

## Playin' the race card

Al Triche  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At the signature social event of our premier local civil rights organization, a recent keynote speaker was former sheriff Jerry Keller, which conjures a preposterous image. It also helps to explain how the group managed to make itself irrelevant.

Over the weekend its national organization was dissed, again, by President Bush, who for the third straight year refused its invitation to address the NAACP annual convention.

But that, too, would've been preposterous.

Think if you will of other images, revealing, if not true; such as the one created just after the turn of a century — in the year '01...and the month of September.

Horrible events had radically altered the country's perception of its chief executive, who, amidst Black America's low expectations, had entered the White House as the obvious beneficiary of an unintended consequence.

The scenario, however, is unrelated to "9-11."

This wasn't our recent turn from the twentieth to twenty-first century, but the one before it — passage from the nineteenth to the last. It is September 1901, a hundred years almost to the day before radical "Islamists" resurrect another image: Pearl Harbor.

This time, the terrorism had been directed not so much at the country as its head of state.

President William McKinley had just died, having been assassinated, making him the first U.S. president since Lincoln to leave office in that manner. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt went on to parlay bully pulpit and big stick into his legacy: father of what history teachers later made us call "The American Century."

Today a more recent image is drawn, again from September '01 but one hundred years later, as the president stands before smoke rising from "Ground Zero," blowing more as if he'd actually been preordained to be "the man" on that awful day.

We had considered him ignorant, if not illegitimately occupying the Oval Office, and that was his image until a second before the World Trade Center was hit. Transformed like Roosevelt in the 20th, this 21st century reinvention emerged from 9-11 no longer as Dubya the Duncie, but as John Wayne.

Only Jim Crow could be nostalgic about the first half of that so-called American Century. The second was different, though with misery enough, to be sure, but the difference was due to the "something" alluded to last week — lust for justice that drove us to great victories, purchased at great cost.

Today, newly into the second half of our year, we are barely into the first half of a new century, by which time I'd hoped hindsight would've immunized us against repeating our mistakes during the last. Yet, as I ponder what historians will eventually call this one, I'm not feeling "The African-American Century"...not at this rate.

Given our prodigious challenges and apparent reluctance to meet them, such distinction — so strongly suggesting that we'd achieved liberation — would probably create a false image.

A Las Vegas favorite son made famous the worldview of Teddy, who in 1901 helped our people only when he ignored us, and of Dubya, who since 2001 has played us for fools. "Image," he said, "is everything."

But, contributions to the black community here by Andre Agassi — who, by the way, is not African-American — belie that slogan. Repeatedly putting not only his time, but also his talent and treasure where too often only mouths are found, in advocacy of black people, he's part of the solution to problems in neglected West Las Vegas.

How freely, or not, do we give to our people whatever we have to offer; after all, wouldn't it add to and advance our greater good, whatever it might be? Contrast such charity, or lack of it, with what Agassi has done; and wonder, as I do, why he's done so much while many of us do little, or nothing.

He's antithetical to the young, rich, self-indulgent jet setters... nevertheless, it's his image, or at least that's one

(See Triche, Page 13)

## Bush, America must hold true on Africa

By Marc H. Morial  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
We are pleased that President Bush visited Africa.

Most importantly, the fact that George W. Bush now knows that Africa is important to America's foreign policy represents a step in the right direction for his foreign policy "dream team."

"I'll be carrying a message [that] America cares about the future of Africa," the President declared to a group of African journalists last week, according to the *Washington Post*. "It's in our national interest that Africa become a prosperous place. It's in our interest that people will continue to fight terror together. It's in our interest that, when we find suffering, we deal with it."

The President was right, of course, on all three counts.

There's no question these are perilous times for much of the African continent because it is convulsed by the two great scourges of our era: war, and AIDS.

President Bush, responding in dramatic fashion, has

### To Be Equal

By Marc H. Morial  
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pledged to help resolve these crises, and, more important, he's pledged substantial funds to give African nations the resources to make that happen.

The President said he wants Congress to commit \$15 billion over five years to fight the AIDS scourge in Africa; and another \$5 billion over three years to aid those countries which have progressed in instituting democratic forms of government.

The question is: will America keep the President's word?

This is not a small question. Indeed, the importance of forging the right response to the win crises in Black

Africa can scarcely be calculated, for the ramifications of what happens in the next few years will affect the entire world.

Africa's horrible wars, with their all too human cruelty deliberately directed against civilians, are but a mirror image of other conflicts in other regions rooted in long-held ethnic hatred, the terrible poverty of the masses, and the pervasive corruption of the ruling class.

One factor which has made Black Africa so fertile a field for carnage is that most of its 48 countries have an astonishing number of ethnic groups — the old word was "tribes" — whose longstanding antagonisms

have been stoked by widespread poverty.

That is not to excuse the atrocities. Barbarous behavior must never be devised.

That's the challenge now facing the United States in Liberia. President Bush has made it clear that part of the solution is for the Liberian strongman, Charles Taylor, who's been accused of war crimes by a United Nations-supported court, to accept the exile offered him by Nigeria. But thus far he's not been convinced to send U.S. troops to the country to support peacekeeping efforts by a group of West African nations.

We strongly encourage the President to commit military troops and reconstruction funds to Liberia — and when he does, we will applaud his efforts?

The task ahead for this country regarding AIDS in Africa is clearer. It has to back up the President's word. AIDS in Africa is not an "African problem." It's a global one.

(See Morial, Page 15)

## Overstreet

(Continued from Page 10)

ing requiring them to prioritize spending.

Now we are faced with the consequence that citizens and businesses will now be required, thanks to the Nevada Supreme Court, to shoulder the biggest tax increase in state history.

At a time when not only America is facing several crises but the entire world as well, why are many national

"knucklehead" religious leaders further confusing matters by exhibiting gross inconsistencies in their personal behavior and biblical points of view on the issues of morality and ethics?

Folks, see you next week, when I promise and predict that the solutions I will suggest are going to make you "Bible thumpers" madder than my calling television reverends bone — oh, I mean — knuckleheads.

## Walters

(Continued from Page 11)

blatant slap in the face.

Regular citizens are also not vigorous about challenging the news producers, editors and bookers — the nameless, faceless people behind the scenes who make the decisions about whom to include and therefore, whose community's voice is heard. They should not be allowed to eliminate the heads of major black organizations from debates that influence the direction of critical issues.

It also appears however, that our organizations don't have effective media strategies that cover the range of actions from

protest to the production of material for consumption on a regular basis in the form of timely news releases, articles, speeches, press conferences, special forums, and other items. Some of our organizations are better at this than others and consequently get more coverage. But they should all should come together and make a big noise about their — and as an extension — our exclusion from the public square.

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## Clingman

(Continued from Page 11)

measurable distance between us. The blessings in which you, this day, rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. The rich inheritance of justice, liberty, prosperity and independence, bequeathed by your fathers, is shared by you, not by me. The sunlight that brought life and healing to you has brought stripes and death to me. This Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine." In other words, Douglass was saying, "U-Lie."

He went on to add, "You may rejoice, I must mourn. To drag a man in fetters into

the grand illuminated temple of liberty, and call upon him to join you in joyous anthems, were inhuman mockery and sacrilegious irony. Do you mean, citizens, to mock me, by asking me to speak today?"

I wonder if Uncle Clarence is familiar with those eloquent words from Douglass and, if he is familiar with them, why he did not choose to use them in support of the court's ruling on affirmative action. As Tavis says, "Just a thought."

Whatever you did on the 4th of U-Lie, I hope you at least thought about our fore

fathers and mothers; I hope you thought about their struggle for freedom in a country that was busy flaunting its freedom to the world. I hope you considered the state of your freedom today, in our country that is now ruled by another "King George." I hope you took a little time to share some of our history with your children.

I also hope you know that in their latest efforts to bring Black folks into their "big tent," the Republican leadership signed a \$2 million commitment to refurbish the

former home of Frederick Douglass. Top-ranking Republicans said the Cedar Hill event was to "promote and perpetuate the legacy" of Mr. Douglass and toward "launching initiatives geared at empowering Black Americans."

\$2 million to "empower" Black folks? One question: Who's getting the refurbishing contract? One statement: U-Lie.

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