

COMMENTARY

Al running - Can blacks get him bucks, votes?

By William Reed
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The question is no longer "if" Alfred Sharpton, Jr. will run for the Democratic nomination for President, but whether he can raise enough money to compete with a corps of better-funded candidates.

Rev. Al Sharpton sees his competitors, as "people who get rich and go straight into the US Senate." "Clearly someone who's spent over two decades working on public policy issues has more of a background to run for the White House than that," says the Pentecostal minister. But, many dismiss Sharpton as a "race hustler" with a candidacy designed to "shake-down" Democrats. As spokesman for "the little people," Sharpton is counting on Black Americans viewing his run as the "shake-up" political parties need.

"There are people who say bringing up issues of race is divisive. I believe not bringing up issues about race is divisive," states Sharpton. His Race Base will be extremely important in Democratic primaries. Sharpton says, "White voters are barely aware of most of the other Democrats. Kerry, Edwards, and the rest are all going to have to try and become well-known to a base vote," says Sharpton. "I'm already well-known to my base vote. John Edwards will spend the next two years getting people outside of North Carolina to even know who he is."



WILLIAM REED

"I wouldn't take nothing for my journey now," is a refrain ministers like Sharpton sing in church. These days, the "journey" requires really passing the plate, because the power of money decides who runs and who gets elected in America. Vice President Al Gore's 2000 run cost \$50 million.

Toward that end, Sharpton has named Don Coleman, CEO of GlobalHue, and Pierre Sutton of Inner City Broadcasting to head his money crew. In January 2003, Sharpton's Exploratory Committee joined other 2004 Democrat presidential candidates: John Edwards, Joseph Lieberman, John Kerry, Richard Gephardt and Howard Dean to become eligible for federal matching funds. Candidates will need \$15 million to \$20 million to run competitive races. Senator Edwards already has \$7 million for his run.

Sharpton's appeal among African Americans garners "race-baiting" reactions from whites. His reputation comes from numerous grass roots campaigns among lower- and middle-income Black New Yorkers. He was a youth director for Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket. He maintained a ministry and political activism while he was soul singer James Brown's touring manager during the 1970s. He became nationally known from a series of racial incidents in New York. In January 1991, after a drunken white man stabbed

(See Reed, Page 12)

Bush must also attack preferences in schools

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If George W. Bush really wants to challenge a "quota" program, he should stop assaulting the University of Michigan and take on the most pervasive preference program in the country — those that give special consideration to the sons and daughters of alumni.

Bush knows all about these programs because that's how he got into Yale University. His widely reported SAT scores of 566 on the verbal section and 640 on the math portion were not high enough to get him into an Ivy League school. But because his father had attended Yale, that opened the door for him.

As a contributor notes in an anthology I edited titled, "The Affirmative Action Debate," far more Whites have entered the gates of the 10 most elite American universities through alumni preference — or legacy programs — than the combined numbers of all African-Americans and Latinos entering through affirmative action.

Yet, neither Bush nor his Right-wing ideologues attack this class-based preference program.

Why should George W. Bush get extra points for being a blue-blood?

That very question is being asked at Bush's alma mater. A headline in the "Yale Herald" two years ago declared: "True blue-bloods shouldn't get royal treatment."

It observed, "The reality today is striking: Those whose parents were affiliated with Yale College or one of the graduate

schools were admitted to the class of 2004 at a rate of 29.8 percent. Over the past 10 years, the admittance rate for those families who were Yale-affiliated varied to well above 30 percent.

"In contrast, Yale's combined acceptance rate for all students last year was a mere 16.2 percent — and this was unusually high. Are students with family connections really twice as qualified to attend Yale?"

The same can be asked of other universities.

As "The Wall Street Journal" reported recently, "Harvard accepts 40 percent of legacy applicants, compared with an 11 percent overall acceptance rate. Princeton took 35 percent of alumni children who applied last year and 11 percent of overall applicants. The University of Pennsylvania accepts 41 percent of legacy applicants, compared to 21 percent overall. At Notre Dame, about 23 percent of all students are children of graduates."

Are the legacy students smarter? Not judging by their SAT scores. Although Harvard officials say legacy students score just two points below the overall average on the SAT, one year that gap was 35 points. Alumni preference programs penalize students for not coming from wealthy or highly educated families. Where's the fairness in giving extra points to students who've had extra advantages all of their lives?

In the case of alumni preference programs (See Curry, Page 12)

Bengals will test Marvin Lewis' resurrection capabilities

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The power of public relations is amazing. In case you have not heard, Mike Brown, general manager of the Cincinnati Bengals, recently hired Marvin Lewis to coach his miserable football team. Even before Lewis gets to call his first practice session, the local paper says, "Civil Rights Leaders Applaud Decision—Not Just a Hiring but Some Healing."

Say what? The last time I checked, football coaches were hired to win games, and with a 2-14 record, the Bengals can surely use a lot of that.

The last thing Marvin Lewis needs is more weight on his back in the form of healing the huge racial divide that exists in Cincinnati. It is unfair to him, and it is naive (maybe, maybe not) on the parts of so-called civil rights leaders to think Lewis will be about the business of healing this city.

Despite the past hope of "healing" by the likes of a

Black college football game known as the Procter and Gamble Riverfront Classic, nationally known minister, Billy Graham, gospel singer Kirk Franklin, a Black (or should I say minority?) city manager, and a host of other Black (or should I say minority?) city administrators, despite all of those "healers" Cincinnati has remained entrenched in the muck and mire of racial discord and at loggerheads when it comes to settling the racially-oriented economic issues that keep the city from moving forward.

But the public relations machine has cranked up and is at it once again, desperately trying to soothe our senses and lull us into the sweet slumber of apathy. It's been done before, many times, and it's being done now. That's why I call this city "Cincinnatiapathy."

Another aspect of the hiring of Marvin Lewis is the "First Negro Syndrome." If you recall Albert Cleage's writings in the 1970s regarding this phenomenon, you should be insulted that we are

still counting to one in 2003. The Bengals could have hired a Black coach 20 years ago if they wanted. Black men have been qualified to coach professional football for years (someone told me there was professional Black football coach in 1920), but it's just now that they are being given their shot, Johnnie Cochran's efforts notwithstanding.

But here in the town that has the worst football team in history, a Black man is hired, and all of a sudden he has the "racial healing" mantle placed upon his shoulders.

Ex-footballer turned television announcer, Chris Collinsworth, commented, "How ironic would it be if Mike Brown and his family help heal this city?"

Give me a break, Chris, and please hold the platitudes for rip-off artist Mike Brown. And Cincinnati's own retired judge, Nathaniel Jones, in his inimitable way, offered his usual calm-down-the-Black-folks-and-say-what-the-white-folks-want rhetoric, lauded

team president Mike Brown as having followed in his father's footsteps with the hiring of Lewis. According to the article in the "Cincinnati Enquirer," Jones recalled how the late Paul Brown broke the color barrier in high school football by allowing Black players on his Massillon teams. Jones went on to say, "The timing is wonderful, and I have to applaud Mike Brown for stepping up to the plate."

Unlike Jones, rather than applaud Brown, I applaud Marvin Lewis for taking the worse coaching job in the NFL. I understand Mike Brown resisted the hiring, and was it not for Brown's daughter, Lewis would still be in Washington.

I wonder if Nate Jones also applauds Mike Brown for ripping off this city's taxpayers for a \$500 million stadium and a long-term lease that is now being contested with a lawsuit by the Hamilton County Commissioners. Stepping up to the plate is easy; getting a hit is some-

thing else again. Mike Brown has been whiffing for a decade or more. And if timing is everything, as Jones says, what does the hiring of Lewis suggest beyond his ability to win football games?

We could assume, quite reasonably, that the timing of this hiring could be a mere public relations stunt and an effort to divert our attention away from the real problems in Cincinnati, using Lewis, of course, as the scapegoat. After all, he certainly cannot do any worse and has nowhere to go but up when it comes to winning football games. However, if he fails to heal the city, what are they going to do? Fire him?

You know, it's about time we stop playing games (pardon the pun) with one another and stop letting others play games on us. God blesses Marvin Lewis and his family as he makes his move to Cincinnati, Ohio. I am proud of his accomplishments. Thanks to those who are continuing to push for more Black people in the top

echelons of sports teams. But, please, let's stop accepting this "first Black" condescension and the empty rhetoric that follows an event that should be second nature in 2003.

This hiring is all about the money for Mike Brown; you can count on that. If more Blacks folks go to the stadium, that's also a good thing for him. (I thought fans went to see the players, not the coach.) Unfortunately, most of our children cannot afford the price of a ticket.

While it's fine to celebrate the Lewis hiring, we must always look beyond the P.R. hype, stay on the course for justice in all areas of our society, and not confine our concentration on economic justice to the sports arenas. As to the racial "Healing" power of a Black football coach in Cincinnati, I kinda doubt it.

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department.