

George W. Bush far from Lyndon B. Johnson

By George Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

After stumbling miserably out of the gate, George W. Bush has finally caught up with the American public and now realizes that there is widespread support for rebuilding New Orleans.

He has finally struck the right rhetorical chords, pledging to "renew our promise as a land of equality and decency." He went on to say, "As we clear away the debris of a hurricane, let us also clear away the legacy of inequality."

With Bush, it is always better to ignore the language and examine his record. He has made some sweeping endorsements of diversity that would have made even Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. proud.

But he used Dr. King's birthday to announce his opposition to a pair of University of Michigan affirmative action cases that went before the Supreme Court. Over Bush's objection, the conservative court upheld Michigan's law school admissions program while invalidating a more numbers-oriented undergraduate plan.

There are already troubling signs that the Bush administration plans to use this natural disaster to recycle some old Bush plans that were previously rejected. All of the water hadn't been drained from Canal Street in New

Orleans before Bush proposed \$5,000 "Worker Recovery Accounts" to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent flooding. Under the plan, those left unemployed by Katrina can use the one-time grant for job training, day care, transportation, education or anything else that will help them land a job.

The administration proposed a similar program two years ago, but Congress rejected the \$3.6 billion plan. If a person found a job within 13 weeks, under the plan, he or she could keep up to \$1,000 left in the account. Liberals opposed the plan because they thought it would be the first step in replacing unemployment insurance. Conservatives, on the other hand, objected because they did not want to create another layer of bureaucracy.

Even more disturbing is Bush's determination to use public funds to subsidize private education.

The Department of Education announced a proposal that would provide nearly \$500 million in federal funding to help students enrolled in private schools in the disaster area relocate to private schools elsewhere. This is a variation of Bush's voucher plan and would



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use limited public funds to subsidize private education. The flawed plan calls for each student receiving up to \$7,500.

Some conservatives, fearing growing deficits and an uncomfortable federal role in the relief efforts, are calling for across-the-board cuts in order to fund the recovery and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Others are challenging Congress to remove pork projects from recently enacted legislation.

Bush said he has no plans to raise taxes or do away with previously enacted tax cuts that mostly benefit the wealthy.

Former President Bill Clinton, in an interview on the "Today Show," said it would be "crazy" to maintain those tax cuts in view of the unexpected new expenses. Clinton and former president George H.W. Bush are heading up private relief efforts to help the victims of Katrina.

Expenses associated with recovering from Hurricane Katrina, estimated to be \$150 to \$200 billion, should not be used to distort the serious deficit problems the nation was facing before the disaster. The Congressional Budget Office had projected that the federal

deficit would exceed \$300 billion a year for the next decade, totaling nearly \$4.5 trillion by 2015. And that was long before Katrina came ashore.

An analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that the repeal of some of the previously enacted tax cuts would more than offset expenses associated with Hurricane Katrina.

"The tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 cost more each year than the total amount likely to be spent on Katrina," the center said. "The cost of tax cuts enacted in 2001 and 2003 is \$225 billion this year alone and will climb to higher levels each year in the future, as more of the tax cuts enacted in 2001 take full effect... The cost of the tax cuts in a single year exceeds the total anticipated costs of all expenses related to the hurricane over the years to come."

Rather than making the "bold" decision that he promised by repealing at least one of the tax cuts, George W. Bush will inflict even more cuts in programs designed to help the very people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Bush's words may sound like fellow Texan Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Programs, but they are not matched by similar action.

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Poverty colluded with Katrina to worsen damage

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice
Part Two

Black people in New Orleans and elsewhere, for years now, have been in control of the politics in their cities, and I use "control" lightly. We are good at "getting" out the vote" and going to the polls. In Atlanta, in D.C., in Detroit, in Baltimore, in Gary, Indiana, to name a few, we are runnin' stuff in the political arena. But nowhere in this country are we runnin' anything economically to the extent that when our folks are in dire straits we can move swiftly to get them out of harm's way or, at least, rescue them after a hurricane.

Because we own and control very little in this country, without help we cannot feed our people; we cannot give them water to drink; and we cannot clothe our children. All we can do is wait for someone else to do it, and watch our people die in the process. Yes, everyone else should help us, especially the government and private sectors, whom we have enriched with our taxes and labor; but we must be our own first line of defense.

Because we failed to heed the warnings and 40 years ago abandoned our own economic base, we have declined to a shameful level of impotence, an embarrassing level of timidity and a state of unparalleled paralysis. Our once-vibrant, valuable and valued communities have all but disappeared and have been replaced by bastions of crime, ir-

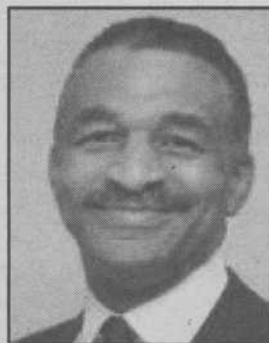
responsibility, economic despair and deprivation.

We suffer from a dearth of real economic leadership and seem only interested in having pandering politicians and polarizing preachers lead us down primrose paths to Proletariat poverty. Our leaders have become pleaders; our resolve to make things better for our children has been laid to waste by a rampage of greed, excess and possession of toys and trinkets made and distributed by everyone except Black people.

So how does this relate to New Orleans? To reiterate, nothing men could have done would have prevented or held off Katrina, but I submit: Were there genuine Black communities in New Orleans, more Black people would have had the means to get out.

I assert: Black people must take economic empowerment seriously, especially where we are the majority population, and carve out niches in industries to create jobs for our people rather than subject ourselves to "minority" programs and dependence upon "systems" that do not work on our behalf.

I contend: If Black folks in New Orleans had taken a collective stake in their city's billion dollar tourism industry, by creating an entity that captured a significant share of the Black dollars spent at events like the Essence Music Festival, there would have been more



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accommodation and transportation resources available for those who had no place to go and no way to get there.

I declare: Had Black people in New Orleans taken vertical control of just a portion of that city's seafood industry, "from the boat to the throat," as Claud Anderson has implored, there would have been more money avail-

able among Black folks to help other Blacks in need.

I maintain: Black people must act upon basic economic survival principles in order to save more of our people from the hurricanes of life. We must do this to an even greater degree because we have a president who is disconnected and a Black secretary of state who defends his inaction by saying, "Nobody, especially the president, would have left people unattended on the basis of race." Then why did he leave them unattended, Condi? Is there another reason, and if so, should that make us feel better?

We must do more for ourselves because we have a presidential matriarch who, despite her husband hugging and kissing Black children, stands by and watches as if she is afraid of them, and thinks living in the Astrodome is a step up for Black people. Barbara Bush said, "What I'm hearing, which is sort of scary, is they all want to stay in Texas... And

so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this — this (she chuckles slightly) is working very well for them."

We must take better care of ourselves because Black Americans are obsolete, expendable and unappreciated by many of those who are in charge of this country. Head of the National Urban League, Marc Morial, who is from New Orleans, said economic empowerment is now the number one priority for Black people.

New NAACP President, Bruce Gordon, in an interview in *Black Enterprise* magazine (September), again speaking about New Orleans, said, "Most recently, there's been a lot of concern about the way African-Americans are treated in the French Quarter. ...Folks there don't treat them very nicely. I would say in addition to [marching], we should take our dollars elsewhere... That, to me, is a more significant message than a protest because it has an economic impact on the offenders."

Tavis Smiley said, "This administration and these folk who run Washington are no more interested in our welfare and our well being than the man on the moon. And we have got to start taking our destiny into our hands."

Will we heed those messages? Will we allow Claud Anderson's work and his tears to be in vain? Will we finally wake up and realize that, irrespective of the racism we all know exists in this country, there are things

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tion finally occurred and the number of both active duty enlisted soldiers and National Guardsmen flowed into New Orleans rising from 5,100 the day of the storm to more than 65,000 a week later, then something wasn't right. When bureaucrats keep disaster relief agencies, such as the Red Cross and Salvation Army, from entering a disaster area

quickly, you know something wasn't right.

When the Hyatt Company can successfully deliver food and supplies to its New Orleans hotel despite claims by local and federal officials that it was inaccessible while people at the convention center had to go without food for four days, you know something wasn't right.

You know that something wasn't right

when a convention center full of Americans had to stand in other people's feces to crap, had to die from heat, lack of food, water and dehydration and had to sleep under the overpass because the place was so full, with a stench that was unbearable.

When America's leaders allow its people to be treated like this, what's the cause? Must the herd be culled? Must a few thousand en-

ergy users be erased from the aggregate data? Americans? African-Americans? The poor? People who have been victims of disenfranchisement and from whom the powers that be have stolen for their own empowerment? What next? What happens when we run out of minorities and poor people whom our country has historically regarded as expendable — and the beast is still not satisfied?