

COMMENTARY

Bush can revamp himself, appeal to Blacks

By Ronald Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The other day, taping BET's "Lead Story," I was asked by conservative talk show host Armstrong Williams, "What can George Bush do to please you Black leaders?" The following day, I was asked on Howard University's WHUR radio station, "What do you think George Bush could do to please Blacks?"

This is a fair enough question, coming from both the Right and the Left media—and I'll answer it here. But first let me address what I feel to be the underlying issue.

The question arises because certainly conservatives like Armstrong Williams, but also some liberals, are beginning to feel that Blacks are overly critical of Bush in the face of his attempts to reach out to them through conciliatory rhetoric. Well, I can understand why some Black people would settle for conciliation. It takes them out of the fight. It expunges from them the necessity to be confrontational and it calls out their liberal instincts to try to prove that they can be forgiving. After all, not to be forgiving is to be perceived as harsh, unreasonable, and even disrespectful of the attempt on the part of Bush to take the first step.

Some Blacks have bought this compassionate-sounding stuff, since it does not appear to blatantly obstruct their interests and

they are wondering why the rest of us are hanging back, still raising a fuss. The Bush camp is smart enough to raise the ante with incentives: many Blacks are now getting something they have not seen before—letters of invitation from Republicans to all sorts of meetings held by the President and his Cabinet officers.

Some of the recipients of these invitations are ecstatic. They have coveted these invitations, because they have wanted badly to boast, "I was at the White House the other day," or, "I have a meeting with the Secretary of so-and-so." However, in the ecstasy of the invitations and the meetings, they have forgotten whose interests are being served and who is being used, lock, stock and barrel. The Bush people are banking on the fact that modest attention will work wonders and that perhaps many Blacks won't care if their narrow interests are served.

I frequently watch a television advertisement for school choice on television, which features Blacks criticizing the public schools. It is a crafty, individualistic message saying, "While public schools may be right for your child, they are wrong for mine. So, to heck with your child, I'm going to take mine out and send them to a private school." That message would be fine with me if the people pictured had the financial resources to send

their children to private school; however, the school choice movement wants to do it by taking money away from the public school. This message sets Blacks against Blacks, ultimately for the larger interest of Whites who can afford to send their children to private schools and who want public dollars to contribute to it.

The point is that these messages are ultimately meant to divide the Black community by appealing to the narrow self-interests of a few in the process, exploiting many.

A recent CNN/USA Today poll showed that most Blacks still feel that Bush is an illegitimate president. That is what makes his minions heartless mad at Blacks who are openly critical of his policies.

What would make them happy?

Well, Bush could start with supporting election reform. He didn't put one dime in his recently released budget to fund the purchase of voting machines, training of election officials, publication of materials, studies by a commission (that has been recommended by almost every piece of legislation), or other recommended correctives to the Florida debacle.

Then, he could put back the \$1.2 billion in construction funds he took out of the education budget. That would go a long way to fixing up crumbling schools disproportionately

located in older cities with large Black populations.

He could put back the "new markets" program developed by the Clinton administration that was just eliminated from the budget. Clinton used the program to try to attract corporate investment to underserved areas left behind in the days of the booming economic upturn. It would use the tax incentive approach more vigorously and it would use the mechanism of the overseas private investment corporation as a domestic idea to cut the risk for private investors in least developed areas of the country by making start-up business loans and risk guarantees available.

He could put back the \$500 million he took out of the Justice Department budget for community policing, since this program has gotten high marks in nearly every sizeable community where it has been tried. The alternative is to go back to a style of policing which envisions the police as swat teams rather than as citizens with a common community interests in knowing their neighborhoods and preventing crime.

Bush could do a lot of things to gain the attention of Blacks. But nothing will work until the stench of political opportunism is taken from the initiatives he has launched.

Dr. Ronald Walters, a political science professor at Howard University.

Nevada is a soap opera

By Louie Overstreet

Special to Sentinel-Voice

"All My Children," do the things you see, hear and read about that are taking place here in Nevada seem different than what is occurring elsewhere in the country? In many ways the things that occur here, often without challenge on our part, remind



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me of the saying that describes the difference between the economic classes in America: "the rich are different from you and me, they have more money."

Nevada is a rich state. That alone makes it different from a lot of other states. Yet, "As the World Turns" here in Nevada, instead of our people enjoying the ride, it appears that the motion is making too many of us dizzy.

While we all know that we only have "One Life to Live," too many of us that are well past our prime get over-dressed in outfits that are "tighter than Dick's hatband," use too much makeup and bedazzle ourselves with jewelry in order that we may stroll- or more accurately, hobble- around the casinos trying to fool ourselves and others into thinking that we are still "The Bold and the Beautiful."

In reality, this type of self-indulgence only makes us prime candidates for "The Jerry Springer Show." It would be far better, if the "Passions" we demonstrate for self-indulgence were directed in ways that would allow us to successfully enjoy the political system in ways that eliminate the disparity between the quality of life of Nevadans of color and that of our majority counterparts.

A step we should and could take to

address the issues that have a disproportionate impact on us, is to convene an African-American summit of all groups in Nevada and chart a course of action that appreciates the fact one group can not be all things to all people. Man, believe me when I tell you there are more than enough problems to go around that need addressing. However, so that the summit will not immediately regress into a debate over who is going to be in charge, all the "Queen Latifah" and "Judge Joe Brown" types should please stay at home.

What such a summit could accomplish would be too important to place it in "Jeopardy" by having people there whose egos seem to always result in a "Family Feud" breaking out whenever they get up and speak at a gathering. The very last thing we can afford is to have this happen at the summit. If it does occur, rest assured that the majority media will report on the event as just another case of blacks being "Entertainment (for) Tonight."

Hopefully, one of the things that would come out of such a summit would be our demonstrating the passion needed to change the violent behavior too many of our teenagers are engaging in, which clearly suggests that they are "The Young and the Restless." To prevent the future "Days of (Their) Lives" from leading to death, prison or "General Hospital," more of us need to become a "Guiding Light" for our youth.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the current lack of commitment on the part of the Clark County School District. The District, also known as "Spin City" (See Soap Opera, Page 19)

Fight vs. drugs possibly disguised as war on poor

By Emory Curtis

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Maybe, just maybe, the killing of an American missionary and her daughter by the Peruvian Air Force under the direction of the United States Central Intelligence Agency will start waking us all up as to the nonsensical actions within and without our borders our government is carrying out under the rubric of a War on Drugs.

In a war, the losers are reflected by the victims of that war. I have a real sympathy for two groups who are losers in the war on drugs—poor peasant farmers trying to eke out a living on hard scabble land and poor Black men who populate both the lowest levels of the illegal drug chain and those in prison with those high mandatory minimum drug sentences for their actions.

Naturally I'm concerned about a drug policy that has resulted in about 60 percent of the soaring federal prison population being there on drug charges. About nine out of ten federal prisoners in on drug charges are Black—yet federal statistics shows that the greatest users of drugs are White.

It is more a war on us than a war on drugs if the Whites

are the users and we are the ones going to federal for violation of drug laws. Also, it is a racist law.

A prison policy that results in Whites being the preponderant users of drugs and Blacks being the preponderance of those going to federal prison because of U.S. drug use is more a War on Us than a War on D is a war on peasants scrambling on their hard scabble land to feed and clothe their family. Our War on Drugs's focus outside our borders is to defoliate crops which wipes out those scrambling peasant's means of making a living. Those peasants are right when it looks to them as a War on Peasants not a War on Drugs.

Since the real focus of the war on drugs is to reduce the use of illegal drugs in this country, not Peru or anywhere else, the real measure of its success is how much drug use in this country has been reduced because of the war. In that light, the Office of National Drug Control Policy 2001 report statistics makes the war on drugs an abject failure.

That report states that according to an extensive household survey, "Since 1992 the number of current users has gradually increased..." Ac-

tually, illegal drugs are subject to market place's the immutable rules of supply and demand. Product scarcity increases prices and an over supply decreases prices.

By that measure, our war on drugs effort to cut this country's supply of illegal drugs is a failure too. Through a policy of the war on drugs our country fosters a Peruvian policy that allows Peru's Air Force enforcers, under our directions, to act as the on-the-spot judge, jury and executioner of those suspected of flying drugs out of the country. That is the policy behind the Peru's killing of the U. S. missionary and her daughter.

Meanwhile, in this country, the prohibition against drug use is benign, at best. As a result, since 1992, according to the Drug Control Strategy report, the price of methamphetamine, cocaine, marijuana, and heroin have all gone down at both the retail and dealer (street level supplier) levels. That means drug users haven't faced a supply problem.

The results of the Department of Justice's household survey probably undercounted the number of illegal drug users. After all, (See War, Page 19)