

# Evo Morales, Bolivia, and lessons for us all

By Bill Fletcher Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The recent electoral victory of Evo Morales holds both immediate and potential significance. Morales, representing the indigenous majority, is the first indigenous leader to be elected as Bolivia's president. The fact that Morales compared Bolivia to apartheid South Africa was not a throw-away line, but, in fact, recognized the deep racial polarization that has existed in Bolivia since the Spanish conquered the land hundreds of years ago.

It was equally significant that Morales not only won such electoral support but that his ratings in the polls have been so high. More than anything else, this probably reflects the hope that people in Bolivia have that the Morales administration will introduce dramatic change to a country which is one of the world's poorest.

What Morales will end up doing and his relative level of success will be anyone's guess. What will be critically important, how-

ever, is the attitude of the U.S. towards developments in Bolivia. Already the rhetoric has been turned up by the Bush administration, in some very interesting ways. The Bush administration has been attempting to argue against all left-wing or left-leaning administrations in the Western Hemisphere by introducing an interesting concept: authoritarian democracies. The basic notion here is that democratically elected governments come to power and then systematically begin the process of dismantling democracy. In the view of the Bush administration the dismantling of democracy generally seems to mean that the government charts a different economic path; different from that advocated by the USA.

Yet, I actually am glad that the Bush administration has started to discuss authoritar-



BILL FLETCHER, JR.

ian democracies because there is something in that concept that sounds familiar; an administration enters into power through dubious means; it uses fear of an outside, near-invisible threat, as a means of ensuring that it stays in power; it begins manipulating the legal system, including the constitutional limits, in order to ensure that its agenda is advanced.

Authoritarian democracy? Sounds like home. And so it should given the course that has been pursued by the Bush administration. For this reason, those of us concerned about the development of healthy and constructive relations between the USA and the rest of the Western Hemisphere should think very carefully before we fall prey to administration rhetoric about alleged authoritarian developments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

What has been fascinating to watch has been the growing international rejection of the economic models that have been crafted by geniuses in Washington, D.C., and imposed upon other countries, largely through the connivance of compliant local regimes. People in Latin America seem to be saying that this approach has no place in their future.

Perhaps there are some lessons that we can learn from Latin America. One is that it is up to the people of each country to decide their own future. A second is not to fear bullies.

There is one more thing for us to all keep in mind when we listen to the Bush administration's rhetoric against Latin American democracy: Be careful of magicians — they keep you preoccupied with their words, while the real action is taking place elsewhere.

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

## Buying Black-owned, because it really feels good

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

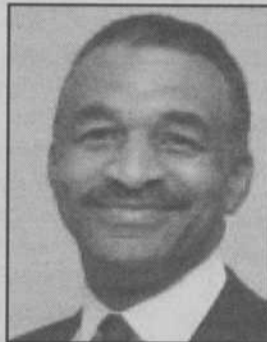
Of course, as I always say, it's not just about feeling good; it's about doing good, too. It's true that we get so strung out on things that make us feel good and neglect the doing good part, but for now I just want to sit back and think about how good it feels to buy Black.

Understanding that Black people in the U.S. could not, even if we tried, spend all of our money with Black-owned businesses, that fact alone should make us feel good when we spend some money with our brothers and sisters. In light of the fact that we spend a miniscule percentage of our disposable income with Black folks, we should rejoice when we are able to find just one with whom

we can do business.

We brag about our so-called \$750 million spending power and stick out our chests about being one of the world's largest economies — if we were a nation. That "if" is so big that it almost makes no sense to discuss our aggregate income, because we spend most of it in non-Black-owned businesses. Such an anomaly defies the logic of "nation-building." Nevertheless, I am happy and it makes me feel so good to spend whatever I can with Black businesses.

The opportunity to buy Black is always present; sometimes it takes a little sacrifice,



JAMES CLINGMAN

a little inconvenience, and maybe even some perseverance, but in the long run, and toward collective economic empowerment, if more of us participated on a regular basis, we would make significant economic strides.

Last summer, I finally needed to buy a new car. (Notice I said "needed" not wanted.) I looked in my *Black*

*Enterprise* magazine for Black car dealers. I found one 250 miles from Cincinnati, in Akron, Ohio, that sold the kind of van we preferred. There are several dealers in my town that had the same van, but I wanted to buy ours from a Black-owned company or, at

least, from a Black salesperson.

I called Greg Edwards, a dear friend and president of the Akron Black Chamber of Commerce, and asked him if he knew the owner of the dealership, Mike Pruitt. He made a call, and the next thing I knew, Mike Pruitt himself was calling me back. I told him how I found his name and what I wanted to purchase; he put Marcus Morris, one of his salesmen, on it right away.

Yes, I live in Cincinnati, but I bought the van from a Black dealer in Akron. Of course, had I wanted a different kind of automobile and could have gotten it from one of the Black dealers in my area I would have done that. I remember buying a car for my sister at Mel Farr Ford, here in Cincy about six years ago,  
(See Clingman, Page 12)

## LaGrande

(Continued from Page 10)

people call themselves must provide them with an understanding of their history by connecting them to a land, a language, a culture, a religion, a philosophy, and so on. There is no such place as Niggerland, Negroland, Coloredland, Blackland, or Jigabooland — and there's no ethnic group in Africa that calls itself or its language Negro. So where did this term come from?

The word Negro is Spanish for black. Spanish comes from Latin, with origins in classical Greek. The word negro in Greek, is derived from the root word 'necro,' meaning dead. The act of ancestral worship known as necromancy or communication with the dead, was the practice of the Egyptians in order to honor the lives of ancestors who came before. They believed that by doing so, it could offer guidance and direction to the living. Temples (monuments) were designed as places where the ancestors could be honored, and holidays (Holy Days) were the days designated for worshipping.

The Greeks thought these sun-burnt people (Egyptians) had a preoccupation with death and didn't understand the worship of the dead (necromancy). They Grecians took their distorted beliefs back to Europe, and the word Negro evolved out of this misunderstanding. What used to be known as a physical condition has been applied to an entire race of people.

White people manufactured the word Negro during the slave trade. In addition, the

term Negro, on the other hand, is introduced to obscure the African-ness of the classical Pharaonic civilizations.

These Euro-centric determinations alienate and distort the historical achievements of African people. Numerous scholars have fallen into the intellectual trap when writing about African people by referring to them as Negroes or semi-Negroes. This is a weak attempt at separating Blacks of today (Blacks worldwide) with Blacks of yesterday (Egyptian-Africans and other great African civilizations).

Historically, the Greeks came to Africa as students over 2,500 years ago to discover what Africans already knew. Writing, science, medicine, and religion were already a part of the Egyptian civilization. History had already been documented thousands of years before Herodotus, the so-called Father of History, was even born.

He, Plato, Pythagoras, Socrates, and other Greek Philosophers were all students of African priests (Sons of Light). When the Greeks returned to Europe, they planned the destruction and pillaging of the remaining African empires. Less than 300 years after the first Greeks came to Egypt as students, their descendants returned as conquerors. They (Greeks/Europeans) destroyed the cities, temples and libraries of the Egyptians and claimed African knowledge as their own.

To justify the enslavement of Blacks, in short, it was culturally necessary to believe, or be able to believe, that Blacks were inher-

ently and naturally less than human — beings of a somehow sub-human, non-human, nature. Proof of this tactic rests in the written words documented in the original text of the Constitution of the United States, which originally stated that Blacks were "three-fifths" a man (by law). It became necessary to dehumanize Blacks and devalue their historical worth as a people in order to ensure their value as slaves.

The enslavement of the Black mind was born out of the educational system and for good reasons. It was forbidden for Blacks to learn to read or write. The education of the Negro, then, becomes a perfect device for control from without. The evolution of the Negro from Colored, to Black, to African-American represents a progression of self-consciousness. Referring to each other with respect and dignity, we call each other brother or sister instead of "nigga" or "bitch." You're more likely to talk to your "brother" or your "sister" in a dispute instead of "killing a nigga" in the same situation.

The Negro/Nigger/Nigga is a race of dead people with a dead history and no hope for resurrection as long as they remain ignorant of their past. This new breed, the Nigga, has become the death of the mind, body, and spirit of Black people, and it's time we do our jobs and work to reverse the damage we have caused by allowing the use of the word "Nigger" or "Nigga" so freely.

Many of us have used and continue to use this word shamelessly, present party included.

But the truth of the matter is that this word should have never risen to the point of being an acceptable variety of artistic expression, and the reason for its acceptance in that ill-advised manner lies at our feet. We did not teach our children why this word cannot be used. So now, suburban White kids are using it and believe that it's okay.

People have become oblivious to the fact that language alone can be used to alienate, abuse and oppress others. If we have become so naïve as to believe that it has a new meaning and that Whites don't mean it the same way now as they did years ago, just think about James Byrd Jr. On June 7, 1998, in Jasper, Texas, James Byrd Jr.'s throat was cut, and the last word he heard before gravity yanked him down and the rope bit into his neck, as his torn corpse was dragged down dusty roads behind the bumper of a pickup truck, was "nigger."

The same word that serves some oafish rapper, who can't find anything else to rhyme with trigger. The same word that so many of us thoughtlessly use. The same word that has been used to denigrate and degrade Blacks for centuries.

We need to rise to a higher level of thinking; we are Kings and Queens; we are not the debased, ignorant, low people the word nigger personifies, unless we continue to use it. Take a page from our ancestors. The mind is trained through knowledge, and now we know that this is a term that we should not use under any circumstances.