

COMMENTARY

# Times call for reestablishing black nationalist thinking

By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

One of the biggest challenges African people face in America is rejuvenating Black Nationalist thinking as we struggle to determine our best collective interests.

We can only do so by reestablishing such thinking and developing a Black Nationalist program of action. This is the missing link in the liberation of African people in America.

We can begin by reviewing the development and impact of Black Nationalism in America.

Black Nationalism is a tradition that emerged in the early 19th century among those who understood the need for African people in America to develop a national entity.

These early leaders such as Denmark Vessey, Nat Turner, David Walker, Henry

Highland Garnet, James T. Holly, Martin Delany, Pap Singleton, Edwin McCabe and Henry McNeal Turner understood that African people in America were a "nation within a nation" and should organize to collectively struggle for the liberation of Black people in this country and throughout the world.

During this era there were some leaders both before and after the Civil War, who led movements requiring people of African ancestry to leave this country and establish a homeland somewhere else. These proposals included Africa, Canada and the Caribbean.

Others advocated Black people controlling the towns where they lived, while some advised moving to the western region of this country to establish all-Black towns in Kansas and Oklahoma.

The core of this Black

Nationalist tradition has been to defeat and overthrow the system of White supremacy, seize control of land (somewhere) and achieve self-determination for oppressed Black masses.

The Black Nationalist tradition has always been opposed to integration, assimilation and accommodation as a solution to the problems of people of African ancestry in America. In this regard, it has rejected the strategy and tactics of appealing to the morality of White people and their system of supremacy.

Black Nationalists have been historically clear that people in power don't teach powerless people how to get power. And, they certainly don't give power away, even though, when challenged, they may give up some concessions.

As Black Nationalism emerged in the 20th century,

the Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communicates League were at the forefront of ideas and organizing.

Garvey used his varied skills to become one of our true 20th century freedom fighters. He arrived in Harlem, New York on March 16, 1916. By 1919 Garvey was well-established as the President General of the UNIA/ACL, which had a membership of more than three million people with more than 300 branches in the United States.

Perhaps Garvey's greatest contribution to the uplifting of our people was his ability to find a formula for organizing African people around the African principle: The greatest good for the greatest number.

This was reflected in the First International

Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in Madison Square Garden in 1920. More than 20,000 Black people from all over the globe witnessed the choosing of Red, Black and Green as the colors of the provisional government.

Garvey and the UNIA/ACL established the Negro Factories Corporation, with cooperative stores, restaurants, steam laundry ships, tailor shops, dressmaking shops, millinery stores, a doll factory and a publishing house. He also formed a Steamship Corporation.

The Black Nationalist tradition continued in the 20th century through the Nation of Islam and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who utilized many of Garvey's organizing tactics and strategies.

During the 1960's, the Black Nationalist tradition

reemerged through the influence of Malcolm X who adopted it as the political, economic and social philosophy of the organization of Afro American Unity in 1964 after he left the Nation of Islam.

Finally, the Black Nationalist tradition, today, is spearheaded through the African Centered Education Movement. The mass acceptance of Kwanzaa, African Liberation day, buy-Black campaigns, the reparation's movement and controlling our own communities initiatives are all part of the on-going Black Nationalist tradition.

Once Black Nationalism is understood by all Black people, it will be the foundation upon which the true liberation of people of African ancestry in America will take place.

Worrill is chairman of the National Black United Front.

## Carl Rowan's Commentary

### Zippergate tornado ready to topple all Americans

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The debate about an inquiry into the impeachment of President Clinton made it clear that Americans are on the path of a very damaging political storm, and that there is virtually nothing we can do to avert it.

The GOP leadership thinks it has a chance to "get" Clinton

the way some Republicans believe the Democrats "did in" Richard Nixon, and they clearly are determined that neither the national interest, cries for statesmanship nor anything else will deter them.

The committee hearings left no doubt that this campaign to humiliate and depose Clinton is pure ugly politics, fatefully propelled by the fact that the issues are such that each side can claim it is driven by morality, patriotism and a love of the Constitution.

We surely will have to endure months of the utterly partisan bickering that we heard when only one of the 37 congressmen who spoke got any applause — Rep. Robert Wexler, D-Fla. I could identify with Wexler's thinking and his passion when he said:

"I am not proud of the personal conduct of the president that has cheapened our national discourse, confused our children, disillusioned our idealists and empowered our cynics.

"I am not proud of this prosecutor, Ken Starr, who has turned government in upon itself, distorted our system of justice in a politically inspired witch hunt that rivals



CARL ROWAN

McCarthyism in its sinister purpose...

"I am proud of the millions of Americans who have sifted through mounds of disturbing material to reach the common-sense conclusion that (the president's behavior) does not rise to the level of an impeachable offense, and who have asked us in a loud-and-

clear voice to move on to the nation's real business."

I know, though, that a majority in the Republican-controlled House, and a sizable minority of Americans, will identify more closely with these words from the statement by David P. Schippers, majority counsel for the Judiciary Committee:

"The president is...neither above nor below the law, (but) he is, by virtue of his office, held to a higher standard than any other American. Furthermore, as chief executive officer and commander in chief, he is the repository of a special trust ... There exists substantial and credible evidence of 15 separate events directly involving President William Jefferson Clinton that could — could — constitute felonies which, in turn, may constitute grounds to proceed with an impeachment inquiry." Thus it is clear that the levels of disagreement and passion are so great that, no matter the damage to the nation, the conflict isn't likely to end until we get to a trial and find out whether two-thirds of the U.S. Senate will vote to convict Clinton.

And the damaging fallout won't even end then.

## Espy fiasco not one for Blacks to scream racism

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When Clinton's former agricultural secretary Mike Espy was indicted in 1997 for taking gifts from lobbyists and companies he regulated, many expected that he would scream that he was being persecuted because he was a politically influential African-American.

It's understandable that some would think that he might play the race card. This is a well-worn ploy that some Black politicians under legal fire have latched onto to deflect attention from their crimes.

One has only to remember that former Illinois Congressman Mel Reynolds screamed racism when he was indicted, tried and convicted of sexual assault charges. Washington D.C. Mayor Marion Barry screamed racism when he was indicted, tried and convicted on a drug charge. And, California Congressman Walter Tucker screamed racism when he was convicted of bribery charges.

Even though their knee-jerk cries of White persecution didn't fly, they played the odds and figured that there would be some Blacks willing to buy this line.

Espy, whose trial began this month, has not screamed racism. It would have been hard to do anyway because the charges against him seem pretty damning. In the 39-count indictment he's accused of accepting more than \$35,000 in gifts and favors from individuals and businesses in return for favorable rulings by the Agricultural Department.

Independent Counsel Donald C. Schmalz's five-year probe of Espy has cost more than \$17 million. Only Kenneth Starr's investigation of Clinton has carried a bigger taxpayer price tag.

But unlike Starr's probe which has

produced few legal results, Schmalz has delivered the goods. He has bagged millions in fines and more than a dozen convictions of individuals and corporations for illicit gift-giving.

Yet, attempting to cast Espy as either a political victim or crook misses the real point. By even winding up in a court docket, he has further tarnished the image of Black political leaders. If this seems like an unreasonable demand that Black politicians be cleaner in their political dealings than Whites, there's a reason.

Black politicians have a special duty to their communities. Many Blacks view them not as politicians, but as leaders and advocates. They look to them to represent their interests and to challenge and confront institutional power. When they take bribes, or are even accused of taking them, they betray the trust of African-Americans.

Many Black politicians are long-term Democratic party veterans who know well the political ropes. Espy was a three-term congressman from Mississippi before he took the agricultural post in 1993.

If politicians such as Espy took bribes or committed other illegal acts they did it because they thought they could get away with it.

Espy doesn't dispute the charge that he took gifts from friends and businesses. He insists that they were given and accepted out of friendship, and not in return for political favors.

If that is true and he believed that lobbyists expected nothing from him in return, then that still means he felt his office and position conferred upon him a special privilege and that gift-taking came with the turf.

I hope that some Blacks out of misguided racial loyalty won't regard him as a victim of White persecution, but as just another corrupt politician.