

C O M M E N T A R Y

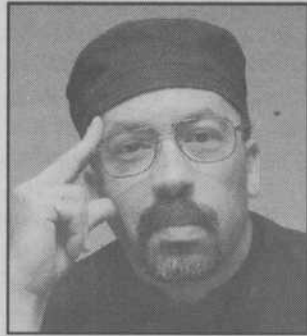
Haiti not forgotten despite scant coverage in press

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When most of us do not hear about, read or see a story for more than a few days, we either forget about it or figure that everything has been "worked out." We have not been hearing much about Haiti recently, but I can assure you that things have not been "worked out."

The coup of February 29, 2004 against the duly elected government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide resulted in a large-scale purge of those connected with the president and his party, the Famni Lavalas. Supporters and members have been chased underground or murdered. The Bush administration has, essentially, blockaded Haiti and refused to permit refugees access to our shores.

Workers attempting to unionize have been crushed. Various institutions built during the Aristide administration have been destroyed. U.S. troops, deployed to Haiti supposedly to restore order, have done nothing to restore genuine constitutional democracy or the real rule of law. Indeed, the military rebels — known, in the words of Secretary of State Colin Powell, as 'thugs' — remain armed and effectively out of control, insisting that they constitute the core of a reconstituted



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Haitian army.

Most of the nations of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) smelled a rat as soon as the coup took place. In a display of courage that should be forever rewarded, these small nations stood up against the arrogant demands of the Bush administration, which insisted that President

Aristide stay out of the Caribbean and under de facto house arrest in the Central African Republic. Nevertheless, the Bush administration pressure has continued and it appears that some cracks have emerged within CARICOM, with some countries moving toward recognizing the coup-installed regime.

Current conditions make it less than likely that Haiti will be in a position to have anything approaching legitimate elections. With a continued atmosphere of squelching political dissent, multi-party elections might take place, but it is improbable that they would represent the will of the Haitian people.

In this setting, the message that emerges from the Bush administration is that we should all "move on" from the circumstances surrounding the coup. This is a coded term meaning, in effect, that those of

(See Fletcher, Page 12)

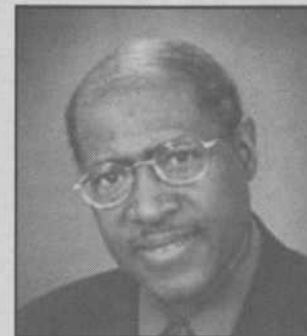
Democratic Party platform offers very little to Blacks

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Let's face it. The Democratic Party platform this year will not contain a Black agenda. But, you say, all Americans have a stake in the issues in the platform. That is true, but it matters and it matters desperately how these issues relate with the various communities in the country.

For example, it matters little to say that Blacks, "too," want decent jobs, education and health at a surface level of vague generalities. In order to make this statement meaningful, it has to take into consideration the shape of the status and concerns in each of these communities. If the communities are ghettoized, substantially poor, foreign-born, or lacking average levels of those public goods, the way in which they are delivered will matter vastly from the way in which they are delivered to well-off communities. So, one wants to see the specifics of the policy, not just the vague generalities in which platforms are written. The platforms of both parties will mention these issues, but not much detail comes with it.

For the details, the leadership of the Black community has traditionally created a "Black Agenda." This year, that process



RON WALTERS

has largely been abdicated and left to progressive Black groups, such as a National Black Agenda Conference (NBAC) that was held in Boston in April and another one in Chicago in mid-July.

These documents contain the specificity that describes the issues faced by the Black community and the way in which the political system is

asked to address them. For example, they deal with Black poverty by referring to the immorality of the new system that replaced welfare and call for its restructure. They deal with the criminally unjust incarceration of 1 million Black men and women and call for the repeal of policies such a mandatory minimum sentences and "Three Strikes You're Out." They reject the corporate control of the health care system and call for a "Quality of Life" constitutional amendment that establishes a right to health care. Similarly, they call for a constitutional amendment on the right to vote in light of the disfranchisements suffered by Blacks in Florida and elsewhere during the 2000 elections.

But what is the relationship between this National Black Agenda process and the national Democratic Party. It is the unwillingness of Black leadership to fight

(See Walters, Page 12)

That's it, I have had it—I'm giving up on Black people

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I give up! I'm tired of having to fight against the Black back-stabbers. I give up! I'm weary of weak-kneed, self-appointed or White establishment-appointed, "leading Blacks." I give up! I'm exhausted from years of toiling on positive economic initiatives for our people, only to have some of my own brothers and sisters fear they may offend their new masters if they support Black empowerment. I give up! I'm drained of my substance, my drive, my enthusiasm, and my hope of ever seeing our people break our psychological chains. I give up! I'm worn-out, Black people, fatigued by our slothfulness, the squandering of our resources and talents, and the abdication of our responsibilities to our children. I give up!

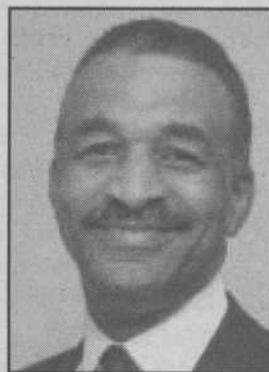
Now that Bill Cosby's words are the cynosure of our conversations these days, I may as well jump on the bandwagon too, notwithstanding the fact that if a White person had said what "The Cos" said, we would be having a completely different conversation. It sounds like Bill is fed up too; he's fed up with those Blacks of "lower economic" status. Well, I'm fed up with Blacks of higher economic status. So, I guess between Cosby and me, most Black folks are covered, or should I say "uncovered."

While my comments won't get the same attention as Cosby's, allow me to vent the same way he did. I'm tired of Black people who sell themselves and their people to the lowest bidders. For instance, National Bap-

tist Convention USA officials agreed to come to Cincinnati, despite the boycott, and in exchange for their \$21 million economic impact, they received a banquet, a limousine, a hotel rebate, and a few free airline trips. Bill Cosby was the first to honor the Cincinnati boycott by canceling his appearance here. Do we agree with him on that? Will we follow his example?

We have two Black colleges, Bethune-Cookman and Grambling, agreeing to come to this boycotted city, in exchange for money they could — and should — be receiving from Black people. Of course, this so called "Black" football game has been commandeered by corporate dollars and turned into a hammer with which to beat oppressed Blacks over their heads. Hmmm. This sounds like a job for the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club. We could give these two schools much more money than they will receive for coming to Cincinnati to play a football game against the wishes of their oppressed brothers and sisters. What do you say, BMDC?

There are Black people, no doubt among the remnant of W.E.B. DuBois' disappointing Talented Tenth, who settle for terms like MBE, SBE, and WBE, having to be certified that they are Black (and glad to do it) to get a contract, and they never open their mouths to say anything about how Black people are mistreated. I have proposed, since Black folks



JAMES CLINGMAN

just love this alphabet soup discriminatory process of economic exclusion, that we institute a new category: "BBE" - Black Business Enterprise.

We have Black leaders, or as Nathan and Julia Hare say, "Leading Blacks," who won't take positions in support of the righteous struggles of their own people. On the contrary, they will speak in support of the establishment, suggesting everything is all right and Black folks are doing just fine. We have super-rich Blacks who make grandstand donations to organizations that do absolutely nothing to uplift their people. Yes, it's their money, and they can do whatever they want to with it, but c'mon brothers and sisters, you can do much better with what you have.

We have Black organizations that kowtow to get those banquet tables sold at their "Freedom Dinners" and Awards Banquets. Freedom? Awards? When did we get free? What are we celebrating? Our major freedom fighting organizations should refocus their attention on capturing an economic position rather than their leaders always trying to capture a good position in front of a news camera.

We have celebrities who've been mistreated and discriminated against by taxi drivers, advertisers, and the police, and common Black folks from across the country rally to their defense, threatening to boycott and punish the transgressors. Some of those same

celebrities, when called upon by common Black folks fighting against oppression, look the other way and opt for the path of least resistance, such as those who have come and will be in Cincinnati for the Underground Railroad Freedom Center celebration in August 2004. Freedom?

Finally, relative to Cosby's remarks about our children having those \$200 gym shoes, I would say many of our upper class Black folks spend their money on ridiculous items, too. Check out an Ebony magazine or watch shows like Crips and How I'm Livin'. Talk about ridiculous! These multi-millionaires show us their homes, their plasma screen TVs in every room, their fur bedspreads, their top-shelf liquor, their 15 cars with \$20,000 worth of tires and rims, and their recreation rooms, but they never show us their libraries.

While Cosby may be "holding up" his end, he has some peers who are certainly not holding up their end. I wonder what they would say if he got on their case. That's why I am giving up on Black people. I am all tuckered out by disingenuous, condescending, fake, self-centered, spend-thrift, self-righteous, snooty, aloof Black folks who do us more harm than good. I give up!

Just kidding, just kidding. I love you, brothers and sisters, with our warts, our dysfunction, and misguided material values. Let's just try to do better by one another, those in the lower, middle, and upper economic status. Okay?

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