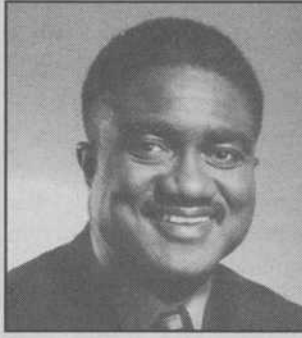


C O M M E N T A R Y

Exorbitant cost of war continues upward climb

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that the U.S. has turned over government control in Baghdad to the Iraqis — in name but not reality — this is as good a time as any to reflect on how much this war is costing us. And that's exactly what an Institute for Policy Studies task force, headed by Phyllis



GEORGE CURRY

Bennis, has done. The 54-page report, which is available on the Internet at www.ips-dc.org/iraq/costofwar/, provides an exhaustive and insightful look at the cost of the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent occupation. Below are just a few of the IPS findings:

HUMAN COSTS — Between the start of the war on March 19, 2003 and June 16, 2004, according to research compiled by IPS, 952 coalition forces were killed, including 836 members of the U.S. military. Between 50 and 90 civilian contractors, missionaries and civilian workers — 36 of them Americans — died. Thirty journalists were killed in Iraq, eight of them employed by U.S. media companies. U.S. forces were responsible for at least nine of the deaths, including employees from the BBC, Reuters, ITN, ABC network, U.S. network, Arab TV stations al-Arabiya and al-Jazeera and the Spanish network, Telecinco. Over this period, more than 5,134 troops suffered wounds, including

4,593 since President Bush declared the end of combat operations on May 1, 2003.

Iraq and its people are paying an even higher cost, the report says.

"The image we were presented with was one of happy Iraqis welcoming U.S. troops with rice and flowers and immediately going back to work to rebuild their new, democratic free-market country," recalls the report, titled, "Paying the Price: The Mounting Costs of the Iraq War." It continues, "Reality was very different. While the removal of the brutal dictator Saddam Hussein was no doubt a welcome development for many Iraqis, the costs of the war have been extremely high and are likely to continue."

Iraq Body Count, a group of academics and researchers, placed the number of civilian deaths as a direct result of the U.S. invasion somewhere between 9,436 and 11,317. In the past, the number of wounded in war has typically been three times the death rate, meaning that approximately 35,000 Iraqis may have been wounded.

ECONOMIC COSTS — The report notes that Lawrence Lindsey, a White House economic adviser, was fired in 2002 for predicting that the Iraq war would cost between \$100 billion and \$200 billion. In retrospect, he was correct. So far, Con- (See Curry, Page 12)

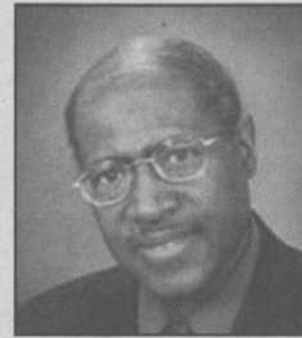
Ex-president showing no leadership in Iraq conflict

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Bill Clinton's memoirs have come out and I will have more to say about them later. Right now, his most vexing point to me is his position that, because this administration has blundered into Iraq, everyone should now hunker down and support that fact and try to make the best of it.

I know that there is an etiquette among ex-presidents that says that they should not criticize another administration in the midst of a war and that the patriotic thing to do is to support the effort. But the hard and dirty politics of how the country was tricked into Iraq must move the criticism beyond etiquette. In that respect, if we follow Clinton's dictum, I hear the faint echo of Vietnam in the background where Richard Nixon's policy of getting out "with honor" cost this country 60,000 casualties and hundreds of millions of dollars in a wasted attempt to retrieve America's honor.

How can you retrieve your honor once you have made a deal with the devil? That is the problem that now faces this country, and I think that the best route to an honorable conclusion of the war is to admit your mistake, turn over real sovereignty to an Iraqi government chosen by the people, put the country on the American payroll for a while to enable it to re-build the material



RON WALTERS

infrastructure and broken bones caused by our military invasion and bring the boys and girls home this year.

The problem with this, as with Vietnam, is that American political leaders have always had a problem with admitting mistakes once they have committed them. They believe, often wrongly, as history shows, that they can

cover over their mistakes by the application of preponderant power. Such power is the seduction in all of this, like they say drugs make you feel — you can do whatever you want. Power is also a drug, enabling leaders to distort the values that people care about. It even allows them to violate the most supreme value of all — preserving human life — in pursuit of a wrong-headed agenda. This is why power must be used very, very carefully.

In these times, you almost wish that the civilians were not in charge of power, because many top military leaders are not drugged, but made a hard-headed assessment of the Iraq enterprise and warned against intervention as unwarranted since Saddam Hussein did not directly threaten American security. Moreover, they warned that the two campaigns at once (Afghanistan and Iraq) have stretched American military capabilities too thin. Bush has ignored their advice and plowed ahead,

(See Walters, Page 12)

Black consumerism caught in demand-supply fix

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"If there had been no poverty in Europe, then the White man would not have come and spread his cloths in Africa." — Asante Proverb

"But I must own, to the shame of my own countrymen, that I was first kidnapped and betrayed by some of my own complexion, who were the first cause of my exile and slavery; but if there were no buyers there would be no sellers." — Ottobah Cugoano, 1787

Both quotes taken from, *The History of Black Business in America*, by Juliet E.K. Walker.

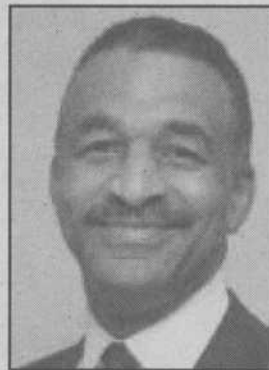
It seems the real law of supply and demand, when it comes to the so-called "Black Community," is "We demand, so you had better supply." And, according to recent statistics, the original principles of supply and demand do not apply to our consumer group; we will pay the price no matter how high it goes, as a matter of fact the higher the better, and we don't seem to care how low or how high the supply goes; we want our stuff and we want it right now. What a dangerous twist on the basic law of economics. Too bad it doesn't also apply when it comes to Black support of Black owned businesses.

Can you imagine what suppliers of the Black consumer market must be saying as they hear and see us demanding they supply more and more stuff for our conspicuous

consumption habit? I can hear them laughing now, as they gleefully count their daily receipts from demand-crazed Black purchasers of 24-inch rims that keep spinning when their truck stops, Black tourists who are always willing to turn their money over for the finer things life, such as top-shelf liquor, suites and meetings in hotels we don't own, and admission to events we do not control.

We demand everything and supply very little of our own material desires. We demand that Arab grocery stores in our neighborhoods sell us good meat and treat us courteously, but we fail to take advantage of the same opportunity they exploited by starting our own grocery stores. We demand the latest designs for our nails, and decry the Vietnamese for taking over the industry in less than 10 years, while many of our sisters walk past the Black-owned nail shop on their way to do business with someone else.

We demand the best service and response from a Black businessperson, paying attention to every detail of their business practices, and yet we go into major department stores each week knowing we are being watched because we are Black. We demand "concessions" from convention bureaus in exchange for our tourism dollars, and they supply us with everything we demand, such as sumptu-



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ous banquets fit for Henry VIII, chauffeur-driven limousines, and fruit baskets in our rooms. In extreme cases we allow them to invest, say, \$400,000 in pitching and wooing us, as was the case with the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., in exchange for a \$21 million return on their investment. They brag about it, and a Black preacher says "This is good for the African-American community."

We demand reciprocity in the marketplace; they supply donations to our annual dinners. We demand fairness and equity from our tax dollars; they supply "economic inclusion goals" that never come to fruition — and we fall for it every time. We demand better schools with all the bells and whistles and all the accoutrements of the finest prisons anywhere in the land; they supply padded construction contracts to their friends and relatives, sweetheart deals that contribute millions to their wealth. Oh yes, they throw in the usual token contracts to the same token "minorities," and the beat goes on.

A Black construction company owner told me the situation in his city was so terrible that if Jesus paid them a visit He would think White folks were our slaves, because they were doing all of the work in Black neighborhoods. That's funny, but the same would be true where I live as well. We have a billion-

dollar school construction program in progress, and you can count on one hand the Black workers on the individual construction sites — right in the middle of 100 percent Black neighborhoods.

Yes, we demand and they supply. Our demands are so vehement and urgent that we have become personified profit margins, across the board, for virtually every business area in this country. We demand to be served, and we are being served up by our timid, weak, greedy, so-called leaders. We demand to be treated properly, but oftentimes mistreat one another. We demand all of the things we need and want in life, but we are reluctant to supply those needs and wants to ourselves.

Other groups in this country are using us to create wealth for their families by supplying what we demand. Black people must decide to get on the supply side of this economic equation; we must decide to take control of more of our resources and stop selling them to the lowest bidder. We must decide to create a demand for our supplies by supporting our own businesses and growing them into bigger and better businesses. There is no reason, except for lack of will, that Black folks could not have several billion-dollar businesses. How? By simply supplying more of our demands for food, clothing, shelter, and all the niceties of life that go along with them.

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