

OUR VIEW

Digital Divide & Do Not Conquer

For what they're worth, the vice presidential and presidential debates provide opportunities to see the men who would lead this country up close and personal, to gauge their affability, credibility and stability, to see if they can exhibit grace under fire. To the extent that the White House can be won or lost on the strength of a debate performance is testament to their importance. This despite the fact that promises made during debates often have little bearing on how the victors eventually govern once in the Oval Office.

Most intriguing about Tuesday night's vice presidential debate between current veep Dick Cheney and North Carolina Sen. John Edwards was Cheney's admission that he didn't know that AIDS is an epidemic among Black women. A startling admission considering that AIDS' romp through Black America over the past decade has been well-documented. Cheney's admission underscores a truism about the Bush Administration: there is a genuine disconnect between the White House and Black America. If the vice president of the United States doesn't know that AIDS is quickly becoming among the top causes of death for certain African-American demographics, then what else about Black America does the Bush Administration not know?

Certainly, Cheney must know that poor, rural and minority communities are often on the butt end of many social maladies. Or maybe not.

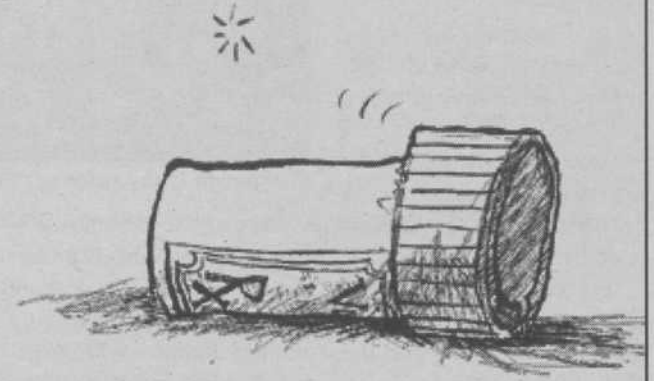
Bush at least knows that a digital divide exists, that there's a racial and socioeconomic gap in access to technology. Though neither candidate has made closing the digital divide a signature of their platforms, at least Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry has gone on record saying he will do something: "Affordable high-speed Internet access is becoming an important national economic necessity. In order for our businesses — from the largest to the smallest — to sell products and services on-line, they all need to be able to reach more people faster through the Internet. Businesses located outside of urban centers — the only place where broadband is widely deployed — are losing out. Consumers, too, face this same type of digital divide. In order to benefit from the often lower costs of purchasing products over the Internet, consumers need to be able to complete their purchases with confidence that their transactions will be completed quickly and correctly. This is the commercial aspect of the digital divide. I am proud to have worked closely with Senator Rockefeller and Senator Snowe to introduce legislation that would address the critical problem of connecting businesses and homes in high-poverty areas of cities to the Internet by creating a tax credit for companies that deploy high-speed..."

In President Bush's case, he's not talking much about the digital divide, maybe because he can't. After all, it was his 2003 federal budget that eliminated Education and Commerce Department programs that helped low-income communities build computer labs for children's education, adult literacy and job training (such programs allowed Indian tribes miles apart communicate as if they were next door; teenagers used the technology to do school research and elders became computer literate). And his 2003 education budget that wiped out several technology projects including community technology centers and programs to help teachers learn how to use computers in the classroom. In March 2003, Commerce Secretary Donald Evans defended Bush: "With the expansion of the Internet and related technologies into all sectors of society, the administration believes federal subsidies are no longer justified to prove the usefulness of such technologies."

Yet in June 2004, Bush announced an initiative to expand "digital freedom" to foreign countries like Jordan. So there you have it: For Bush, closing the digital divide overseas is more important than closing it in America.

POINT OF VIEW

How to tell if the Viagra
You Just Bought over the
INTERNET IS FAKE —



Are we going to be Bush-wacked again?

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The phrase "like father, like son," is being made by your boy to get in my I told you so from January 2001, just before Bush II was installed as the 43rd President of the United States of America.

Back on January 4, 2001, I wrote, "While fully understanding and supporting the need for us to be bipartisan, such an understanding has nothing to do with having a healthy suspicion that there is a good likelihood that the administration that will take office on January 20, 2001 will become Bush II. If so, then it "ain't gonna" be good times for Black folk."

I went on to write, "One would have hoped, given the facts that Al Gore won the popular vote by 500,000 plus votes and Florida disenfranchised a disproportionate number of Black voters, thus giving Baby Bush a four vote (271-267) electoral college margin that these mitigating circumstances would have deterred Bush II from going back to the future to recycle appointees who served in Father Bush and Ronald Reagan Administrations."

I suggested that Bush II's Administration could be an either or proposition. It could hold promise as embodied in the appointment of Colin Powell as Secretary of State or create division in the nation based on the appointment John Ashcroft to serve



LOUIE OVERSTREET

as General Attorney. I predicted that his appointment would be as harmful to person of color as his daddy's appointment of "Uncle" Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court as a 42 jurist who never practiced law in the private sector a day in his life.

Do I have to remind you that Clarence (he may be my color but he is not my kind) has been the swing vote on all 5-4 court decisions that have effectively eroded the equal opportunity gains that were made in the 1960's and the early 1970's? Man, isn't it amazing that this dude could be so against Affirmative Action (AA), yet in essence should be the poster child for opponents of AA. Such bigots believe that an unqualified Black was appointed to fill a position that should have gone to a more qualified White. Hopefully, I have remained honest enough to myself to admit that in this particular case these bigoted folks were absolutely right.

I concluded the column by stating, "If you are into

wagering, the odds are that under a Bush II Administration, our future will be that of the 1980's again!"

However, what I completely missed the boat on back then was that Bush II would re-start a war with Iraq that produced such a different result than the war his father initiated 1990/91.

Bush I's invasion of Iraq resulted in a swift victory that resulted in only 148 American combat deaths and 467 persons suffering non-fatal injuries. Bush II's invasion of Iraq has resulted in a non-victorious mess that has produced 754 combat deaths and 6,916 non-fatal injuries.

Stated another way: unlike father, son's failure in terms of deaths is 5 times that of his father, and injuries are 15 times those resulting from the first invasion of Iraq. This does not even begin to account for, much less attempt to atone for, killing tens of

thousands of innocent people in a senseless pursuit of one man who, ironically, is still alive.

Speaking of Saddam, it's not likely that he will survive a trial. The very simple reason being that our nation's support of him in the late 1970's and early 1980s, if made public, would prove too grossly embarrassing, if not criminal, in the court of world opinion.

Now compare this with the real war of terrorism, where the entire citizenry of America is in support, to include the invasion of Afghanistan with complete justification, has resulted in only 53 Americans losing their lives and 360 service persons suffering non-fatal injuries.

Giving all that we have learned about the Bushes, I will pose the question to you, can we afford, as persons of color, to allow ourselves, come November 2, 2004, to again be "Bush-whacked?"



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