

COMMENTARY

Bush's tax plans hurt U.S. higher education

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I wonder how long it's going to take for many of those who voted for George Bush to wake up and understand that his tax cuts are killing them. What happens is something strange. Bush supporters rally for his tax cuts at the national level, only to find that governors and mayors are absorbing them by cutting the heck out of services and in some cases raising taxes. One service that has come under the knife in most states is higher education.

I knew something was up when my own university raised tuition in mid-year last academic year. I discovered that as a result of the growing federal deficit and the downturn in the economy, 43 states were in deficit and looking for ways to balance their budget, something they are mandated to do by their state charters. Last year, many of the governors made it clear to Bush that they were hurting and needed a bailout from the federal government only to be politely but firmly ignored by Bush.

The consequence is that governors are cutting. Take higher education for example. The following table is a picture of the probable tuition increases this fall at several institutions that are popular with Blacks and Hispanics.

These figures show a disturbing fact that the average increase in tuition for this coming Fall will be right at \$1,000 for most of these institutions, a reflection of a much wider problem affecting colleges and universities of all kinds.

Conservative politicians in these states are making all kinds of excuses, such as that the tuition increases reflect a normal increase to make for times in the 1990s when funds were flowing to the institutions in much greater amounts. Others have tied the increases to some patriotic rationale, which says that the institutions of higher education must share the burden of protecting national security and homeland security. And doubtless many people will fall for these reasons.

There would be some relief if the Congress were able to give Bush an increase in the Pell grant, which would offset some of the increases. However, in July, Democratic lawmakers sought to increase the Pell grant from its present per-student level of \$4,050 to \$4,200 for this coming Fall, but the motion was ruled out of order by a 222-to-199 vote in the Republican-controlled House. To pay for the increase in the Pell Grant, the proposals had sought to increase taxes on those earning more than

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Institution	2003-4 Tuition and Fee	% Increase Over 2002-3	Dollar Amount
U. of California System	\$5,437	29.5%	\$1,239
State U. of New York	\$4,350	27.9%	\$ 950
U. of Oklahoma	\$3,741	27.7%	\$ 81
Indiana U.	\$6,517	22.8%	\$1,202
U. of Virginia	\$6,149	19.1%	\$ 984
U. Mass., Amherst	\$7,482	15.4%	\$1,000
U. of Maryland-College Park	\$6,759	14.6%	\$ 861
Ohio State	\$6,474	14.3%	\$ 810

Source: National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

Not in a 'Rush' to see outlandish Limbaugh

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Beginning this week, the "Sunday NFL Countdown" program on Disney-owned ESPN will feature Rush Limbaugh as a color commentator. There is a certain irony in hiring a color commentator who became famous and wealthy by bashing people of color. Mark Shapiro, ESPN's executive vice president of programming and production, describes Limbaugh as "a fan's fan." Well, fan is a derivative of the word fanatic. And Rush Limbaugh is indeed a fanatic's fanatic.

In response to a caller saying African-Americans should be heard, Limbaugh once responded, "They are 12 percent of the population. Who the hell cares?" He told another Black caller, "Take that bone out of your nose and call me back." In 1972, on his television show, he ranted about Spike Lee urging African-American students to take off from school to see his movie, "Malcolm X." Limbaugh's comment: "Spike, if you're going to do that, let's complete the education experience. You should tell them that they should loot the theater, and then blow it up on their way out."

I am not going to be in any rush to watch or hear Limbaugh on Sunday or any other day. Not simply because he is a Right-wing fanatic—though that would be reason enough—but also because he has no regard for the truth. Limbaugh is so factually challenged that he makes Jayson Blair, the former "New York Times" serial liar, seem as believable as George "I Cannot Tell a Lie" Washington.

For several years, the watchdog group, Fairness and Accuracy in the Media [FAIR], has documented Limbaugh's wayward missives. Below are few of the many examples of how his pronouncements often don't square with reality.

LIMBAUGH: "The videotape of the Rodney King beating played absolutely no role in the conviction of two of the four officers. It was pure emotion that was responsible for the guilty verdict." (Radio show, quoted in *FRQ*, Summer 1993)

REALITY: "Jury Foreman Says Video Was Crucial in Convictions," read an accurate "Los Angeles Times" headline the day after the federal court verdict." (4/20/93)

LIMBAUGH: "There are more American Indians alive today than there were when Columbus arrived or at any other time in history. Does this sound like a record of genocide?" (From his book, "Told You So," p. 68).

REALITY: According to Carl Shaw of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, estimates of pre-Columbus population of what later became the United States range from 5 million to 15 million. Native populations in the late 19th century fell to 250,000, due in part to genocidal policies. Today the U.S.'s Native American population is about 2 million.

LIMBAUGH: Praising Strom Thurmond for calling a gay soldier "not normal," Limbaugh said, "He's not encumbered by being politically correct... If you want to know what America used to be—and a lot of people wish it still were—then you listen to Strom Thurmond." (TV show, 9/1/93)

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U.S. could learn from DuBois' foreign policy views

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"No nation threatens us. We threaten the world."—W.E.B. DuBois (1958), commenting on the role of the United States internationally.

While we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the historic 1963 March on Washington, we should as well be commemorating another event. On the eve of the 1963 March on Washington, the life of one of the 20th century's most brilliant individuals came to an end. W.E.B. DuBois, scholar, Pan Africanist, political leader, champion of the struggle against White supremacy in the USA, died Aug. 27, 1963, in Ghana.

It is easy to forget about DuBois since an orchestrated effort has been conducted by the larger society to minimize his contributions and, in fact, to expunge him from our collective memory.

Beginning with the Cold War in the late 1940s, the government and the Right-wing went out of their way to harass DuBois, restrict his travel and opportunities and limit his access to those who wanted to or needed to hear his words.

For us at TransAfrica Forum, the work and life of DuBois was particularly significant because of his commitment to the struggle against racist discrimination at home, as well as against imperialism and colonialism abroad. DuBois saw no inconsistency in taking up both struggles, usually at the same time.

Thus, DuBois is acknowledged as the "father" of the modern Pan-African movement. He was directly involved in organizing and helping to lead the first five Pan African Congresses. He also was one of the leaders, along with the great Paul

Robeson, of the Council on African Affairs, a U.S.-based advocacy group on Africa which was, in many ways, a political ancestor of TransAfrica Forum. DuBois was also a founder of the NAACP, editor of its magazine, "Crisis," and author of the monumental and definitive study, "Black Reconstruction in America."

DuBois would probably have been heralded by the larger U.S. establishment if he had restricted his criticisms to racial matters in the USA. DuBois refused to be so constrained. His critique of U.S. society expanded over time to examining the economic roots of racial oppression, as well as his expansive analysis of Western colonialism and the U.S. role in propping up colonial empires, allegedly in the name of fighting communism.

Following World War II when the United States came

to the aid of various European colonial powers, in some cases reinforcing their domination, in other cases attempting to replace them, DuBois was one of the courageous few who would not be silenced. DuBois saw that anti-communism and red-baiting were not aimed at stopping the spread of a totalitarian ideology, but rather were aimed at silencing any and all dissent from policies that advanced corporate interests. For his recognition, the forces of repression came down upon him.

Ultimately DuBois chose to leave the United States and reside in Ghana. Before his death he began work on an encyclopedia of the African world. He did not live to complete it.

It is not enough for us to honor the memory of DuBois, though that is itself important. Reminding ourselves, and particularly younger ac-

tivists and scholars of the renown of such a human being has a value in and of itself. Yet for those who work with and support TransAfrica Forum, and other organizations committed to a democratic foreign policy on the part of the USA, the life and work of DuBois has an additional value.

All too often I hear people suggest that international events are too distant from the realities of the everyday person. DuBois repudiated such notions, suggesting instead that it is inconceivable that we, African-Americans, can fight the good fight here in the United States for social justice in isolation from the fight for what we now call global justice.

A system that would ignore the plague of HIV/AIDS as it ravages Africa and the Caribbean; a system that would promote the interests of pharmaceutical corpora-

tions over those of the individuals living with HIV/AIDS, can never be expected to discover humanity in its treatment of those of African descent living in the USA.

The reverse is also true. As often as we attempt to illustrate our patriotism through volunteering to support U.S. wars overseas and other such adventures, we may achieve awards and note, but it brings us no closer to achieving actual freedom, equality and dignity at home. To the extent to which we stand up for what is right rather than what the establishment deems to be popular, we regain our humanity. If there is no other lesson to learn from the work and life of W.E.B. DuBois, it is that one simple point.

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