

## C O M M E N T A R Y

## WMD treatise interpreted differently by U.S., Qaddafi

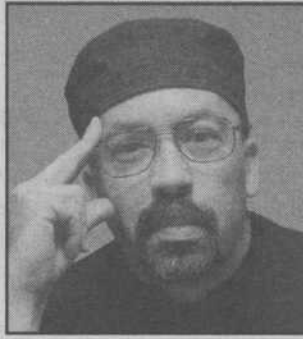
By Bill Fletcher Jr.

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi has proven to be as unpredictable as ever. To the surprise of many international observers, Libya has agreed to step away from creating, obtaining or possessing weapons of mass destruction. While the Bush administration has proclaimed this development to be evidence of a great victory for administration policy, Libya's Qaddafi has taken a somewhat different view, seeing in this decision a successful step toward breaking the U.S.-led blockade against his country.

The Libyan decision, however, carries with it even greater potential significance that has received only limited attention. As raised by both Iran and Egypt, the Libyan decision raises the question as to what steps Israel will now take — if any — to eliminate its own arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.

It is almost a forbidden subject in U.S. political discourse, but it is well known that Israel possesses weapons of mass destruction. Given Israel's projected image as a friend of democracy, it was noteworthy that Israel worked with apartheid South Africa to produce a nuclear weapon. With the advent of a democratic South Africa, that country took steps to de-nuclearize. Israel continues to remain silent about its



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weapons capacity.

It was odd during the lead up to the invasion of Iraq that there was little discussion coming out of Washington, D.C., and specifically the Bush administration, concerning turning the Middle East into a nuclear free zone. The entire discussion focused on what weapons Saddam Hussein possessed or was thought to possess. Similar such discussions have taken place for years centered entirely on the capabilities of various Arab and Muslim states rather than raising the larger question of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and bringing about a lasting peace.

With Libya's announcement, some commentators have raised questions as to Qaddafi's intentions in making this offer. Qaddafi's intentions are irrelevant; it is the action or actions that are critical. If Libya wishes to eliminate such weapons, that brings the Middle East much closer to peace. Yet, without open disclosure by Israel and a commitment to do likewise, such efforts will come to naught.

This entire matter raises a very thorny discussion as to whether there should be one standard with regard to weapons of mass destruction. There seems to be an assumption that the handling of weapons of mass destruction, including who possesses

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## Mixed messages gleaned from Capitol Hill primary

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

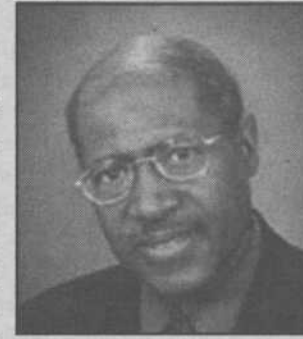
Howard Dean edged Al Sharpton in the District of Columbia's non-binding primary by a margin of 43 percent to 34 percent. All but ignored by the national media, the D.C. primary last week pitted front-runner, Dean head-to-head against the rest of the progressive candidates for the Democratic nomination for president, all hoping to win over voters who were mostly White liberals or African-Americans.

Moreover, Dean went head on with the two Black candidates in the race, Al Sharpton and Carol Moseley Braun, who has since ended her campaign. The results: Dean 43 percent, Sharpton 34 percent, Moseley Braun 12 percent and Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich of Ohio, 8 percent.

So, how is it that Dean beat Al Sharpton, both of whom campaigned in the District, a city that is 60 percent Black and 31 percent White?

An analysis of the voting shows that it was not a clear-cut victory for Dean. The Democratic front-runner beat Sharpton in the predominantly White areas — Wards 1, 2, 3 and 6 — but Sharpton defeated Dean in all of the Black Wards — 4, 5, 7, and 8.

For example, in Ward 8, which is almost entirely Black, Sharpton trounced Dean 59 percent to 24 percent. In the



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mostly White Ward 3, Dean beat Sharpton by a 10-to-1 margin.

For those Blacks who voted for Dean, rather than Sharpton or Moseley Braun, they followed the lead of the Congressional Black Caucus and other Black leaders in ignoring the Black candidates and supporting one of the White candidates they

believe can actually win. For most of them, it is not just about race, but about the "realism" that neither Sharpton will eventually win the election.

But there is the circular logic that says if they don't vote for them, then they surely will not win. So, besides the fact that so many Blacks want to be with the winner, for others, their evaluation is not just that Dean can win, but that there is something undesirable about the Black candidates in comparison to him.

Those who voted for either Sharpton or Braun highlight the split in the Black community over these two candidates; but that split is over now that Moseley Braun has pulled out of the race.

The District of Columbia primary shows what we might be seeing on the national scene: the Black vote thus far has no unity, no leadership, no coherence. If this continues, it means that the Black vote will not make a difference in the primary election

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## Is the term 'black economy' sensible or oxymoronic?

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Although the dictionary calls it archaic, the "management of a household" is one of the definitions listed for the word "economy." Another definition is "a saving or attempt to reduce expenditure." Yet another is "a system of interacting elements, especially when seen as being harmonious." And still another definition for economy has to do with "the production and consumption of goods and services of a community regarded as a whole." As I look at those descriptions of an economy, only the last one partially applies to Black Americans collectively, and that's the "consumption" part.

The U.S. Census 2002 statistics for businesses will be available next month. Every five years a survey is done to determine how many businesses there are in this country, who owns them, how many persons they employ, and what their annual revenues are. The figures for 1997, while lauded for the increase in the number of Black-owned businesses, revealed decreasing revenues for Black businesses, relatively few employees, and a vast majority of them in the service industry.

The 1997 census revealed total receipts for Black-owned businesses to be a little more than \$71 billion which, when juxtaposed against an aggregate disposable income during that period of approximately \$400 billion, illuminated a dearth of business

ownership and a glut of consumer spending. Other statistics disclosed low savings among African-Americans and a grossly disparate median income and net worth when compared to other ethnic groups.

As we enter 2004, we already know our disposable income is more than \$700 billion each year and forecasted by the Selig Center at the University of Georgia to exceed \$900 billion in 2008. The 2002 U.S. Census data will likely reveal a bump in business receipts, but the total will probably still be less than \$100 billion.

Median income, net worth, and savings disparities will likely stay the same and the mythical Black economy will trudge along like a brand new, 12-cylinder, state-of-the-art, top-of-the-line automobile running on only six of those cylinders. We will definitely look good, but we sure won't be doing good (pardon my grammar).

That's essentially how we are as individuals. We look real good, but when it comes to how we are doing, that's another story. Maybe one of the reasons for that can be found in some of our consumption statistics. The Selig Center reports that Blacks spend more on telephone services, children's apparel, electricity and natural gas, and guess what, footwear.

I could do a separate commentary on those expenditures, especially the shoes, but it's fairly obvious what impact they have on our households and our disposable income. We

have multiple cell phones, we buy the latest fashions for our children, we keep our homes and apartments very warm, and we have the latest gym shoes, three or four pairs of them.

In his book, *Black Bourgeoisie*, sociologist E. Franklin Frazier stated, "[Black] business enterprises come within the definition of small businesses; in fact, they fall within the lowest category of small businesses.

When the first study was made of Negro business in 1898, it was found that the average capital investment for the 1,906 businesses giving information amounted to only \$4,600.00. When the latest study of Negro business was made in 1944, it was revealed that the average volume of business of the 3,866 Negro businesses in twelve cities was only \$3,260.00."

In 1997, the Census data indicated Black-owned firms' average receipts were \$86,500, compared to \$891,000 for all firms. Was Frazier correct in his assessment of what he deemed the mythical nature of Black business? Was he correct when he suggested the Black middle class was also a myth?

He made a lot of folks angry when he wrote, "Negro business ... has no significance in the American economy, [and] has become a social myth embodying the aspirations of this [Black Bourgeoisie] class." As we look at today's statistics we must reconsider Franklin's position, because the numbers reflect the same conditions he discussed in 1957.

Frazier was decrying our definition of "middle class" as one that embodies high incomes and material possessions, e.g., the mink coats, diamonds, and Cadillacs to which he referred, instead of business ownership and economic growth. While we consider the trappings of the good life as "wealth," sold to us by everyone else of course, we are mired in a dysfunctional — and maybe even mythical — Black economy.

Much of our economic pain in the 21st Century is the direct result of our failure to develop a real Black economy, our failure to take care of our "household," our failure to save more of our money, our failure to work harmoniously, and our failure to produce goods and services commensurate with our percentage of population and income. Additionally, we have failed to work together for the uplift of the masses, sharing our resources with one another and helping one another as we make our way individually.

The so-called "middle-class" Blacks have distanced themselves, not necessarily physically but mentally, and as Frazier wrote, they have been obsessed "with the struggle for status." And many of the less fortunate among our people spend too much time being jealous and envious of our brothers and sisters who have achieved at higher levels. The result is an oxymoronic Black economy.

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