

Conservative Robertson flying off deep end

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The recent exchanges over Rev. Pat Robertson's comments concerning ailing Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon were particularly noteworthy, in part, because of his outrageous remarks and the response he received. It was remarkable to contrast the response he received for those remarks with the response that he received when he called for the murder of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

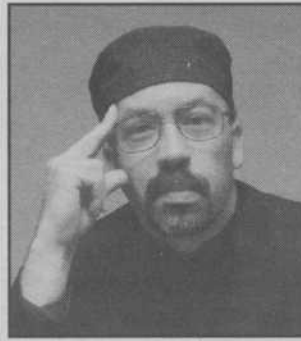
Consider for a moment that Robertson blamed Sharon's stroke on allegedly violating God's covenant with the Jews. Let's leave aside for the moment, the theological bastardization in which Robertson involves himself. Is this another example of where God supposedly spoke to Robertson, just like God supposedly spoke to Robertson about George Bush's re-election? If this were not so serious, it would be hilarious.

Robertson's comments about Prime Min-

ister Sharon were barely out of his mouth when he was, and quite correctly, attacked and repudiated by virtually everyone walking on two legs. Even the Bush administration offered a forceful statement concerning the lunacy of Robertson's remarks.

Yet, only a few months ago, the same Pat Robertson called for the murder of the democratically elected president of Venezuela. There was little of the outrage expressed then compared with what we saw in response to the Sharon remarks. In fact, the Bush administration's comments at the time were not mild, but they never actually condemned the inappropriateness and inflammatory nature of Robertson's death call.

The irony of this is that it is actually an example of something that the religious right regularly criticizes: moral relativism. Moral



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relativism, in brief, refers to a lack of consistency when it comes to moral principles. The dissimilarity between the responses to the Sharon remarks compared with the remarks about Chavez by the same Pat Robertson is clear evidence of this moral relativism on the part of the political right, generally, and specifically the Bush administration.

When one compares the responses, it becomes very clear that allies of the USA are entitled to a specific form of treatment that lets them off the hook for any crimes that they commit and protects them from assault or defamation. The same is not the case when one stands in the way of the global ambitions of this administration.

Permitting Pat Robertson to make a death call and the failure of the administration to both repudiate these comments and explore legal actions against Robertson, demonstrates a lack of sincerity about a fight against ter-

ror.

Terror is not simply flying planes into buildings or suicide bombers blowing themselves up in crowds. Terror is also the absence of any feeling of protection and safety, as well as the collapse of any rule of law. As despicable as were Robertson's comments about Sharon's illness, his death call concerning Chavez was more disconcerting. Given that Pat Robertson has an international following, his death call cannot be viewed as simply the ravings of a demented mind, but must be taken seriously as the proposals of a right-wing fanatic.

If there were ever a question as to why this administration is viewed so uneasily by most of the world, the comparison between their response to Robertson's comments in the Sharon case vs. the Chavez case should settle the matter. Much like Humpty Dumpty in Alice in Wonderland, for the Bush administration, words mean what they want them to mean... nothing more or less.

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

Dump

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Center was founded in Atlanta, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 12989 ordering federal agencies to ensure equal protection from environmental pollution for all communities. That meant agencies such as the Environmental Protection Agency were to increase their aggressiveness in protecting non-White, economically depressed areas from disproportionate exposure to environmental toxins. A decade later, the US Civil Rights Commission published "Not In Our Backyard," an investigative report essentially concluding there hadn't been full compliance with Clinton's decree, a conclusion echoed in 2004 by the EPA inspector general.

"I would want [the A.P.]

study to make Black people mad, particularly Black people in our leadership organizations," says Bullard. "If your environment is unhealthy and you're bombarded with environmental stressors, you're going to have a population that's unhealthier."

For communities of color saddled with disproportionate environmental pollutants, the health consequences are varied, and severe.

A study done six years ago by the American Lung Association discovered that the majority of Black, Latino and Asian kids live in areas of high atmospheric ozone exposure while only half of White children do. Ozone is a carcinogen known to cause skin cancer. Reproductive health issues such as de-

creased fertility, birth defects and spontaneous abortion are also tied to prolonged exposure to environmental pollutants.

Environmental activists, such as Carter, see the last victories being 10 to 20 years away. Last year her organization, Sustainable South Bronx, launched a feasibility study of a "green roof" project in her community. It was the first step in putting plants, trees, and flowers on the rooftops of notoriously desolate buildings.

"There's often no kind of recourse for the community that's been taken advantage of," she says. "It took a long time for our communities to get as devastated as they are, so it's going to take a long time to clean up."

Clingman

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despite threats and hardships.

You are the ones who will stand in the gap for our children and love them unconditionally, giving your time and resources to raise them up rather than put them down. You are the ones who will fight for the rights of your people; you are the ones who will educate our youth. You are the ones who will look the Establishment in its eyes and say "Oh, no you don't. I am not going to sit silently while you mistreat Black people, or anyone else for that matter, but especially Black people. I will call you out every time I see it, and I will work to change it."

You are the ones who will accept no less than what is right and equitable. You are the ones who will never accept the proverbial 30 pieces of silver, never allow yourself to be used as a token, a pass-through, a mouthpiece, or a lap dog. You are the ones who will always make footprints rather than butt prints, because you will always be busy working on initiatives that lead us to economic freedom.

This article is for you, the warriors out there, not the critics and criticizers, not the theoreticians and pontificators filled with

pompous rhetoric and shallow deliberation, and surely not those "cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

I will end with another quote, one that I feel is even more apropos. It is from Frederick Douglass' tribute to Harriet Tubman:

"The difference between us is very marked. Most of what I have done and suffered in the service of our cause has been in public, and I have received much encouragement at every step of the way. You, on the other hand, have labored in a private way. I have wrought in the day — you in the night. I have had the applause of the crowd and the satisfaction that comes of being approved by the multitude, while the most that you have done has been witnessed by the few trembling, scarred, foot-sore bondmen and women, whom you have led out of the house of bondage... The midnight sky and silent stars have been the witness of your devotion to freedom and of your heroism..."

I thank you for your conscious commitment.

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Powell continues work of community service

By Kanya Simon
Special to Sentinel-Voice

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (NNPA) - When Gen. (Ret.) Colin Powell resigned as U.S. secretary of state, he didn't abandon all of his duties to the country.

Powell continues to impact the world through his love for mentoring and education and through organizations such as America's Promise, an alliance for youth.

Last week Tallahasseeans, local and state officials had the opportunity to see that impact first hand.

Powell was the keynote speaker at Gov. Jeb Bush's Leadership Forum, which celebrated the accomplishments and the six years of success of the Florida Mentoring Partnership program. Bush and Powell also used the day to honor some of the program's top volunteers.

After an introduction from Florida's new secretary of state, Sue Cobb, and a standing ovation, Powell, who helped Gov. Bush kick off the program in 1999, got straight to the point, making a difference in a child's life through leadership.

"It can be in any setting where an adult reaches out (to a child)," Powell said. "All it involves is some adult caring. All of us have to care together to help these youngsters. Do we have anything more valuable in this country than the youngsters?"

Powell, 68, told the standing-room-only crowd at the Capitol the story of how he got involved with mentoring initiatives. He said it all started when a youngster "called me out."

"I got involved in the whole business of mentoring right here in Florida at a Boys and Girls Club in Palm Beach," Powell said. He added that after explaining to the children how he was the son of Jamaican immigrants and how he was often treated as a "10th-class citizen" he still was successful and that they could do it too with the help of their parents and other adults in their lives.

"Some young 9-year-old boy looked at me, listening to every word," Powell recalled, "and he said 'General what if you don't have parents? What if you don't have that kind of presence in your life? What about me? I don't fit your model. What are you going to do for me?'"

It was at that point Powell said he saw the importance of and need for more adults working to ensure that no child is left behind.

"How do the children learn?" he asked the crowd. "They learn from the adults in their lives."

Powell called for Floridians to be leaders and applauded the leadership of Bush in his mentoring initiatives. Bush is currently a mentor at Raa Middle School.

"Real leaders are those

who look at reality and don't turn away," he said. "Gov. Bush saw that."

Powell asked that adults take on more responsibility when it comes to the children.

He said, "Just like other mammals, we must pass on the experience. Every child in America should have a responsible, loving adult in their lives. We need to make sure we have enough safe places for our young people."

He also called for a change in the healthcare system when it comes to children, ensuring that children are taught to compete with the rest of the world and ensuring children have access to education that will "make sure our youngsters have the skills needed for the 21st century."

Before the completion of his speech, which seemed to captivate and inspire the audience, Powell gave pointers on what it takes for Floridians to lead this country and ensure its success through children.

"Leadership says I'm going to take it above what the science of management says," he said. "Leadership is all about the personal commitment of the leaders. A leader is going to take us through the dark valleys and bring us out the other end. The essence of all leadership is trust. And trust is earned, never given."

Kanya Simon writes for Capital Outlook.