

Black America ignoring volatile Sudanese crisis

By Ron Walters
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I know that this is a busy season with the elections and other things, but we simply must pay some attention to Sudan. Why?

You remember that a few years ago, it was discovered that slavery was being practiced in Sudan and in other Arab countries in North Africa.

Well, in the past few months alone, 30,000 people have been killed by roving bands of armed thugs known as the "Janjaweed," a word which literally means "armed men on horseback."

They have set upon areas in the West like Darfur and attempted to annihilate people in a campaign that has been called by both Houses of Congress as Genocide.

The Janjaweed is said to be financed by the Sudanese government in Khartoum, the capital of the country.

It is officially an Islamic state and the Arab population controls three quarters of the countries; the Southern half, Christianity and traditional African religions are practiced.

Part of the motivation for this killing is to complete the Islamization of the country, a process that began in Africa in the 7th Century AD and has been in progress every since. In fact, many of our ancestors who found themselves in American slavery were captured by Arab slavers and sold to the Europe-

ans for the same reason.

In Sudan, it is particularly ugly. The roving bands have been accused of raping women of the South in a program of ethnic cleansing, attempting, as one said, "to produce a lighter population."

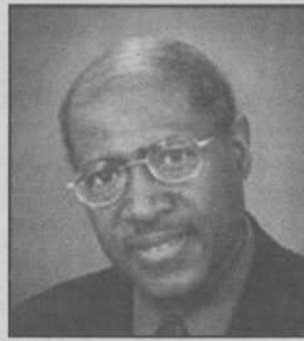
But one of the leaders of the Janjaweed refuted the charge of rape in an interview published in the Economist magazine, by saying that force against them was not necessary since they invite such action by their sexually-oriented dancing.

This is serious business, because United Nations estimates are that since 1989, nearly 2 million people have died in the violence.

This is reminiscent of the genocide that took place in Rwanda during the Clinton administration when the United Nations waited for the U.S. and the U.S. waited on the U.N., giving time and space for the killing to escalate and affect more than 1 million people in a bloodbath that is the shame of the modern world.

We should do something. I know there is the old saw that things are so bad here that we should hunker down in this country and take care of the people.

But we have always been able to walk and chew gum at the same time, which has en-



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abled us to fulfill our Pan African responsibilities to advocate for the well-being of our brothers and sisters on the African continent or elsewhere in the Diaspora.

So, I went to the Sudanese Embassy a few weeks ago. The method that worked out to bring this crisis to the attention of the U.S. government has been frequent demonstrations

at that embassy, spearheaded by well-known radio talk show host Joe Madison, who is committed to social justice and a star of Radio One's WOL in suburban Washington, DC.

It is the tactic used to allow citizens to fight against South African apartheid, that was managed by TransAfrica which had newsworthy figures come up to the embassy in 1986 and get arrested for trespassing.

I was invited by Joe to come up there one day and I found a line of people marching outside of the Sudanese embassy.

Very prominent were the blue picket signs made by a strong delegation of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) workers who were there, along with others, all chanting to a familiar song let by one of the original South African protesters, former Congressman Rev. Walter Fauntroy, "We shall not, we shall not be moved"; and "Stop the killing,

stop the killing now!"

At one point they gave me the microphone. My only point was to praise their steadfastness in this struggle and to observe that there probably would not be a time when it would not be necessary to put our bodies on the line for justice.

With that, I walked up to the embassy door. I was asked by the Secret Service three times to move and refused each time. Then, they handcuffed me, put me in a paddy wagon and took me to jail for processing.

It was a simple gesture, but when multiplied by Congressmen Charlie Rangel of New York and Albert Wynn of Maryland and others, it could start a powerful movement. There are many such simple gestures that can be made by all people of conscience, Black, White, green or grey.

But Blacks should be especially sensitive to what is happening in Sudan. So tune in to RadioOne WOL radio to find out what is going on; write the Sudanese Ambassador in protest (2210 Massachusetts Ave. N. W., Washington, D. C., 20008); and write the State Department and tell Secretary Colin Powell to stop tap-dancing and exercise some leadership.

Your pressure is important.

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Black Voters

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"He's got to secure and turnout his base voters, which are, of course, African-Americans, Latinos, women and labor. You cannot take your base for granted," Sharpton says. "One of the things that Bush is doing is working his base, the right-wing, Christian Coalition types."

Though Jackson and Brazile agree that African-Americans must inspire themselves, they were not without criticism of Kerry.

"He has to have a sharper message and a sharper focus on issues that the American people care about. There are a number of Americans who are still interested in seeing a change in the White House and I think that John Kerry can provide the answer that they're

calling for," explains Brazile.

"For the month of August, he took the hits. He's got to fight back," says Jackson. "They discussed [for a month] what he did not do in Vietnam while Bush and [Vice President Dick] Cheney never went to Vietnam. For a month, he allowed them to divert attention away from an economy in which there was a net loss of jobs in every state for the first time since [President Herbert] Hoover's time. He ought to be on the offensive and they ought to be on the defensive."

Polls are showing mixed results as another close presidential race is all but certain.

A Gallup Poll conducted for USAToday showed Bush with a 13-percentage-point lead. A Harris poll conducted around the same

time showed Kerry leading Bush 48 percent to 47 percent among likely voters with a margin of error of 3-percentage-points. And a poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press showed the race as tied, as Bush post-convention bounce erodes.

Many pundits say polls are unreliable predictors and cite the last election as an example.

Although Bush-Gore polls continued to show first one then the other winning by margins as large as 10 percent in 2000, they still ended the race in a statistical dead heat,

with Gore winning 48.3 percent of the popular vote to Bush's, 47.8 percent.

"Bush momentum will slow," Brazile predicts. "Bush will find himself facing new questions about his leadership on Iraq, his leadership on the economy. John Kerry has an opportunity, with a stronger message and more affective and reliable way of getting his message out, to regain the lead, to rebound and to turn his campaign around. I am confident that John Kerry will be the next president. Like Seabiscuit, he runs fast from behind."

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four short years ago.

One of the many ironies of our current situation is that the Bush administration has made our lives much less secure. U.S. intelligence agencies confirm that the Iraq invasion has increased recruitment into terrorist organizations, and it is clear and evident that hostility toward the U.S.A. has been growing, not only in the Arab and Muslim world, but across Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and increasingly in Europe.

Yet, fear blinds too many of us to the realities of the day. We just want the unknown and potential threats to go away. We want to be secure, and if the man in the White House uses the right words and questions the seriousness of his opponents, then too many of us are prepared to ignore reality and grope for the shield of false hope.

Instead of coherently responding to the fear technique, the Kerry campaign has shot itself in the foot by the candidate's ambiguous statements on the Iraq war. The war was built on a foundation of lies and the violation of international law. Why cannot this be said, and said without reservation?

Fear plus acting produces the outlines of a horror film. Playing itself out in front of the eyes of billions on this planet is the unfolding of just this drama. The question posed to us by the people of the world is whether the people of the U.S.A. will ignore the realities of the world situation and the transgressions our own government is committing. This is about far more than voting. Irrespective of who occupies the White House after the November 2nd elections, the entire fabric of the relations of the United States to the rest of the world must be called into question.

We must also realize that a permanent sense of insecurity and fear cannot be remedied by a permanent fortress America. A fortress America may seem to be a protective mechanism against terror and lawlessness, yet it can as well serve as a prison for those of us on the inside, squeezed, observed and restricted, all in the name of protecting ourselves against an evil that can always surface.

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Curry

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Just don't spend that much time on him...I truly am not that concerned about him."

In an interview on May 29, 2003, Bush claimed, "We found the weapons of mass destruction. We found biological laboratories...for those who say we haven't found the banned manufacturing devices or banned weapons, they're wrong, we found them."

But it was Bush who was wrong. Appearing on "Meet the Press" (Feb. 7, 2004), he said that stockpiles "could have been destroyed during the war. Saddam and his henchmen could have destroyed them as we entered into Iraq. They could be hidden. They could have been transported to another country, and we'll find out."

The news media tracked how Bush flip-flopped on creating the 9/11 Commission.

"President Bush took a few minutes during his trip to Europe Thursday to voice his opposition to establishing a special commission to probe how the government dealt with terror warnings before Sept. 11," CBS News reported on May 23, 2002. On September 20, less than four months later, ABC News reported, "President Bush said today he now supports establishing an independent commission to investigate the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks."

In the mother of all flip flops, President Bush said on Sept. 25, 2002: "You can't distinguish between al Qaeda and Saddam when you talk about the war on terror." On Sept. 17, 2003, he was forced to concede, "We've had no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved in Sept. 11."

In discussing whether the U.S. can win the war on terrorism, Bush has done a double-flip.

"One of the interesting things people ask me, now that we're asking questions, is, can you ever win the war on terror? Of course you can," Bush said on April 13 of this year. On August 30, he reversed himself, saying: "I don't think you can win [the war on terror]." The next day, Bush flipped yet again, saying: "Make no mistake about it, we are winning and we will win [the war on terror]."

It is understandable that "W." might not want to be labeled a "waffler" like his dad. And certainly he would not welcome a Waffle House menu citing his change in positions. But there's nothing wrong with his being truthful and simply calling himself "I-Hop." Just don't pour any syrup on his stack of waffles.

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