

Law punishes illegal immigrants' kids

By George Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

If you're not a Native American, you're an immigrant. We're a country of immigrants. Yet, the nation is embarking on a nasty and divisive debate over how to stem the flow of illegal immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, and what to do about the undocumented workers already living here. Suggestions have ranged from President Bush's guest worker proposal to erecting a wall along the 2,000-mile Mexican-U.S. border.

Until now, nothing has worked. That — and raw politics — has prompted a group of federal and state elected officials to seek alternatives that would curb the flow of illegal immigrants. This week, the U.S. House of Representatives is expected to take up the Border Protection, Antiterrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (H.R. 4437), which has already been reported out of the Judiciary Committee.

One of the most controversial plans is to circumvent the birthright citizenship provision of the constitution. The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868 to protect the rights of newly-emancipated slaves, declares: "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside."

To get around the difficult task of amend-

ing the constitution, anti-immigration advocates are arguing that inasmuch as illegal immigrants are not in the U.S. lawfully, the parents are technically not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the U.S.; therefore, their children are not covered by the birthright citizenship provision of the 14th Amendment. This is a matter that is likely to be settled by the Supreme Court.

Supporters of curbing illegal immigration note that the United States is one of the few major industrialized nations that grants broad birthright citizenship with no additional requirements. Even some backers of the change acknowledge that ending birthright citizenship will not solve the problem of illegal immigration.

"Illegal immigrants are coming for many different reasons," Rep. Lamar Smith, R-Texas, told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Some are coming for jobs. Some are coming to give birth. Some are coming to commit crimes. Addressing this problem is needed if we're going to combat illegal immigration on all fronts."

The challenge for Republicans is that some want to enact get-tough immigration polices while simultaneously courting the burgeoning Latino vote. California Republi-



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can Gov. Pete Wilson backed an anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in the mid-1990s, only to face a Latino backlash.

Clearly, Americans of all political stripes have strong feelings about the need to curb illegal immigration.

A 2004 Gallup Poll found that 85 percent of Americans believe that "large numbers of immigrants entering the U.S."

pose a vital threat to the U.S. over the next decade. A September Zogby poll found that by a 3-to-1 margin, Americans believe border control is more important to national security than gun control. And a Pew Research Center for the People and the Press poll two years ago found that 76 percent of Democrats and Independents agreed with the statement: "We should restrict and control people coming into the country to live more than we do now."

In August, the Pew Hispanic Center announced the findings of polling it did in Mexico.

"...About four of every ten adults in the Mexican population say they would migrate to the United States if they had the means and opportunity and that two of every ten are inclined to live and work here without legal authorization," the report found.

While it is clear that Americans want

tougher immigration laws, many hold stereotypical views of migrants coming across the border. A popular perception is that most of them were unemployed. In fact, most worked before entering the U.S. to take menial jobs for wages higher than what they were earning back home.

However, a recent Pew study found that of the estimated 6.3 million to 11 million Mexicans living in the U.S. illegally, most arrived to find better jobs and because of family connections, not because they were unemployed in Mexico. Of those polled after applying for identity cards at seven Mexican consulates in the U.S., most are believed to have moved here illegally, more than 80 percent had a relative other than a spouse or child living in the U.S.

As everyone knows, there are no easy solutions. Even if the U.S. were to miraculously build a steel and wire fence along the U.S.-Mexican border, illegal workers would still find a way to enter the U.S.

No one knows how many children are born each year to illegal immigrants. Estimates generally range from 100,000 to 350,000. Whatever solutions lawmakers come up with should not be predicated on punishing babies that had no say in their parents' decision to cross the border for a better life.

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Are Blacks serious about economic salvation?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

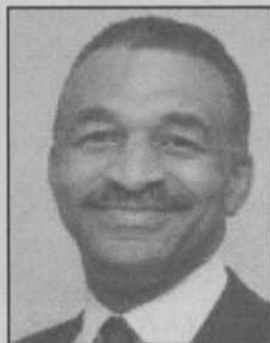
Are we playing to win, or are we just playing to play? It appears that Black people are content with our third-string status on the two most important team sports in this country: politics and economics. We have seen the results of being "bench-warmers" (or is it booth-warmers?) in the political game, and now, despite so many of our so-called leaders hailing economic empowerment as the most important issue facing Black people, there are few results coming from all of their bombastic rhetoric. Black people, collectively, are in the same relative economic position as we were 40 years ago.

In politics, we have seen the first-string team get virtually all of the resources. We have seen them convert public money into private money, via laws they bring forth and pass, and we see them steal whatever is left-

over or allocated for the less fortunate, via no-bid contracts, fundraising campaigns after hurricanes, and under-the-table deals. We have a president, a "vice" president, and a just plain goofy secretary of defense, who are more interested in building someone else a "New Iraq" than they are in rebuilding our New Orleans.

Politics? We are on the sidelines, brothers and sisters, not even in the game.

In the economic arena we have seen a new form of apartheid, via "minority" and "economic inclusion" programs. We have seen a new millennium affirmative action program that is reminiscent of the one started and maintained for the first 250 years of this country's existence — a program that allows



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White people to get 99 percent of the resources and the rest of us get, not what's right, but what's left. And we have seen Black gatekeepers stand in the way of Black progress, getting their meager payoffs along the way. Are we playing to win? Hardly.

So the question is: Are we really serious about our economic freedom? Of course,

this question is directed to those of you who are consciously aware of our predicament and willingness to step up and do what must be done to change our situation.

There have always been and there will always be a group of our brothers and sisters who will sell out, act as fronts and pass-throughs, and even seek a position on the opposite team. But the rest of us must answer the question, and then act upon our affirmative answer.

I watched television in sadness on so-called Black Friday when there, leading the throngs to get into the stores to spend their money, were my brothers and sisters. Knocking one another down and even trampling those who fell in the rush, folks were actually running to spend their money, playing right into the hands of the merchants. It was a Black Friday indeed.

I listen in sadness to Black folks who complain about store owners selling bad meat and inferior products, yet Blacks continue to support them in their effort to suck the lifeblood out of Black households. I ache when I see vacant storefronts in Black neighborhoods, which could be stores of our own, that only serve, for the time being, as props to hold up our young men as they lean their lives away on the streets with nothing to do.

Are we serious about our economic free-

dom? All indications say we are far from serious about it. When people allow themselves to be mistreated, some of whom even volunteer for that mistreatment, those people cannot be serious about their freedom.

Even when we were in chains and relegated to slave labor, thousands of our ancestors continuously sought and eventually won their freedom, both physical and economic.

Even in light of the ominous specter of maiming, torture, mutilation and murder, many of our ancestors ran for freedom and even fought back, in the face of overwhelming odds, against the men who held absolutely no regard for Black life other than how many hours of work they could get from that life.

Despite the threats and likelihood of death, there was a Gabriel Prosser, a David Walker, a Harriet Tubman, a Denmark Vesey and a Nat Turner. And for you White folks who read this, there was a John Brown.

If you are serious, you must dismiss the empty rhetoric of pandering politicians, the transparent ramblings of self-righteous religious pretenders, the oratory of warmongering, money-grubbing government officials, and the unbounded pronouncements and musings of speechifying intellectuals.

If your leaders are only talking about the problems and have nothing to show for their monologue, such as a genuine plan of action, an institution they have established to deal with the problems they decry, or a movement that will help you economically, you must not follow them.

If you are serious, you must understand the difference between Black leaders and "leading Blacks," as Julia and Nathan Hare tell us. You must know that some of your leaders are really misleaders, chosen by the Establishment to do its bidding. You must

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ciety that it has become? I would suspect not. In response to what it has become, he tried to make recompense by penning books to urge young people not to turn out like him.

The other side of the story: He has done some good things, including becoming a nominee for a Noble Peace Prize (not to throw salt on the wound, but Adolph Hitler was nominated for a Noble Peace Prize); written anti-gang books; healed old wounds through his writings; and mediated longstanding, gang truces. And he deserved to have a second chance.

He was thrown into solitary confinement when he arrived in prison and given a dictionary and a Bible, and he taught himself

to read. Williams found a deep faith in God and determined in his mind and heart that he would find a way to make up for the bad things he had done — and in his own way, he did.

So, as a person whose foundation has been Christianity, where is the forgiveness? Where is the acceptance of true redemption? Just because he would never apologize and show remorse, that wasn't a reason to kill him. The fact of the matter is, if I was in his shoes and I truly did not commit the crime, I wouldn't apologize or admit to it either. I guess none of us will ever really know. It's between him and God now, and they have settled it face to face, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.