

COMMENTARY

U.S. universities steadily retreat from preferences

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Few universities have pursued racial diversity with as much vigor as the University of Michigan. It spent more than \$10 million defending its affirmative action programs for undergraduate and law school applicants, challenges that were ruled on last year by the U.S. Supreme Court. University President Sue Coleman is an ardent supporter of affirmative action. And the school was among those that Blacks turned to during the Jim Crow era when universities in the South refused to enroll them because of their race. Even so, over the past four years, both the number and percentage of Black students accepted by Michigan has declined in each successive year.

According to figures made public by the university, Black freshmen enrollment at UM declined from 499 in 2001 (9 percent) to 443 in 2002 (8.5 percent), to 410 in 2003 (7.4 percent) and to 380 (5.8 percent) in 2004.

President Coleman attributes the decline this year to fewer African-Americans applying to Michigan. However, officials say they don't know why fewer Blacks are applying to Michigan and have pledged to step up their education and outreach campaigns. A similar approach was used to



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attract Latinos and Native Americans to Ann Arbor; their numbers increased slightly this year.

It would be easy to surmise that the drop-off was caused, in part, by confusion over the twin Supreme Court rulings. Last year, the court upheld the UM Law School admissions process that was less numbers-ori-

ented than the undergraduate program that was struck down. But two years prior to the eagerly-anticipated court ruling, Black enrollment figures were already headed south.

If the University of Michigan, with its enlightened leadership and willingness to stand up to Right-wing legal firms, is having problems attracting Black applicants, what does this mean for universities that don't exhibit a strong commitment to diversity?

Other universities report similar declines this year, especially in the enrollment of African-American males. If this becomes a trend, it could have a profound impact on our community and our families.

Though we celebrated the narrow 5-4 Supreme Court ruling upholding the concept of affirmative action, we didn't realize that some universities, still facing threats from Right-wing think tanks and law firms,

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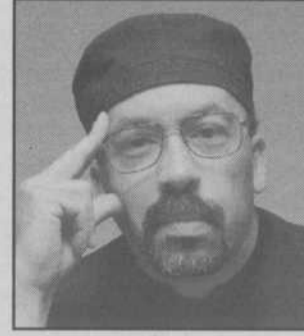
American foreign policy as seen via post-9/11 lens

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Probably for the foreseeable future, the November 2004 elections will be subject to serious analysis as well as spin. While much is being made of the so-called "values" issue, commentator Kevin Phillips offered what for me was the best summation of the Bush victory: it represented the victory of the "9/11 coalition." In other words, it is unlikely that President Bush would have been re-elected had it not been for the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001. This is not an idle comment. The condition of the country and the fact that Bush remains a very unpopular president (with respondents continuing to indicate that they believe that the country is going in the wrong direction) would most likely have resulted in a different outcome on November 2nd.

That said, I want to keep my observations focused on one issue: foreign policy and the implications of the re-election.

A newspaper headline in Britain the day after the U.S. election posed the question: "How could 59 million people be so dumb?" While I can understand the question and the sentiment, I do not believe that most of the supporters of President Bush are or were dumb. I think that they made a choice, or perhaps a series of them.



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One choice was to decide not to see certain things, such as:

- 9/11 happened on President Bush's watch and the "9/11 Commission" has shown that the Administration dropped the ball prior to the attacks.

- There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, thereby undermining the entire Bush pretext for the invasion.

- There was no connection between Saddam Hussein and the 9/11 terrorist attacks nor was there any clear connection between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaeda.

- The Bush administration has antagonized most of the world through policies that disrespect the concerns of sovereign nations. This includes issues such as climate control, trade, not to mention harassment of nations following a different course than that advocated by President Bush.

So, issues such as these were either ignored or blocked out by sizeable portions of the electorate. In some cases individuals appear to have honestly believed misinformation fed them by the Administration and its allies, but that speaks volumes about what we call "news" in the USA.

A second choice has to do with security, and this is a touchy one. I kept listen-

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Black America must get busy with nation building

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I often wonder what some of us do between elections. Now that the last one is over, what are you going to do? Will you do your best imitation of Rip Van Winkle? Or, will you sustain the political energy you have built up during these past few months and do something to empower our people economically? As Morgan Freeman said in the movie, *Shawshank Redemption*, "Get busy livin', or get busy dyin'." The way I see it right now, Black people are busy dying, as we continue to create wealth for everyone except ourselves. So let's look at some ways we can get busy livin'.

As we draw nearer to Kwanzaa, the MLK holiday, and Black History Month, I ask — no, I beg you all to consider doing more than celebrating, doing more than discussing, and doing more than writing about our issues. What we write today will be around for our progeny to read. What we say will be recorded in the annals of history as well. We should not want our children to read or hear our words and not be able to see our deeds. Please, please, please, (as James Brown would say) do these few things, as a minimum, to show our people and our children that we cared enough to take ACTION.

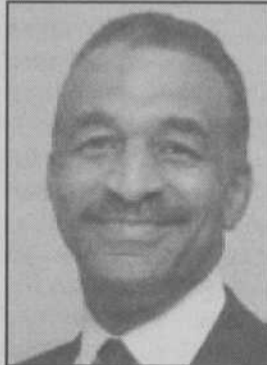
1. Just once every month, purchase products from the MATAH Network. www.matah.com How can we fail to support the ONLY Black-owned and operated distri-

bution channel? It could very well be the company that provides employment for your children and, for certain, it will be the example of Ujamaa, cooperative economics, we discuss this time of the year. If we do not support it, another opportunity for Black people to move to the supply side of the economic equation will be lost.

2. Write letters, editorials, e-mails, and make phone calls in support of the Powernomics Plan for Detroit. If this project fails, in a city where 85 percent of the population is Black, what will it mean for the rest of us? Let your voice be heard in support of this project; stand with the brothers and sisters in Detroit. Their victory is our victory. This is an excellent example of the unity cited in the principle of Umoja.

3. Join the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club (BMDC) www.Blackonomics.com. As a brother from Florida told me, "This is ingeniously simple and quite easy to do." Talk about Kujichagulia, this is it. We must step forward and determine more of our own destiny by using more of our money to support our valued and valuable institutions. If we are not self-determined, then we are not determined at all.

4. Build "partnerships" between Black businesses and Black consumers for mutual support. Business owners, take care of your



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responsibilities. Consumers, seek out Black businesses. Ujima, collective work and responsibility, between and among Black people will definitely encourage and promote economic empowerment. We must stop thinking that as long as "I got mine" everything is all right. It's about the collective — the group.

5. Build relationships in your particular city that will revive our collective and cooperative spirit. Start investment, loan, and assistance funds; establish cooperative purchasing programs. Let's really be innovative this year. Isn't that what creativity, Kuumba, tells us? Stop doing things the same way; get out of your rut; take some risks; be creative; create more economic empowerment for our people.

6. Get involved and stay involved in the education of our children. Teach our children their history by teaching them Our Story; start entrepreneurial schools; create job makers, not job takers. Don't fall prey to the commercialism of our history by major corporations in February. They will only tell you the history they want you to know, and then ask, "Would you like fries with that?"

7. Do whatever you can with whatever you have to help your brothers and sisters in times of need. I consider this a major component of our individual purpose, our Nia. When you

seek ways to help others you will be blessed with the help you require. Accept this as your mantra, as part of your purpose, and instead of lamenting, as W.E.B. DuBois did, the "power of selfishness over sacrifice" among our people, you will rejoice over our collective progress.

8. Love, respect, and trust one another more, and do the right thing, for the right reason, all the time. If we do these, first, there will be no question that we will gladly and willingly do all of the others and many more. In other words, have more faith, Imani, in your brothers and sisters. Have more faith in yourself as well. The Creator gives us what we need; it's up to us to have faith, not only in Him, but in ourselves to accomplish what we say we want.

Not a long list, not a complicated set of rules, just a few thoughts on how we can achieve many of the goals we discuss. We cannot be content with mere discussion of our problems. Do we even have the right to talk and write about the plight and the victories of our people if we do not participate in and contribute to their solutions? I don't know about you; but I do know that I cannot. So, "as for me and my house," in addition to writing and speaking, we will participate; we will fight; we will support; and we will contribute to the uplift of Black people — OUR people.

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