

# Blueprint for rebuilding a Black university

By George Curry

Special to Sentinel-Voice

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. - Eight years ago, Knoxville College, my alma mater, lost its accreditation for the first time since the historically Black institution was established in 1875. Usually, the loss of accreditation is a death knell for colleges, with most of them closing their doors within three years after falling from grace.

But Knoxville College has refused to die. And how it has remained alive without accreditation since 1997 can provide a future blueprint for saving troubled historically Black colleges.

And they are worth saving.

Black colleges represent only 3 percent of the nation's colleges and universities, yet

produce 24 percent of all African-Americans earning bachelors degrees. Black colleges represent nine of the top 10 colleges that graduate students who go on to earn a Ph.D. And of the top five colleges that produce students who are accepted into medical school, four of them — 80 percent — are historically Black colleges.

Although it has never had a journalism program, Knoxville College has produced numerous notable journalists. They include: Vernon Jarrett, the first Black columnist for the *Chicago Tribune* and former president of the National Association of Black Journal-



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ists (NABJ); Barbara Rodgers, anchor for KPIX in San Francisco; my first professional job was as a reporter for *Sports Illustrated* and Ralph Wiley also wrote for that publication and appeared regularly on ESPN. I served as president of the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME), making Knoxville College the only institution to

have had its alumni head both NABJ and ASME.

That's just Knoxville's track record in journalism. Similar lists could be compiled for other fields and would include the late "Jake" Gaither, the legendary Florida A&M

football coach who won more than 85 percent of his games over a 25-year period; Dr. Edith Irby Jones, the first female president of the National Medical Association; Tuskegee, Ala., Mayor Johnny Ford and Green Bay Packers defensive tackle Grady Jackson.

After it lost its accreditation, Board Chair Jack LeFlore recruited a half-dozen of us to join the board in an effort to regain the school's footing. In addition to rejuvenating the board of trustees, the next step was to reinvent Knoxville College. This, perhaps more than anything else, is why it's still surviving today.

Prodded by LeFlore, Knoxville College became and remains the nation's only his-  
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## Calling ourselves 'minorities' strips us of power

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

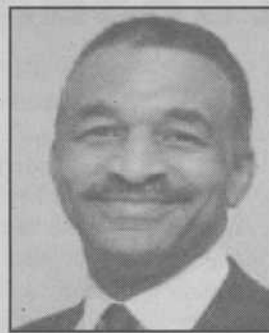
I know you have heard the clamor about minority groups not getting their fair share of the reconstruction dollars being spent in New Orleans. Headline articles abound across this country disclosing the unfairness that is being perpetrated against minorities in New Orleans. Apparently, White folks are taking over, giving no-bid contracts to their buddies. "Vice" president Cheney came in to survey the damage to see what he could channel to his company, Halliburton, and all of the other players are there already working and making millions while the newspaper headlines continue to read: MINORITIES NOT GETTING IN ON THE ACTION IN NEW ORLEANS."

Newsflash! I beg to differ. Minorities are, that's right, I said they "are" getting their fair

share of the economic benefits from the reconstruction of The Big Easy. The newspapers, advocacy groups, television news shows and radio shows, politicians and social activists are all wrong — dead wrong on this one.

As a matter of fact, in New Orleans, the principle of majority rule has been surpassed by "Minority Rules, which has taken over and ensured that the "minority" will reap bountifully from the devastation of Black people in that city. How is that possible?

Here's how: The New Orleans Black population is 67 percent (at least it was before the hurricane). My math tells me that's a "majority." Thus, simply put, White folks



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are the minority in that city. White folks are getting more than their fair share of the contracts, business opportunities, and employment. In other words, the minority rules in New Orleans, brothers and sisters. But, don't feel like you're alone, New Orleans; minority rules are in full effect in Detroit too — and other cities.

What we see in New Orleans is exactly why I rail so much against this word, "minority." It is totally ridiculous for us to allow ourselves to be placed in that category under any circumstances, but even more so in this instance. We find ourselves giving in to being called minorities and complaining about not receiving equitable treatment in a city that

has a majority Black population. Even though Black folks are the majority, they — and we — are acting like minorities. So, stop complaining about the minorities not getting their share of the money in New Orleans. Believe me: they are getting their share, and most of your share, too.

Let me be very frank by saying it is just plain stupid for Black people to continue to submit to such disparate treatment, all under the guise of minority programs, and accept being called minorities. It is even more stupid, insulting and demeaning for Black people (or should I have used a small "b" there?) to use the term to describe themselves. We have Blacks in my hometown who use the term all the time, but they are the gatekeepers and the Hayward Shepard types of our town. They are always the ones who  
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attention to the bills, the legislation and the impact that they have on us.

For example, you will be hard pressed to find any African-American who will say that Clinton was not a good President, even though he signed legislation eliminating some of the most important pieces of legislation to affect African-Americans.

His administration also eliminated two minority preference policies adopted by the Federal Communications Commission. The first policy stated that the FCC could award an enhancement for minority ownership and participation in management, weighed together with other relevant factors in comparing mutually exclusive applications for licenses for new radio or television broadcast stations.

Secondly, the legislation required that the FCC's so called "distress sale" policy allows a radio or television broadcaster whose qualifications to hold a license have come into question to transfer that license before the FCC resolves the matter in a non-comparative hearing, but only if the transferee is a minority enterprise that meets certain requirements.

Both of these pieces of legislation were enacted so that the FCC could promote diversification in programming and encourage minority participation in the broadcast industry.

Locally, we have Black and White

Democrats and Black and White Republicans right here in the Las Vegas community who, if you checked their records, have neither signed nor enacted any legislation or brought anything significant to the forefront to empower and advance African-Americans. And this is true all across the United States.

In this community alone, you have White elected officials actually beating the drum for Hispanics and courting them like never before. When is the last time that you have seen them courting us?—other than at election time when they go to the churches. We have been pushed to the side, and our elected officials are standing back and allowing it to take place. It appears that their personal interests are more important than the interests of the masses.

We have, maybe, one elected official who has recently shown at least the fortitude and the courage to put forth legislation or issues that can empower and enhance the Black community locally. Other than that, we have no one beating the drums for Black folks.

A large percentage of Blacks believe that if you're a Black Republican, you're an Uncle Tom. Are we so gullible that we actually believe that all Republicans are Uncle Tom's, Oreo's and other stereotypical names just because they're Republicans who just happen to be Black?

Think about effective Black people like Fredrick Douglass; Arthur Fletcher, the civil rights activist, affirmative action champion

and assistant secretary of wage and labor standards who was appointed by President Nixon in 1969; and our very own Bob Bailey, who fought for, assisted and championed the cause of Black businesses in Las Vegas and was more effective at helping them attain success and funding in his hey day than any other Black elected official ever; and we have locally elected official Lynette Boggs-McDonald, another among helpful Republicans.

Do we actually believe that there are no Democrats who happen to be Black who are failing to do anything for Black folks? Let us tell it, every Democrat has our best interest at heart and is fighting to support Black issues. That is just not the truth — and that goes for Black and White Democrats, alike.

We are in a place where we don't need Black conservatives or Black liberals, people for whom Black is an adjective and conservative or liberal is a noun; we need conservative and liberal Blacks, people for whom conservative and liberal are adjectives and Black is the noun.

Similarly, we don't need any more Black Democrats or Black Republicans. What we need are Democratic Blacks and Republican Blacks. This Democrat vs. Republican issue amongst Blacks is yet another divide-and-conquer tool to keep us down, and, as always, we allow ourselves to be sucked into it, and we are, yet again, propelled down the wrong path.

It is not only extremely narrow-minded but, also, totally unfair to label someone as an Uncle Tom, a Sambo, Steppin' Fetchit or an Oreo just because they belong to the Republican Party. If Black folks pay attention, if either Party was so pro-Black, would we be in the predicament that we're in now? No.

I do know that people are people, and the large majority of people are going to choose political affiliations based on a few simple ideas.

So, I must deal with the fact that people have their own reasons, and getting people on your side by appealing to simple concepts is part of the game. Blacks, however, can't afford to throw away their votes on a simple concept.

We are in a position where we need to understand that both parties will take any kind of Blacks that they can get. That's called franchise.

My hope is that in Black politics we can find ways to get Black folks' needs met. That means what the parties can do for us, real patronage, rather than just what bone they throw our way or what swag we get in "being" an advocate for one party or persuasion.

We need to seriously look at the issues and the candidates on their own merit and hold them accountable once we commit to give them our vote, whether they be Black or White, Republican or Democrat.