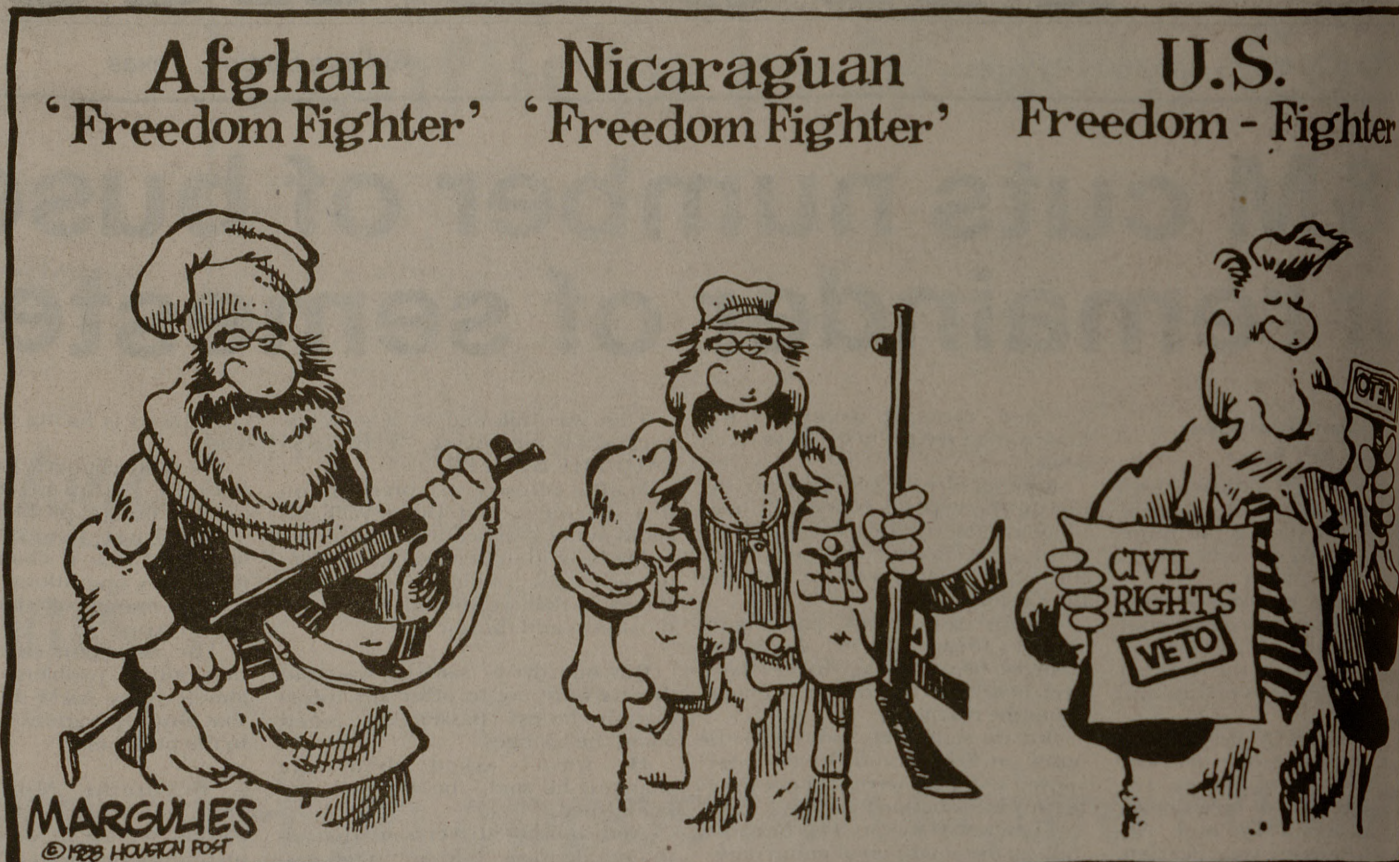
This use of unbridled violence to suppress protest or any challenge to the "white" man's rule continued throughout the colonial period and into the eve of independence. By importing this brutal use of force into Africa, the colonial rulers indeed provide a paradigm of government to their African successors, i.e. government rested not on consent but force. One then has to be very shallow-

The truth is there are human rights violations everywhere, even in the "good ole U.S.A." But it is absurd to compare what is going on in South Africa with situations in the Soviet Union or the rest of Africa. I am totally convinced that the condition of the Africans in South Africa is only one step behind that experienced by the Jews in Nazi Germany, i.e. the absence of the gas chambers!

Brian completely erred when he wrote that "Africans lack the cultural and historical basis for democracy, which is a western innovation alien to African experience." One would expect that he avail himself of the opportunity to break from regurgitating the narrow historical perspective of the old and broaden his horizon by studying historical materials written from different perspectives — this would have given him a balanced education. If he had done so, he would have learned, for example, that the Yorubas of the Southwestern Nigeria, to mention just one, had for thousands of years developed a system of government equipped with checks and balances not unlike ones obtainable in a democratic form of government. This was later violently disrupted by the "white" man. Besides, isn't his claim, by deduction, that the west had the necessary cultural and historical basis for democracy a staggering piece of arrogance considering the fact that democratic model has had such a chequered career in the west? A lofty idea like democracy was never the invention of any race. Remember, much of the elements of the so called western civilization were borrowed by the Greeks from that far-reaching and awe-inspiring Negroid civilization along the Nile valley, ancient Egypt.

Yes, Mr. Frederick, Africans have spent the last 25 years trying to dismantle the European legacy of violence. We did that in Uganda by throwing out Amin and his successor, and we are struggling to do just that in Zaire, South Africa and Liberia. Ironically, our struggles are not made any easier by the fact that the old masters of violence, though they like to portray themselves as the champion of human freedom, continue to prop up and aid these oppressive regimes as long as they get what you familiarly described as "strategic minerals." In spite of all this formidable opposition to our freedom, we are making progress everyday. We believe God is on our side; and with the help of people of goodwill here in America and around the world, Azania shall be free.

Rasheed Ladapo is a graduate student



Oh, no, not the ELECTIONS!

They're heeere! Da da dum, the Student Government elections of 1988. In good conscience, what advice can I offer but RUN, RUN, RUN FOR YOUR LIVES! DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME, SAVE YOURSELF! OPIE, OPIE, GET THE FRISBEE!



Mark Nair

OK, OK, wait a minute. Maybe we really shouldn't panic. After all, no sports writers are running for anything. Maybe there is a God.

But then again, it is Student Government. And then again, it is election time. And then again, this is my job. Ah, you gotta do what you gotta do. The following is a true and ugly story. Those weak of stomach and weak of mind are advised to read it cautiously.

When I was a small urchin, my parents were always trying to convince me to be someone important, someone powerful, someone famous. They were very disappointed when I decided to become Student Body President. But those were the old days when I was young, impressionable and strung out on Underdog reruns. I wasn't responsible for my actions.

And then, suddenly, I was in college. And then, suddenly, it was Student Government election time. And then, suddenly, I was elected to the Student Senate. And I found that rather neat, because, you know, I wasn't running for any Student Senate position. I won as a write-in candidate.

With six votes.

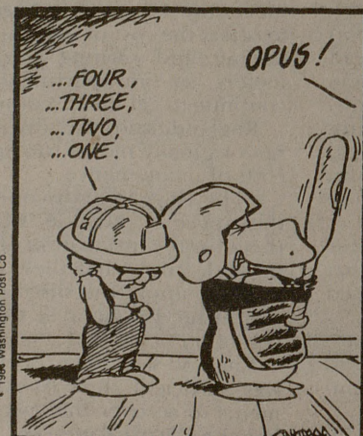
That's right. I garnered that powerful (verging on omnipotent) position with six write-in votes. I knew my time in Student Government had come.

BLOOM COUNTY



by Berke Breathed

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The Battalion

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