

## COMMENTARY

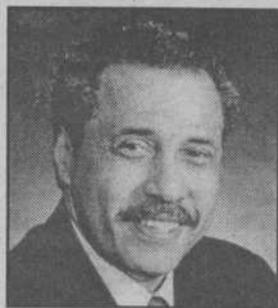
## Black, brown unity needed

By Louie Overstreet  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Last week, I wrote about coalition-building between African-Americans and Hispanics as a way to impact public processes in a manner that would prove to be mutually beneficial to our respective groups. Two public institutions that could be immediately influenced by such a coalition are the Clark County School District (CCSD) and the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT).

Over the decade of the 1990s, these public agencies have been the most grievous offenders of the spirit of inclusion and equitable participation by persons of color. Equal access to educational programs and facilities, as well as representative participation, have been denied to brown and black students and businesses.

While the recent appointment of a Hispanic to the position of CCSD Superintendent seems, on the surface, like a step towards inclusion, the jury is still out on whether he will meet with a similar fate as did an African-American superintendent, Dr. Claude Perkins, two decades ago. Further, I have not heard any public statements by Superintendent Garcia about promoting bilingual education or about auditing operating and capital spending for schools in the east and westside neighborhoods of



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Las Vegas- with those out in Green Valley based on equity in funding on a per-pupil basis.

A black and brown coalition ought to jump on education issues with all four feet. This would be a welcome alternative exercise to the ritualistic half-stepping engaged in by the "Uncle Toms" and "Tio Tacos" appointed by the systems to maintain the status quo.

The situation is not likely to improve, unless the coalition utilizes its numerical strength to unseat obstructionists presently serving as board trustees. Combining the numbers of students with minority backgrounds, the total is just above 50 percent of all CCSD students, whereas only two persons on the seven-member Board of Trustees are minorities.

The proposed redistricting plan for CCSD, based on 2000 Census data, will not improve the situation for persons of color. Six of the seven new districts will still have white majorities, thus, to change things will require a coalition to go after the majority candidates from districts that have significant minority populations. The seats that could be impacted by black and brown folks, in concert with groups of people of yellow and red hues, are Trustee Ruth Johnson's District Seat B and Trustee Sheila (See *Coalition*, Page 17)

## Reality TV new social teacher

By E. Webb

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Watching turns us on. Judging by the flood of reality TV shows this year, we undoubtedly do. Since MTV first premiered its "The Real World," other networks have followed: CBS's "Big Brother" and then other contributions like "Survivor," "Temptation Island," "Boot Camp," "Murder In Small Town X" and probably the most disheartening and disgusting of the bunch, "Fear Factor."

And there's certainly more to come.

I must admit, sometimes I watch-otherwise I couldn't write this column. Why? I'm not totally sure. Maybe I watch because I want to know how truly greedy, desperate and stupid people can be to get their 15 minutes of fame, or maybe the \$50,000 for eating live cockroaches or lying in a coffin with snakes or rats-which is still bewildering. (What, nobody's worried about rabies?)

Secretly, I probably watch to see White people do stu-

pid things. After all, I have the nightly news to watch Black people caught engaging in equally asinine behavior since the media remains more than somewhat biased in its coverage. For me, I guess, reality TV balances the idiotic factor.

Well, I guess that makes me just as bad. Still, whatever my reasons, reality TV has value, maybe value that has not been realized, but value, nonetheless. Personally, I think it could teach some very powerful lessons, lessons about racism, poverty and other social issues.

Reality TV could become the true social experiment that television executives have argued and rationalized it to be, instead of being used to promote one of human nature's dangerous seven deadly sins-greed.

Think about it. For example, it could be used as a way to let people see the other side of their argument like those arguing that racial profiling doesn't exist, teens wanting to be single parents and those opposing welfare

and poverty programs.

Imagine your favorite bigot or extreme conservative participating in some of my suggested reality TV shows below-whether it would change their minds, who can say? But, it sure would be fun to watch, at least for me anyway.

I know they'll likely never happen, but hey, humor me. After all, 10 years ago we couldn't have expected network television shows to induce people to eat sheep's eyes, lie in coffins with maggots, rats or snakes, or jump from moving trucks either.

Here are my shows:

"I'm Homeless:" Contestants would be placed on the streets of a major city for three months with no money and a camera crew.

There'd be some great footage-getting mugged and attacked in homeless shelters, scenes of hunger and desperation, etc. Lawmakers and folks who oppose programs for the poor and indigent would be great participants for this one.

(See *Reality TV*, Page 19)

## Bush must not obstruct racism meeting

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The moment that some organizers of the upcoming United Nations conference on racism in Durban, South Africa, threatened to tack incendiary resolutions onto the agenda denouncing Zionism and demanding reparations for slavery, the predictable happened. President Bush screamed foul, and said that the United States would stay home. Congress quickly passed a non-binding resolution backing him. The resolution's backers, mostly reparations activists and representatives from Arab countries, instantly branded Bush a racial obstructionist for ducking these issues.

This is a convenient label to plaster on him. In the past few weeks, Bush's foes, and even some friends, have branded him an environmental obstructionist for refusing to endorse the Kyoto accords on global warming. He's been called a health obstructionist for not committing more U.S. dollars to the global fund to fight AIDS and other diseases in Africa and Asia. And he's been tagged as a peace obstructionist for backing out of germ warfare talks, and attempting to scrap arms con-

trol agreements.

Though Bush can be pilloried for soft-peddling affirmative action, racial profiling, hate crimes and the death penalty, and saying and doing nothing about the Florida voting debacle that still rankles many Blacks, the racial obstructionist label is one that doesn't fit. Bush's demand that the conference excise any resolution condemning Zionism from the agenda is consistent with U.S. policy. Then President Jimmy Carter, and every president since, denounced the U.N. resolution passed in 1975 that equated Zionism with racism and relentlessly demanded that the resolution be repealed. A decade ago the United Nations finally dumped it, and even the PLO publicly rejected the slogan. Still, this doesn't mean that Israel's divisive domestic and aggressive military policies toward the Palestinians are not a legitimate subject for the conference to debate.

The issue of slave reparations is just as touchy a policy issue for the Bush administration. It insists that slavery ended decades ago, that the slaves and their slave masters are long dead, that the U.S. government has no le-

gal obligation to pay reparations, and that the issue is racially inflammatory.

Bush, and former President Clinton, scrupulously avoided any public mention of bills introduced by Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., in Congress during the past decade to establish a commission to study the reparations issue. They also ignored a bill twice introduced by Ohio Rep. Tony Hall that called for Congress to apologize for slavery.

Clinton, whom of all presidents would have been the most likely to support this call, touched off a brief flurry by raising the possibility of an apology, but then quickly backed away from it.

But even though Bush's opposition to reparations is consistent with past and present U.S. hostility toward reparations, this doesn't mean that it should not be discussed. The U.S. government encoded slavery in the Constitution, and protected and nourished it in law and public policy for more than a century. And, in the near century after slavery's end, legal segregation, peonage, and racial terrorism has saddled the black poor with a terrible (See *Ofari*, Page 19)

## Confab place to examine U.S. bias

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Recently, I read that Ari Fleisher, George Bush's spokesman, said the Bush administration had decided not to send a delegation to Durban, South Africa, to attend the World Conference Against Racism if the agenda contained the issue of reparations.

He went on to suggest it was "important that they focus on the current problems of racism and not get lost in the tangle that is presented by trying to address long-ago inequity that involved Africans trading Africans, Arabs trading Africans, Europeans trading and enslaving Africans. And it quickly becomes a point of who pays reparations to whom-the West African nations that engaged in slave trading, should they pay reparations to themselves?"

"Fleisher's position does not represent the interests of Black Americans who largely support reparations by 65 percent in the latest poll on the subject. So in rejecting an issue about which most Black Americans think highly, Bush is playing a kind of racial politics.

Like many people, I would want to be officially represented at this meeting at a significant level, because it would signal that the United States is committed, even if symbolically, to do something about the continuing problem of racism.

However, it is fundamentally embarrassing to witness this dance of denial and ultimate betrayal, in light of the factual history that the government of this country legitimized the practice of slavery and that slavery is directly implicated as a cause of

the conditions which Black Americans face today: lagging education, social disorganization, the lack of an economic infrastructure and others.

Whether or not the issue of reparations is on the formal agenda in Durban, it will be discussed in my presentation and many others. Therefore, the absence of the U.S. delegation, or the presence of low-level representation, will not shield the nation from its culpability and from the moral necessity to make restitution to their descendants on their behalf. Making such an argument is not a rejection of the fact that restitution has been attempted, however, it informs us that most assuredly the attempt has not been sufficient. The Bush position then becomes a test of whose interests it represents and it has decided to represent the 67 percent of Whites who oppose reparations.

Neither the absence of the American delegation, nor the power to change the agenda will shield this nation from the growing movement for reparations that has taken hold, regardless of whether or not the financial aspect of the movement is successful. Already, city councils and at least one state, California, have passed resolutions urging a study of reparations for Black Americans and targeting companies that insured slavers.

Already community organizations and colleges are having forums about its feasibility and, already, serious work to formulate legal demands for Reparations is being done by several organizations.

(See *Conference*, Page 19)