

COMMENTARY

# Gates' scholarship donation a boon for minorities

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*  
Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft and the wealthiest man on planet Earth, is a visionary.

He proved that by starting a company which changed human history and now he's proving that he understands the changes the new millennium will bring about and the responsibilities the privileged have to ensure a future in which all have an equal opportunity to participate.

Gates showed he is a visionary for the 21st century as well as for the current one when he announced the Gates Millennium Scholarship program, which will make available \$1 billion to African American, Hispanic and native American students over the next 20 years.

The Gates Millennium

Scholarship program is one of the largest philanthropic gifts ever made and will be administered by the United Negro College Fund.

It will guarantee full financing for outstanding students of color who come from poor families.

Undergraduate students will be able to study any subject, but graduate students must be committed to studying science, math, engineering, computer technology, education and library science.

By itself it will nearly double the number of scholarships available and was called "earth-shattering, landscape-changing" by William Gray, the head of the UNCF.

Gates noted that people of color are vastly underrepresented in science,

## Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



higher education and in his own computer industry.

These scholarships, of which 1,000 are expected to be available every year, are designed to rectify those numbers.

Over the past two years, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has made large contributions to education, health and library sciences.

It has assisted in wiring the country's public libraries for the Internet and has made some \$200 million in

contributions to research and distribution of vaccines for AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Prior to that Gates found himself being criticized for his lack of philanthropy despite his incredible wealth.

It is clear that Gates understands that unless all Americans are equipped to enter the 21st century and its information age, that our nation cannot really flourish.

He understands that we

must either put money in education now or in imprisonment later.

He understands that we can expand the slices of the economic pie through education and true equal opportunity.

And he's putting his money on 20,000 young people of color living in our nation's poorest communities who can make a difference if given a chance.

Beginning in the fall of 2000, those high school seniors who have 3.3 grade-point averages or above and are nominated by a teacher or principal will be eligible for the Gates' scholarships.

They will also have to write an essay on their life goals and will be required to commit themselves to some form of community service.

Gates is a visionary and a

multi-billionaire who understands that young people of color are a key to the future of our nation. Maybe you and I don't have that kind of money, but we, too, can have that kind of vision.

We can commit ourselves to ensuring that young people of color are prepared and ready to apply for those Gates scholarships.

We can be mentors and role models.

We can provide summer jobs.

We can tutor and we can give what dollars we have.

Who knows what future Mae Jemison or Charles Drew or Garret Morgan is out there waiting for a chance. Thanks, Mr. Gates, for believing in the future. Thanks for challenging us to do the same.

## Carl Rowan's Commentary

### G. W. Bush, other voucher backers ignoring causes of student failure

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

If you only consider his recent song and dance about poor kids and federal education funding, you might conclude that Texas Gov. George W. Bush is the best friend that needy children ever had. But, as another song says, he plans to kill poor youngsters with "kindness" by destroying



CARL ROWAN

"failed" public school and allowing the kids to "escape" with \$1,500 each in federal funds.

Bush goes on to suggest that the cause is "failed school" and to suggest that he will cure the problem by taking from such public schools some of the \$13 billion that Uncle Sam spends yearly on public education and reallocating it to \$1,500 vouchers, and by "allowing someone else — including churches and synagogues and community groups — to serve our children in better fashion."

I would be applauding Bush if he had said: "That gap in test scores is in large measure a reflection of generations of Jim Crow in public schooling. And of current Jim Crow in housing. And current racism in employment and all the other things that create family backgrounds that are not conducive to children learning and scoring high on standardized tests. Ever since the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools, those favoring separation and unfairness have prevailed. When I become president we are going to equalize spending in public school districts, and we are going to end the racism by allowing any child to go to any public

school in his state. That way African-American and Hispanic kids will begin to have a fair chance."

I don't blame Bush exclusively for this sudden assault on "failed" public school. President Clinton fell into that same trap some months ago. And I don't expect any real change away from a

public school system in which more than 90 percent of the nation's children must depend, no matter how much it is weakened by vouchers.

But I do pray that Bush and other Americans will understand that schools "fail" for reasons far beyond the things that Bush mentioned. If you locate a school where the student-body is certain to be overwhelmingly minority, and poor, with parents who lack a good education; if you staff that school with the only teachers willing to work in such an "unsafe" or "unprestigious" environment, meaning minority teachers who themselves were deprived by a Jim Crow education and poverty backgrounds; if you fund that school so stingily that it lacks books, science lab equipment, computers and advanced placement classes; and if politicians are constantly assailing that school, you will turn out kids who don't read and write or handle math problems in a satisfactory way. Such a school will FAIL!

The tragic truth is that we have many such public schools in America, and they won't get much better until this country ends the kinds of discrimination that Bush is not talking about.

## Granting activists clemency could backfire on first lady

Jeffrey Hart

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

There probably is not a single person in New York who believes that President Clinton is offering clemency to 16 FALN — the Spanish acronym for Armed Forces of National Liberation — Puerto Rican terrorists on their merits. New Yorkers are a canny lot, and just about everyone believes Clinton did this to help Hillary Clinton with New York's Puerto Rican voters in her Senate race.

The Clinton administration initially said that those receiving clemency had not participated in terrorist violence.

New York Post investigative reporter Murray Weiss reports that a 1983 report connects several of them with FALN bomb factories and violent attacks, including a bomb blast at the Mobil building that killed a 26-year-old lawyer (New York Post, Aug. 31).

The Post also reports that "most of those being offered clemency were arrested in 1980 in Evanston, Ill., after a botched army robbery following dozens of Chicago-area FALN bombings.

One of those to be released, Juan Segarra Palmer, was convicted in connection with the \$7 million Wells Fargo armored car robbery. According to Evanston police, documents uncovered by the FBI indicated that those arrested were in town to kidnap a local millionaire industrialist and hold him for ransom."

Dick Morris continues to be a shrewd commentator on politics. Yes, he disgraced himself in his 1996 escapade with a prostitute

and had to leave the Clinton campaign (imagine anyone having to leave the Clinton team because of moral disgrace), but Morris was then and still remains a shrewd political analyst and tactician. In a recent column, he argues that the release of the FALN terrorists could be Hillary's Willie Horton."

Horton, it will be recalled, is the Massachusetts murderer serving life in prison without parole who, nevertheless, was allowed weekend furloughs from the prison under the administration of Gov. Michael Dukakis. On one of his furloughs, Horton committed a murderous assault upon a Maryland couple and is serving life in that state. The George Bush 1988 campaign stung Dukakis badly with TV ads about the Horton furloughs, using them as a symbol of Dukakis' permissive liberalism.

Morris writes: "Here's the ad Rudy (Giuliani) can run.

"My name is Diana Berger. In 1975, I lost my husband — and my son, Adrian, lost his father — when terrorists from the FALN blew up a restaurant in Manhattan where he was eating lunch, minding his own business. Now, President Clinton has offered clemency to 16 FALN terrorists who are now in prison for helping to carry out the group's bombings. Hillary is supporting clemency. Mayor Giuliani and the U.S. attorneys who prosecuted the cases are against it.

"So am I. So is Adrian. His father would agree, if only he were still here."

Dick Morris smells raw political meat. If these ads ever run, that's it for Hillary.

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