

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Chuck Lee, other politicians should quit race baiting

For years, whites and other minorities have complained that Blacks too often play the race card.

At the least slight — a rude salesman, a piercing glare, aversion to small talk, among other things — they claim we're ready to contact the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and take our case all the way to the Supreme Court to get justice. They're wrong, of course.

But something strange is happening in America's political landscape: Whites are becoming more apt to play the race card.

And their contribution — if you can call it that — isn't limited to the occasional anti-white rhetoric bandied about when people talk about affirmative action. More often, when Whites play the race card, it involves a race of another kind: political.

Whether they're incumbents trying to hold on to power, upstarts to wrest power away or political veterans seeking higher office, White politicians are assailing the records of their opponents when it comes to what they've done for minorities.

Case in point: Monday's rally for the Million Youth March.

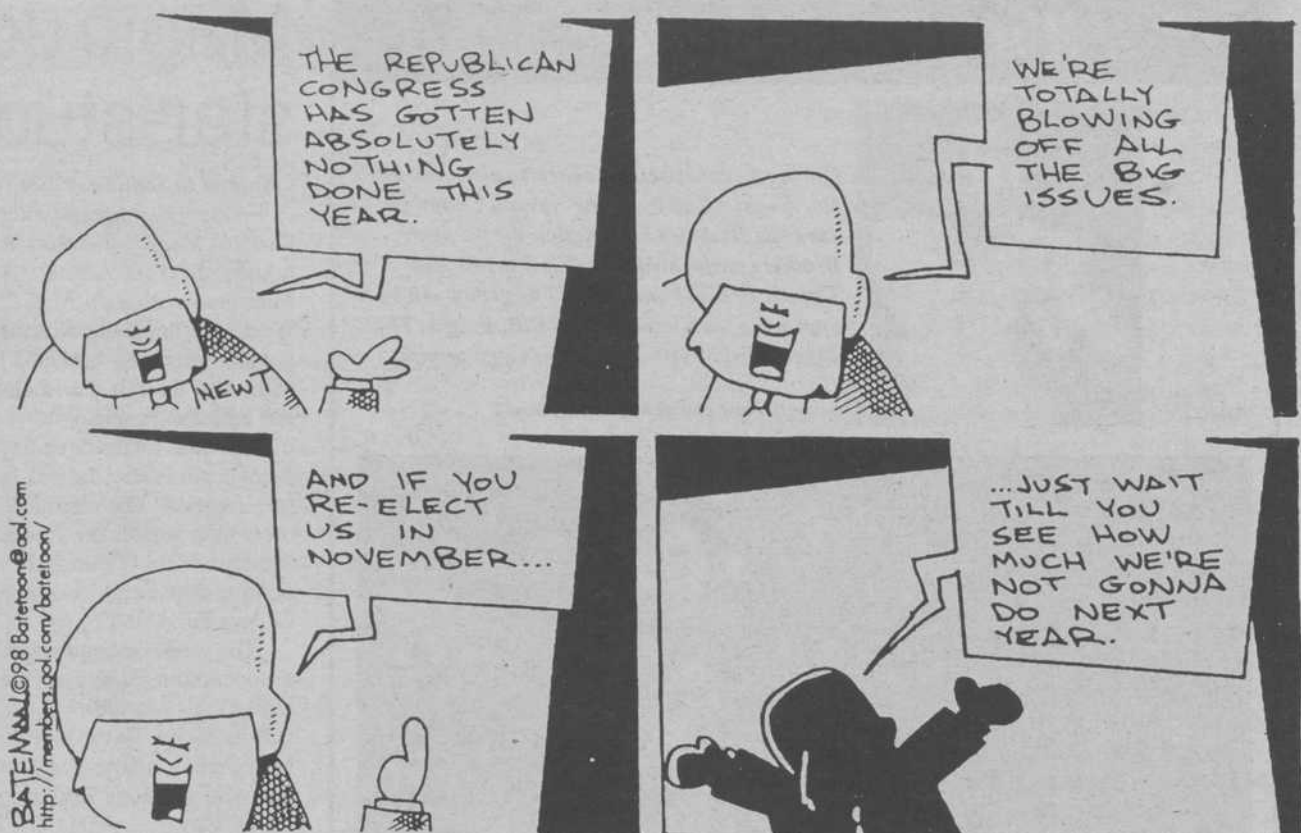
In front of a packed house at the West Las Vegas Library, wealthy businessman Chuck Lee, who is running for sheriff, lambasted current Sheriff Jerry Keller for not having any African-Americans in top positions at the Metropolitan Police Department.

But Lee's assessment of Keller's administration, however true it may be, smacks of hypocrisy when his record in hiring and promoting minorities to top jobs in his nine local car dealerships is examined. The picture isn't rosy.

As surely as there are black officers qualified for management position's in the city's police force, there are black salesmen cut from leadership cloth.

White politicians have become adept at trying to sway the black vote by pulling at racial heartstrings. We, as Blacks, have to be smart enough not to cower to their political pandering and challenge the accusers on their records.

Lee had no problem ridiculing Keller's apparent lack of sensitivity in front of a large crowd that included many impressionable youth. Let's see if he has an easier time explaining why the leadership in his companies is lily-white.



America needs more responsible fathers

By James W. Compton
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Special to Sentinel-Voice

Like many others, I was taken aback by an article in the recent issue of *Sports Illustrated*. In case you missed it, the cover featured a handsome African-American youngster, four, maybe five years old, with a pained expression on his face, holding a basketball.

The caption reads: "Where's Daddy?"

The young man is Khalid Minor, son of Boston Celtics player Greg Minor. Minor, who at first denied he was Khalid's father, also has two other children by the same woman, to whom he is not married.

Unfortunately, as a professional athlete, Minor has plenty of company.

In a comprehensive, 10-page article titled "Paternity Ward," *Sports Illustrated* chronicled what has become a growing problem: paternity suits against some of our best-known athletes.

A couple of well known retired white and Hispanic athletes are discussed or mentioned in passing: Indiana Pacers coach Larry Bird, baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Palmer, current baseball star Juan Gonzalez, and boxer Oscar De La Hoya. But the overwhelming majority of those profiled are African-American players in the National Basketball Association.

Shawn Kemp, of the NBA's Cleveland Cavaliers, was singled out as the worst

known offender. At the age of 28, Kemp already has seven children by six different mothers.

This is not to say that some of these superstar athletes have not tried to behave responsibly toward children.

For example, Kemp has tried to maintain relationships with his children, but in some instances has been blocked by the mother.

And one could say the unmarried-births situation in pro sports merely reflects the situation in the larger society. Thirty-two percent of all children are born to unmarried mothers, according to a 1995 survey by the National Centers for Health Statistics. In 1980, it was only 18 percent. That overall statistic includes nearly 70 percent of African-American children, 41 percent of Hispanic children and 21 percent of white children.

Nonetheless, the situation *Sports Illustrated* exposed is deeply disturbing.

For one thing, the article underscores how unwise it is to accept without hesitation the perhaps uniquely American belief that those who display superior athletic skills also adhere to a high moral code.

Secondly, it's evident that the broader sexual promiscuity indicated by the *Sports Illustrated* article results from the often corrosive dynamics that saturate the off-the-field environment of the professional sports scene: some women indiscriminately throw their bodies at the athletes, and some athletes indiscriminately accept.

But it also results from the

coddling many of these athletes received the moment they began to show their superior talent. Through high school and college, blue-chip athletes are too often shielded by coaches, teachers, principals, athletic directors, and college deans from the consequences of their misbehavior, whether major or minor.

That willingness to look the other way - as long as the athlete produces on the playing field - is exacerbated in professional sports because the money at stake is even greater.

Of course, not all athletes succumb to this.

But too many do succumb, as is glaringly evident in the *Sports Illustrated* story.

This isn't a plea for returning to the sexual prudery of yesteryear. We know that often hid a hypocritical double standard.

It's a declaration that we ought to demand that professional athletes behave better, but not because we want to put them on a pedestal.

We should demand the

same of them as we do of ourselves - and as we do of poor inner-city youths who don't have a million-dollar contract: Be responsible!

Be responsible in part because we know that across the society, the economic burden of being born out-of-wedlock falls heavily on the children themselves, and then, on the women who bear them and raise them, often alone.

That is the skill we in the Urban League Movement have been trying, with considerable success, to help instill in the youth of our communities. Indeed, the Chicago Urban League, like many of our counterparts elsewhere, is expanding its youth development programs.

We're joining the Urban League-wide "Achievement Matters" campaign to celebrate those youngsters who have done well in school and in their communities - and to inspire others to follow their lead.

We're also expanding a project we call the Male (See *Responsible*, Page 15)

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