

C O M M E N T A R Y

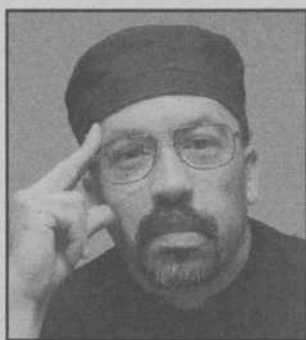
Securing peace proving elusive in Sudan

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As we edged into 2005 it was announced that a final peace agreement had been reached between the Sudanese government of General Al-Bashir in Khartoum and the rebel forces in the South known as the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. If successful, this peace agreement will bring to an end Africa's longest running civil war, a confrontation which is reputed to have cost the lives of 2 million people.

Events over the last year in the Sudan's western region of Darfur have overshadowed the depth of the larger crisis facing Sudanese society. The civil war between the North and the South arose out of efforts by various Northern Sudanese-dominated governments to impose their interpretation of Islam on the largely non-Muslim Southern region. The war took on a greater intensity when oil reserves were discovered in the South.

Despite important differences, there is an underlying linkage between the hopefully resolved North/South conflict on the one hand, and the war in Darfur on the other. It is important to understand that the borders of the Sudan were not drawn up by the people who have lived in its territory. The Sudan, during colonial times, was a British possession, and at one point jointly administered by both the British and their puppet allies in Egypt. What came to be known as the Sudan was the forced merger of the largely Arab and Muslim North, with the largely non-Arab but Muslim West [Darfur], and the largely Christian and Animist South. Though there was no reason that these groups could not have otherwise found a way to live together, opportunist political elements took advantage of



BILL FLETCHER JR.

ethnic, religious and resource tensions in order to advance their narrow objectives. This seems to have been especially true of the minority ethnic clans in the northern part of the Sudan that have dominated the country since independence. The apparent end to the North/South civil war only resolves part of the irritation which permeates the Sudan.

The undemocratic nature of the Khartoum regime will tend to undermine all progress made in efforts to end the North/South war. The Khartoum government's willingness to utilize ethnic cleansing as its modus operandi in fighting rebels in Darfur, for example, is linked to its repression of all dissent in the country as a whole. A regime that believes that it is acceptable to arm and encourage Arab militias to commit atrocities against

non-Arab Muslims in the name of fighting an insurrection is a regime in which one can put only qualified hope.

That said, the government of General Al-Bashir and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army are to be applauded for taking even the tentative steps towards peace. That peace will be a precarious one, however, as long as there is a larger failure to recognize that the Sudan is truly a multi-ethnic, multi-religious state where a politics of tolerance is the only measure through which peace and stability can be fully achieved. A politics of tolerance will be, itself, a step toward a democratic Sudan, a country that, in addition to being the largest in Africa, could serve as an example for those seeking a path out of the cyclone of ethnic war and societal collapse. The changes this necessitates, however, are nothing short of revolutionary.

Bill Fletcher Jr. is president of TransAfrica Forum, a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit.

Africa continues to be ravaged by economic tsunamis

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that the first Tsunami has subsided, another one has been visited upon the same people. It's the "Money Tsunami." Just after the huge waves hammered the islands, cities, and beach resorts, billions of dollars immediately began to wash onto those same shores. Money came in so fast they didn't know how to handle it. But not to worry, I am sure they have figured it out by now. All that money being raised was a sight to behold.

The vaunted G-8 countries began their high stakes competition; little children raised money; and corporations vied to see who could give the most. Even our president dipped into his pocket, albeit, not too deep into his pocket, and came up with a whopping \$10,000! Of course, that had to be lead news story. After all, aren't "Bible-believers" supposed to broadcast our charity? Or, is it the other way around? (Pardon me while I check Matthew 6:1-4.)

This country and others, now coming up with billions of dollars, have looked on for years as Africans have suffered tremendous hardships. There was no outpouring of funds and military support from this country when nearly a million people were being slaughtered in Rwanda, but folks in Hollywood are about to make a lot of money on that tragedy with its new movie, "Hotel Rwanda." People dying in Sudan and Congo seem to have no effect either. With all of the money being

spent in Iraq — a billion per week — for a war that should never have been. You would think we could break off a billion or two to save lives in Africa rather than to kill people in Iraq?

Oh, I'm sorry. Most of the jack being squandered in Iraq is going to Halliburton. Sorry, Dick. Didn't mean to get in yo' bidness. Hey, maybe you can figure out how your former company can get a piece of this Tsunami action. Need infrastructure? Need meals on wheels? Halliburton to the rescue. What do you think, Mr. Vice President?

The crazy money being raised and sent off to Asia, some \$6 billion and counting, graphically portrays a few aspects of our so-called global society. But, even more distressing is the lack of Black consciousness by many brothas and sistahs in the U.S. for their relatives in Africa.

First of all, as I stated above, we have watched people in Africa suffer several Tsunami-like disasters and have done little to help them. For instance, in response to the news about the tragedy in Asia, globalafrica.com reported the following: "It has been common knowledge ... that an African child below the age of five dies every three seconds on the [African] continent. That means every week 201,600 African chil-



JAMES CLINGMAN

dren don't get to celebrate their 5th birthday. Every year ten and a half million (10,483,200) African children perish, some through curable and preventable diseases such as malaria, small pox, chicken pox, measles, whooping cough, dysentery, malnutrition, and others through combinations of neglect, starvation, poisoning, political mismanagement, local wars and deliberate genocidal policies of

criminal, puppet governments. Of course, we are not taking into consideration another twenty million...annual deaths. This means, in human terms, Africa is haemorrhaging (sic) from a disaster much greater in scale than two Asian Earthquake Tsunamis each and every week, year in and year out..."

So much for the "Diaspora" we hold so dear. The reaction by many Black folks to the Tsunami disaster simply mimicked what the establishment was doing. I heard no questions about Africa, nor did I read any coverage on the condition of the people living there. Brother Colin Powell never mentioned it in his defense of what Bush was not doing and had not done. (I won't even go there with Condoleezza Rice; even though it would not take long, it's not worth the time.) Folks were highly interested in finding one of Oprah's regular guests, but several high-profile Black folks in the media never uttered a mumblin' word about the fate of their brothers and sisters in Africa.

A sight to behold was the National Basketball Association players offering \$1,000 per

point scored to the Tsunami relief effort. With a guy that was hated a few weeks ago, Jermaine O'Neal, leading the way with \$55,000 for his 55 point performance, several players got in on the act, scoring points and making pledges. Who knows how much they will end up sending? Now, here's the thing: As we all know, most of the players in the NBA are Black. Will someone tell me where they were for the Rwanda, Sudan, and Congo disasters? Other than Patrick Ewing, Alonzo Mourning and maybe a few more, where were they when their fellow NBA player Dikembe Mutombo announced he needed help to build a hospital in his native Kinshasa?

We have gotten so used to following the establishment and have forgotten about our own people, here and abroad. Not to diminish what happened to the people of Asia, but Africa has a Tsunami everyday; where's the U.S. government? Too busy looking for oil in the Motherland perhaps. Where are Black Americans? Too busy waiting for White folks to show us what to do, perhaps.

Yo! Brothers and Sisters, athletes and entertainers, and other "notable" Black folks. How about signing up for the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club (BMDC), and we can help one another on a continuous basis, not just when a Tsunami hits. Go to www.Blackonomics.com and add your name to the BMDC Mailing List. Or send an e-mail to jjclingman@Blackonomics.com saying "Sign me up!" Our people could use some money too.

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department.

Curry

(Continued from Page 10)

in the NAACP and then in the voter registration project, was killed with a .38 pistol by Eugene Hurst, White, a state representative. Hurst was never arrested, booked, or charged. A coroner's inquest ruled that the killing was in self-defense and he walked out free forever."

But the killings didn't stop there.

Foreman continues, "Three years later, on January 31, 1964, Lewis Allen, one of the key witnesses in the killing of Herbert Lee, was

planning to leave Mississippi the next morning and look for work in Wisconsin. That night they found him dead in his front yard. He had been shot with a shotgun three times."

That's the environment in which Jim Foreman chose to work. And because of his work, and that of others, we're now far removed, to a large extent, from that kind of brazen bestiality.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.

Freedom

(Continued from Page 4)

fact that there were eight Whites on that jury."

While jailed, he became a self-educated writer and helped transform the prison publication, "The Angolite," into a nationally acclaimed magazine. He also co-directed "The Farm," a prison documentary that was nominated for an Oscar in 1999, and wrote and narrated an award-winning National Public Radio documentary.

In retrospect, Rideau expressed remorse for his victims.

"When you do something like that to somebody, they have the right to feel any

way they want about you," Rideau said. "I realize words are pretty inadequate. But that's all I've got right now."

Don Hickman, whose father, bank branch manager Jay Hickman, was one of the two people whom Rideau shot and left for dead, expressed disappointment with the verdict.

"I was telling a friend of mine this morning we'll just have to learn to live with it," said Hickman.

Will Blacks and Whites in Lake Charles now be able to discuss the case together? "I don't think they'll talk in the same vein," he said.