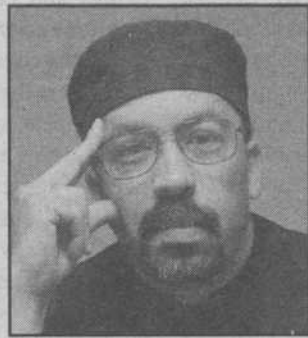


COMMENTARY

Swaziland's quality of life disappearing as we watch

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice
"...Swaziland has an HIV infection rate of 40 percent.."



BILL FLETCHER JR.

I heard those words on April 14th while serving as an election observer in Johannesburg, South Africa. The person who uttered those words was Jan Sithole, the president of the Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, and a passionate fighter for democracy in his homeland.

I sat there in the car watching the world pass. It took a few minutes for it to register. I then turned around in my seat and said, "Did you say 40 percent?" "Yes," he responded very slowly and somberly. "The highest infection rate in the world."

Without thinking it through, I shouted out, "Wait a minute. What you are saying is that it is conceivable that Swaziland will cease to exist!" I could not see Jan's face, nor judge his reaction through body language. I could only hear in his deep voice one of the deepest expressions of sadness I had ever heard. "Yes, that is correct," he said.

The small country of Swaziland, surrounded by South Africa and Mozambique in southeastern Africa, is dying. Yet this same country has a ruling monarch who has chosen to build nine palaces at the cost of \$15 million for most of his 12 wives. I should add that the young monarch, King Mswati III, unfortunately looks from a

distance like Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr., I say unfortunately because I like Congressman Jackson. I must admit that I can do nothing more than despise King Mswati III.

A small ruling elite dominates Swaziland. Through King Mswati III, they have made the country available to foreign capital for the low

wage production of garments and textiles. Certainly the people of Swaziland need jobs, but the King and his regime have done everything that they can to ensure that these are jobs that exist without a modicum of justice. There is no political democracy in Swaziland to speak of; virtually every major decision can be made at the whim of the King. Labor unions exist under the constant scrutiny of the employers and the King.

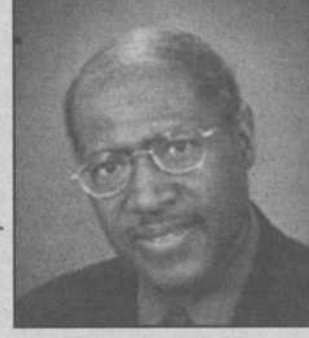
All while the country is dying.

The more that I have discovered about Swaziland – and I had the opportunity to briefly visit that beautiful country several years ago – the more that it becomes clear that the lack of any real political and economic justice makes it almost impossible for the country to confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The fact that a ruler has the right and ability to spend \$15 million on palaces for his wives, for heavens sake, while the pandemic spreads, speaks volumes. The fact that this ruler has more than one wife and
(See Fletcher, Page 12)

Democrats devolving into piddling, political punks

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice



RON WALTERS

I have been asked often why George Bush has not been impeached for malfeasance, given the illegal intervention in Iraq, I have generally replied that Bush would have to be charged with "high crimes and misdemeanors." Of course, we all know that the definition

this concept is purely political inasmuch as Bill Clinton was impeached for consensual sex with a woman in the White House.

Compare what Bill Clinton did with Bush leading the country into an illegal war. He did so without the support of the country's strongest allies, under the false pretense of finding "weapons of mass destruction." In the process, we have wasted precious lives and financial resources.

Congressman Charles Rangel has recently drawn up impeachment articles against Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. In remarks on the House floor, Rangel pointed out that the Constitution gives to the House of Representatives the sole power of impeachment covering civil officers of the United States government. So far, only one such officer, Secretary of War William Worth Belknap, was impeached. And that was in 1876 for bribery.

I think an additional approach could be for the military's commission of crimes against persons who are considered prisoners of war in contravention to the Geneva Convention. It could be leveled against

both President Bush and Secretary Rumsfeld, It should be focused at the top.

Why?

Because Brig. General Mark Kimmitt and a story in Newsweek magazine revealed that Rumsfeld demanded to personally sign off on various tactics would that would be used

to interrogate prisoners at the Guantanamo Base facility in Cuba immediately after the September 11 attack. That fits his detail, hands-on style of micro-management that has driven the military crazy and caused him to be unpopular with the higher brass.

We are led to believe that Rumsfeld approved these measures without the authorization of the president of the United States. In fact, it is known that Bush was told by Rumsfeld in late January or early February of this year that abuses of the prisoners had occurred in the facility at Abu Ghraib. So, we are also led to believe that Bush knew about what had happened, but did not approve of Rumsfeld participating in a cover-up by keeping this information away from Congress or the American people.

That means we should also believe that Rumsfeld participated in a closed intelligence briefing for the Senate Armed Services Committee on April 28, but did not disclose the secret report prepared by Major General Antonio Tagabu on the atrocity
(See Walters, Page 12)

By pooling money, Blacks can create change in U.S.

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If you have visited my Web site, you know it is based on the life and death of Brother Marcus Garvey. As the site opens, it is accompanied by the sound of a "Whirlwind" and photos of Marcus and his movement. One of our mailing lists is called the Whirlwind List, in keeping with those prophetic words of Garvey, "I will return in the Whirlwind." The other mailing list on the site is the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club (BMDC).

Little did I know when the BMDC was formed that our first nationwide assistance effort would be to send money to the Marcus Garvey School in Los Angeles. How appropriate.

Before I say anything else, let me say, "Thank you" to all of those who joined the BMDC. Because of you, I am confident we can do great things. You are the example our children (and adults) need. You are soldiers in that army that Marcus Garvey wrote about in his letter from the Atlanta prison. You are the love and trust I often write about in this column and in my books that will release us from psychological enslavement.

You are, indeed, a group of dedicated, selfless, supportive, and enthusiastic brothers and sisters who are willing to make the small sacrifices necessary to obtain true freedom. You are doers, not just "rhetoricians"

(I made that up), not just hearers, not just complainers, but the ones who will get things done. Maybe we have finally found DuBois' Guiding Hundredth.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for believing in this cause and for demonstrating that belief by responding to the call. I love all of you.

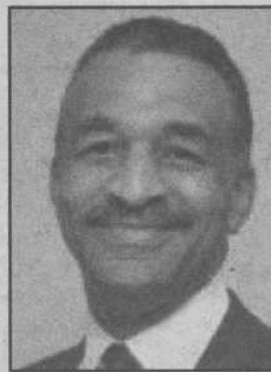
There were times, I must admit, that I had my doubts about whether the BMDC would work.

In my idealistic thinking, as was the case with the Piney Woods School campaign, I thought we would have 200,000 names in a month or two. I also thought that we would collect a million dollars for Piney Woods in time for Kwanzaa 2003.

In both cases, we did not meet our goal, not by a long shot.

However, there are some very determined brothers and sisters who wrote to me and said things like, "I don't care how many people we have signed up, let's go with who we have." They just wanted to do, to help, to take action. So, on May 7, 2004, my daughter's birthday, we moved with who we had and issued the call to send our first contribution to the Garvey School.

It was so encouraging to receive those e-mails from the group. I always wonder why it



JAMES CLINGMAN

seems so difficult for our people to do something so simple, why we do not get in front of the curve sometime rather than always being behind it, and why we continue to discuss our problems to ad nauseam rather than doing whatever we can to solve them. Well, I am convinced there are more brothers and sisters of that ilk than I ever imagined. They are either in the BMDC or on their way to joining the

BMDC.

The Blackonomics Million Dollar Club was established to provide a means for national collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, and self-determination. It is an opportunity for "just plain folk" to do something to help one another, and to participate in a collective effort by putting our meager resources together and demonstrating what can be done if we work together. Each of us may not have a lot of money, and we may not be celebrities, but together we can do great things.

We will never, individually, get the kind of publicity a Bill Cosby, Willie Gary, and Oprah Winfrey get when they give millions to Black colleges, even though, relatively speaking, our individual donations mean the same to us as theirs mean to them. Our sacri-

fice may even be more difficult to make than theirs, but the collective aspect of pooling our money and doing things in support of one another is what is really important. The only important individual credit is the credit given to the group – The BMDC.

Thousands of people giving a few dollars can have the same result as one person giving thousands of dollars. Even better, more of us feel empowered and more of us have an opportunity to be a part of a meaningful and relevant movement. We become connected, like an expansive web, using the worldwide Web. What a concept.

The Blackonomics Million Dollar Club is your opportunity to be able to contribute as little as \$5 to worthy causes and institutions on a national – and international – level. The BMDC is a no-excuses cadre of honorable, ready-to-go, determined individuals who are willing to put their money where their mouths are, ready to put up or shut up. The BMDC is a group of brothers and sisters who stand ready, awaiting the next opportunity to give their financial assistance to the next worthwhile institution we select. Are you ready to do the same? If so, go to www.Blackonomics.com and sign up for the BMDC.

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