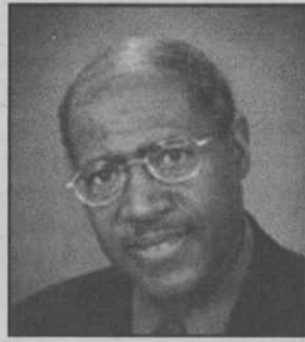


C O M M E N T A R Y

America the divided: Red vs. Blue, North vs. South

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I looked at the recent Democratic Governor's Conference on C-SPAN recently and they were talking about what kind of person should head the Democratic Party. The consensus of this group was the new chair of the party should be a "centrist." This was a cold wind



RON WALTERS

coming from the governors to suggest that the Democratic Party be given over to the Right wing of the party that will employ Right-wing thinking and, if they get back in office, will give us Right wing public policy.

Bill Clinton was essentially a "centrist" who fed Blacks a lot of Black symbolism at the same time he was weakening affirmative action and sponsoring several other retrogressive measures that we are paying for now. But this was all covered up by the fact that the economy was so good that no one paid any attention — and the Blacks in the Cabinet and in other high government positions just went along. A centrist is a politician who tries to govern from the center; but, since the center has moved to the right in the last three decades, it means that Democratic leaders are tempted to go in that direction, dragging our community

along with them.

This was a strong signal to Democratic members in the house, senate and in state houses all around the country that they should be prepared to look like Democrats, but walk and talk like Republicans. So, Democrats all over the country are learning to talk "values" and "morals" talk, get their hair

cut shorter, wear dull clothes, and dump on unions, poor people and gays. In other words, the message coming out of the Democratic governor's conference was "give up, they've won, join them!"

Much of this is not surprising. Politicians worry about the next election and how they can stay in office. And if Fat Albert was popular, they would be trying to be big, fat and Black. But what about the rest of us? I have witnessed so much despair about the outcome of the elections, especially by those who went to vote. And they are asking what do we do now?

I say we should fight. We would have had to fight even if Kerry had won because Kerry is a "centrist." So, now the targets are clearer, but first, we should get something right. The country may be divided up

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Diversity viewed as vital component to business

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

LOS CABOS, Mexico — Valerie Daniels-Carter, the dynamic president of the Minority Franchise Association of Burger King Corporation, invited me to this sunny retreat south of the border to give the keynote address last week at the organization's 30th anniversary conference. During my stay, I was able to talk with Clyde Rucker, Burger King's senior vice president and director of its diversity programs; "Magic" Johnson, who is being as successful in business as he was on the basketball court; Byron Lewis of UniWorld advertising agency, one of the nation's top experts on advertising to people of color; Sam Tidmore, a longtime friend who was being honored along with Brady Keyes for their roles in establishing MFA, and many others.

While all were proud that an organization of Black franchise owners has been around for three decades, they were also aware of a paradox: At a time when sheer demographics should dictate a greater reliance on experts and business leaders who have developed expertise in reaching people of color, many African-American



GEORGE CURRY

experts are being underutilized or kicked off of accounts in favor of larger, White ad agencies that claim that they can do a better job than people who have devoted their lives to this cause.

When Andy Young was ambassador to the U.N., he decried what he called smart-butt White boys, or words to that effect, who automatically thought they were smarter than the most talented African-Americans. We saw similar arrogance on display during the past presidential campaign when cash-drenched White 527 political groups bypassed experienced African-American grassroots organizations and devised their own plan for reaching African-American voters. Of course, they failed.

And many businesses are also going to fail if they refuse to adjust to a changing society.

According to the Census Bureau, over the next 50 years, the population of the United States will grow by almost 50 percent, increasing from 282.1 million in 2002 to 419.8 million in 2050. People of color will account for approximately 90 percent

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Global political pressure hamstrings United Nations

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Maybe you have noticed the same thing that I have noticed. When the United Nations does something that the United States wants, it is a glorious institution, or at least so says the U.S. media and the White House. When, however, the United Nations does something that the United States does not like, then, sometimes overnight, the United Nations allegedly becomes a terrible institution that risks irrelevancy.

I started thinking about this again in the midst of this alleged scandal involving the son of United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Iraq oil-for-food program. Annan's son may have been inappropriately involved in this program and gained financially as a result. The question is whether Annan knew about this alleged inappropriate conduct. If so, there was an apparent conflict of interest. Annan, however, has denied knowing anything about this situation, saying that his son is an adult and conducts business without any consultation with his father.

What has been interesting about this investigation is that very quickly some Republican members of Congress began calling for Annan's resignation.

At first glance this would seem odd since there have been no prior allegations of inappropriate conduct on the part of Secretary-General Annan. In fact, Annan was the candidate backed by the United States for the position of Secretary-General.

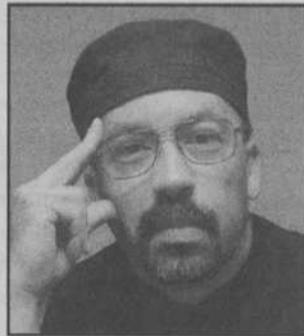
Despite Annan's general support of U.S. international initiatives, from the standpoint of the Bush administration and many of the

Republicans in Congress, he made a fatal error: he disagreed with the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Not only did he disagree, but he dared to speak openly about the invasion as having been inappropriate and a violation of international law. Having taken this stand, Annan found himself in the dog house as far as the Bush administration was concerned

and there has been sniping at him ever since. I, somehow, knew that the Bush administration and their allies in Congress were going to gun for Annan. It was simply a matter of time. What is at stake is not so much Annan-the-person, but the manner which U.S. presidents, generally, and the Bush administration, in particular, wish the United Nations to operate.

Let's go back to the months prior to the Iraq invasion. The Bush administration realized at a certain moment that they had overstepped their bounds. They tried to get United Nations support for the war. The propaganda by the White House was amazing, suggesting that if the U.N. did not support the Bush invasion of Iraq that it would be rendered irrelevant just like the pre-World War II version of the UN called the League of Nations.

Unfortunately, the Bush team forgot, or overlooked, a bit of history. The rendering irrelevant of the League of Nations was the result of the fascist powers—Germany, Italy, and Japan—and their failure to abide by anything that the League proposed. It was the



BILL FLETCHER JR.

fascists that made the League irrelevant through their arrogance and aggressiveness. Odd that the Bush administration would attempt to make an analogy with the League of Nations.

In the build up to the Iraq aggression, the Bush administration could not get the support of the U.N. and this stuck in its craw. The Administra-

tion's irritation was compounded when the warnings that were offered by most governments and social movements concerning the probable non-existence of weapons of mass destruction turned out to be correct. Red in the face, the administration did not know what to do or say, other than to turn in anger against the United Nations.

There has always been opposition to the U.N. from within the extreme wing of the ideological Right in the USA. These are either the isolationists or those who wish no constraints on any US international behavior. Nevertheless, when the UN has been compliant, the ruling circles in this country have been more than willing to support the United Nations.

Particularly during the 1970s and 1980s, however, as there were louder voices from the Third World demanding justice for the underdeveloped world, the US became increasingly uneasy with the United Nations. As years passed and many of those voices were muted, the U.S. worried less.

Nevertheless, in order to ensure greater compliance with the objectives of U.S. for-

eign policy, the U.S. opposed an additional term for then Secretary-General Butros-Butros Ghali, who did not seem to adhere sufficiently to the White House line (at that time during the Clinton Presidency). Kofi Annan, another son of Africa (Ghali is also African, coming from Egypt), emerged as the individual who was seen as acceptable to U.S. interests.

The non-partisan arrogance of U.S. administrations is demonstrated in the fact that one can be a rather consistent ally of the United States, but should one step out and chart a different course, even if only on one particular issue, one is quickly demonized. Ask the French, who in opposing the U.S. aggression against Iraq were called everything but children of God by the ideological Right in the USA. This is just as true with the United Nations.

The current uproar around Kofi Annan's son has little to do with his son's alleged activities. Had Annan been supportive of the U.S. aggression against Iraq, I would wager a dollar to a donut that this issue would never have come up, let alone been the subject of any controversy. Instead, it becomes another opportunity for the U.S., in this case the Bush administration, to stick a pin in the United Nations, further weakening an already fragile and complicated institution. I am waiting for the day when the Bush administration will announce the formation of a new 'united nations,' this time made up of the coalition of the compliant. I may not have to wait too long.

Bill Fletcher Jr. is president of TransAfrica Forum.