

# Blacks must keep Darfur at forefront

By Ron Walters

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Almost unnoticed by the media in the national Hispanic mobilization was the demonstration on the Mall in Washington, D.C., to bring and to keep attention focused on the continuing catastrophe in the Darfur, a region located in the African country of Sudan.

Out on the grounds of the demonstration, I could not help but notice the vivid contrast of a largely Black movement begun last year almost single-handedly by Joe Madison, Radio One talk show host who was on the stage serving as the emcee in the midst of a largely White turnout.

This is important because if Black people cannot be depended upon to continue the leadership on this issue, in the long run — and that is always the case — how can the pressure build for the United States government to pressure its allies to do something to stop the killing and genocide.

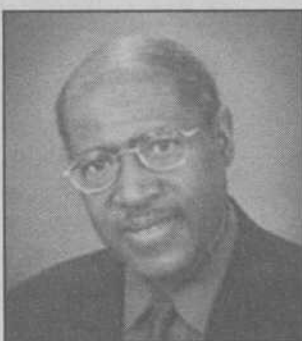
But the racial issue aside for the moment, the conflict is still critical and so, it was good that actor George Clooney, with Sudanese basketball player Manute Bol, Congressmen Elijah Cummings (D-Md.) and Don Payne (D-N.J.) and others drew some attention to the gathering. They reminded the crowd that by now an estimated 200,000 people have

been killed, raped and tortured and 1.5 million displaced by an armed force called the Janjaweed. The thugs continue to be sponsored by the Sudanese government trying to impose an Islamic culture on Christians and others observing traditional African religious practices.

Originally, the pressure on those in the south and west, who were non-Muslims, was resisted by several militant groups, such as the Sudanese Liberation Movement/Army and Justice and Equality Movement, that came together to resist the imposition. The government responded by letting loose the Janjaweed.

The group of about 20,000 rallied to protest the inaction by the world community and to attempt to spur the U.S. government into action.

This is a strategic moment, because in the Bush administration, there is a Black Secretary of State who has formerly expressed an interest in Africa and a Black Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. If they can't move this issue who can? Furthermore, at the moment, the United States has just begun its term as the chair of the United Na-



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tions Security Council, placing it in a strategic position to lead, if it would.

Some movement is occurring in the talks that have been initiated in Nigeria between the warring parties under the sponsorship of the African Union. The AU has proposed a deal involving wealth-sharing and power-sharing between the militant groups and

the Sudanese government; U.S. diplomats are involved in attempting to pressure the Sudanese to accept it.

But, as one diplomat involved in the talks reported, "It all comes down to a power-play between Washington and Khartoum." The deal is also dependent on the agreement of the militant groups that have had a history of internal conflict among themselves.

With respect to Khartoum and the United States, however, there is the rising specter of oil politics as a factor in the background that limits the pressure that each can either employ or resist.

Khartoum has recently begun the flow of 500,000 barrels per day in a new pipeline that is a product of a jointly owned Chinese pipeline, with both the Chinese and English

(White Nile Ltd.) operating in Southern Sudan. The reserves of Khartoum are vast and an Italian firm has been contracted to build a refinery in Port Sudan. Therefore, Sudan is involved in the increasingly treacherous game of global oil politics and that tends to guide the approaches of other countries to critical decisions.

Whether oil interests will trump the violence, in the case of Darfur, and provide a context in which all parties can see the future (even African countries such as Zambia and Kenya are attempting to establish access to Sudanese oil resources) or whether it will harden those interests remains to be seen. The presence of oil in Southern Sudan should be a catalyst for politics that results in peace and stability, but it cannot occur under the oppressive control of the Sudanese government. Thus, real power-sharing and wealth-sharing are the only solution between the government and leaders of Southern organizations.

All citizens, including Blacks, need to monitor this situation and keep the pressure on the U.S. Government to guide Sudanese government impulses toward peace and self determination for Southern Sudanese Africans.

Ron Walters is the director of the African-American Leadership Institute.

## Rice expects minority president in future

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says she expects to see a U.S. president from an ethnic minority during her lifetime, but it will not be her.

Rice's audience of young Latinos laughed and applauded when she said it Friday, and she responded with an embarrassed grin.

Rice, who is Black, has been asked repeatedly whether she plans to run for the open Republican candidacy in 2008, when her boss, President Bush, completes

his second term and cannot run again. She is considered a prospect for the 2008 GOP nomination in some Republican circles despite her protestations that she's not interested in running.

On Friday, a young man from Texas attending an annual Washington conference of Latino and Latin-American students asked the secretary whether she thought it possible that "a Latino or Latina person or an African-American person or a person from any other minority" might become president.

"Yes," she said, prompting first the knowing laughter, then applause.

"I think it will happen, and I think it will happen in my lifetime" — more laughter — "but it won't be me."

She said she bases her opinion on a course she used to teach as a professor at Stanford University: "The Politics of Elites."

The title means, she said, that candidates advance to the presidency by serving in some other capacities, such as a state governor or a senator.

"So watch what is happening with the Congress and with the Senate and with our governors, and... how the diversification of American politics at lower levels is becoming greater and greater, because those people then become the pool from which we will one day select a

### HIV

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progress already made. The emerging challenges are outlined in an editorial review published in the April issue of the International AIDS Society's official journal, AIDS. The paper outlines six major themes:

- "big events" like wars, political transitions
- ecological or economic disruption
- large-scale HIV epidemics and their social consequences
- government policies that ignore or defy available evidence

— stable societies without generalized epidemics, which face distinctive challenges — emerging biomedical changes; and possible failure of previously effective therapies due to evolution of the HIV virus

"There is a high probability of massive political, ecological and social changes over the next few years," the authors note. "These threaten large-scale disruption of existing social and risk networks, sexual (and injection)

president," she said.

She pointed to her position as an example. "Now the interesting thing is that if I serve the entire time that I am supposed to as secretary of state, it will have been 12 years since there was a White male secretary of state of the United States: Madeleine

Albright, Colin Powell and me." The last White male was Warren Christopher, who served during former President Bill Clinton's first term.

"I think nobody would have predicted that 20 years ago or even maybe 15 years ago. It shows how fast things are changing in America."

mixing patterns, and sexual and injection behaviors that can impede or facilitate HIV transmission."

The relative lack of such large-scale research has weakened the response, both individual and societal, to the epidemic, states the editorial. It calls for funding agencies, individual researchers and students, non-governmental and community organizations and the general public to become better informed about the bigger picture of the pandemic.

The most important issue in many parts of the world is "preventing epidemics rather than simply preventing individuals getting infected one by one," said Mr. Friedman.

"We do know that some of the biggest events in the epidemiology of AIDS in the last 15 years have come about partly because of big events," said Friedman, pointing to the huge outbreak of HIV/AIDS in Central Asia and Eastern Europe following the collapse of the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

With an estimated

860,000 people HIV-infected in late 2004, Russia has the largest AIDS epidemic in Europe.

The situation partly stems from large-scale disruption of existing social networks and the demoralization of youth following the transition period, which led to changed sexual, drug and injection behaviors, he added.

He cited "the continued creation of urban slums with no sanitary facilities and a great deal of exposure to various parasites and malnutrition," as well as the myriad social problems caused or worsened by armed conflicts around the world, and the impact of a possible economic collapse.

However, the authors note that such outbreaks are not inevitable.

"Many African wars have not increased HIV transmission, and the case of the Philippines shows that transitions need not lead to outbreaks either," they say, calling for further study of the specific social risk factors driving HIV transmission.

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impact, what do you think the impact would be if Black people, supposedly made legal by default, would have? It sure would be interesting, and exciting to find out.

I cannot get over the fact that some Black folks are marching in support of this latest cause de jour, as if they have some say in what happens to the immigrants, and yet have not organized a march, and I said a "march" not a stand-in, for Black people. What is wrong with us? We see millions of folks on the move, working together, willing to sacrifice for one another, not asking and begging but demanding rights for "illegal" immigrants, while we engage in rhetorical doublespeak about what someone else deserves.

Don't reduce this to an "us against them" argument. That only shrouds the important issues and diverts us from our own battle. Don't fall for the retorts that suggest you are a hater or a bad person when you choose to speak out on behalf of Black people in this country. And don't be swayed by those who suggest you should stand up for others even

before you stand up for yourself and your own children.

Those who are marching have every right, indeed, to do so; quite honestly, it is refreshing to see people who are unafraid, willing to make sacrifices, and people who are resolute in actually fighting the power — as opposed to just singing the song.

However, Black people not only have the right, but we also have the greater responsibility of an obligation to do the same and much more to attain the collective status and recognition our ancestors' legacy demands of us.

The blood of our relatives cries out from the ground, like Abel's blood called out after he was slain by his brother. Will we answer positively or continue to languish in despair, only finding solace in the struggles of others? When will our marches be held across this country to the extent that the economic impact will be felt by those who hold us in disdain and steal from us everyday? When?

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies Department.