

BUSINESS

New government-backed Internet excludes minorities

By John William Templeton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There is a reason that the Creator gave us at least six senses. At the very moment that my ears perked up hearing the moving story on the radio of a senior citizen who cried when she saw a photo of White and Colored fountains while visiting the Birmingham Civil Rights Museum, my eyes bulged over something else on my computer screen.

On Wednesday, a group of big companies and 70 "major" universities unveiled their own private Internet with high-speed bandwidth that can handle practically any computer application at speeds thousands of times faster than the rest of us. Another federally-financed consortium is building a high-speed Internet II for research universities.

Even a country boy from

North Carolina could understand the connection. Originally, the Internet was not supposed to be accessible to the public. It was contemplated and designed when only big companies and federally-funded university researchers had access to computers.

Because of the threat of nuclear war, it was thought that it could survive because it did not have centralized controls. Now, it has far outstripped the purposes that the U.S. military originally intended it for, even destabilizing authoritarian regimes like the People's Republic of China.

On the Internet, there is the potential for everyone to be equal. Clearly, this is not consistent with American history. So rather than building high-speed links to grade schools, community colleges, libraries, recreation

centers, churches and homes, both the federal government and this private consortium want their own Internet. And you or I won't be able to access them.

You see they are far more worried about your having the same information they have than any nuclear bomb.

The stakes are bigger than Bull Connor could imagine. With the current relatively accessible Internet, the impact of the digital divide will amount to a \$3 trillion loss of income for Black and Latino households due to lack of access to jobs, business opportunities and equity ownership in high growth firms.

Let the access to science, engineering, research and

development be further concentrated in the hands of an increasingly wealthy elite, and those trends will grow worse.

In California, home of most of the high technology industry and the high-flying Internet stocks, a new report concludes that the gap between the rich and poor grew wider during the economic rebound than during the recession earlier this decade.

The universities behind these exclusive networks are the same ones that are at the forefront of the attacks on affirmative action, meaning that students who do not attend these universities will be at a big disadvantage.

The Congressional Black

and Hispanic Caucuses should halt these efforts unless they grant equal access to historically-Black and predominately Latino campuses along with tribal colleges and utilize the technology to allow grade schools where these groups predominate to have access to the top academic resources.

President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore should be called to account for their role in catering to technology executives. They've already decimated minority ownership in telecommunications with the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

This new Internet is the epitome of "White privilege" that the president's race

initiative described.

Federal resources should be banned from creating exclusive networks that create the digital equivalent of "White" and "Colored" fountains.

This is another reason why the new lawsuit against the University of California on behalf of Black and Latino students, who scored 4.0 averages, but were denied admission is so critical. The attack on affirmative action is now being revealed as an effort to carve out an "elite eye of the needle" through which all but a favored few are kept from the tremendous wealth being generated through the Internet.

John William Templeton is executive editor of "Griot."

MLK Center

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money will fund the activities and programs.

The county initially planned to build senior residences in the surrounding area, but the city voted down the zoning. Clark County Community Resources Manager Douglas Bell hopes the new center lifts community spirit.

"We really want to change the image around here," he said. "That will encourage private investors to put their monies and resources in this community."

Sen. Harry Reid, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, North Las Vegas Mayor Michael Montandon, and Clark County Justice of the Peace Stephen Dahl expressed their support for the \$8 million project during the ceremony.

Financial

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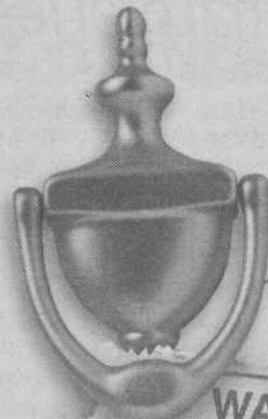
validates the total amount of investment income you report on your tax return.

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• **Mortgage Interest Statements.** The holder of your home mortgage is required to provide you a statement showing how much you paid in interest during the year on your home loan. That interest you paid remains one of your biggest tax-deductible expenses.

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