

U.S. backing terrorism in Palestine

By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I must apologize for writing so soon again on the situation in Palestine. It has been impossible for me to sit back and watch the scenes of carnage displayed every night on the news as the Israelis continue their offensive against the Palestinians in Gaza, and now in southern Lebanon.

Yet, what jumps out at me when I'm watching the news and reading about the situation is the blatant hypocrisy within the USA and much of Europe when it comes to the treatment of Israel vs. Palestine. Consider for a moment that if a Palestinian militant carries out a suicide attack against Israeli civilians, this is condemned — as it should be — for being an act of terrorism. At the same time, when we watch Israeli jets attack a bridge or a school, allegedly in retaliation for a Palestinian military action, this is not condemned as terrorism.

Were the Palestinians to claim that they were "retaliating" against the Israeli occu-

pation, would that be good enough to justify attacking civilians? This is not a rhetorical question because this is precisely what has been said at times. In fact, those Palestinians who have engaged in suicide bombings have claimed that — in view of the fact that the Israelis have repeatedly ignored United Nations' resolutions calling for withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, the overwhelming military superiority of the Israelis and the level of armament among Israeli civilians — there are no military targets. How can the Israelis respond to such arguments when they seem to have a casual, if not cavalier attitude toward attacking Palestinian civilian targets?

There is a provocative question that has circulated that asks whether an apology would be accepted if a Palestinian militant blew up a bus with Israeli civilians and the



BILL FLETCHER JR.

militant group claimed that the target was the bus and that, unfortunately, the civilians got in the way. Yet, as preposterous as this may seem, the Israeli actions are not that different. When they allegedly target Palestinian leaders for assassinations and civilians are killed, there is generally an apology — the tragic casualties of war, we are told. Yet, this continues to happen. And now, the ante has been upped through the attacks on civilian targets, such as power plants, bridges and schools in Gaza; and in Lebanon, the Beirut International Airport, among other targets.

There is a term for the actions being carried out by the Israeli government and it is the notion of "collective punishment." The Israeli government has thrown a wide net and decided that power stations, airports, schools, etc., are all military targets and, as the U.S.

mainstream media so diplomatically claims, are points of pressure that the Israelis are exerting on the Palestinians (and now on the Lebanese) in order to get them to act 'reasonably.' Points of pressure?

Years after atrocities have been committed, the people of the world generally look at one another, shake their heads and ask "...why were we silent? How could we have let that happen?"

We have an opportunity to preempt such questions by action today. The Israelis must cease their military measures and commit themselves to withdrawal from the Occupied Territories through peaceful negotiation. The U.S. government, rather than being a co-conspirator in the destruction of the Palestinian people, must assert support for the United Nations' resolutions on Israeli withdrawal. Such resolutions cannot exist just to be used at the discretion of the great powers or those with greater military strength.

Bill Fletcher Jr. is a labor activist and former president of TransAfrica Forum.

Who are Blacks fighting—and can we prevail?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I have been doing a great deal of soul-searching lately — on a spiritual level, as well as a physical level.

Having studied much of the history of this country and the role Black people had in building it and sustaining its wealth for centuries, as well as the deeds of some of the White folks who set this thing up and those who continue to do anything to maintain status quo, I began to ponder the question: Who and what are we fighting?

We are daily witnesses to warring factions, gang slayings, increasing violence in our streets and some of the most heinous crimes committed against children in our history. The weather has drastically changed in the past five years to the point of causing major catastrophes with wind, water, heat, and forest fires. The elements are rebelling against us as we continue to pollute our land, our living space, and as we seek new places to live on the moon and on Mars in outer space. Much of the strife we face can be traced right to our front door. Who is in charge? Who is running this country? Who is running this world?

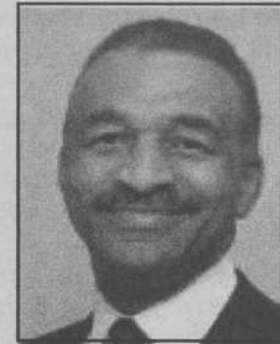
I watched a video about the assassination of John F. Kennedy recently and was moved emotionally at the mere thought of this country's leaders doing what they did, not only to JFK but, also, to MLK, RFK, Fred Hampton and Malcolm X. It made me want

to give up my quest of trying to move Black people to collective economic change because the foe we face is so treacherous.

Who is this monster we are fighting? Is it even rational to think we can defeat him? Is it logical to think we can ever get even? I certainly believe that we are fighting against those "principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places." That said, I truly believe — just based on what I have studied and what I see today — we are fighting the Devil himself.

There have been men in this country who have occupied high places, ravaged other countries and trampled the rights of people in this country. We still have men in high places doing the same things today. I used to ask how they could do the things they do, how they could sleep at night, and how they dealt with their consciences. I no longer ask those questions because I know who we are fighting; therefore, I know the answers.

For instance, the Enron debacle was one for the annals of time. All of a sudden, Ken Lay has a heart attack, after he is convicted and looking at 20 years in jail. His very close relationship with Dubya, coupled with the strange and unresolved "deaths" of the past, gives credence to the possibility that Lay is



JAMES CLINGMAN

not dead. Who knows, maybe they fixed that situation like they fixed the Kennedy thing.

With enough money and fear, anything can be "fixed" in this country. And with the help of the media, some of whom collaborate with the liars, the people will believe anything they say and continue to mimic the thousands of wildebeests on the

Serengeti Plain. Instead of acting collectively and fighting together against the lion, we wake up everyday hoping and praying that today is not our day to be eaten.

Brothers and sisters, we are in a fight for our very existence, but victory is possible. The odds are great, but so what? We can still prevail if we stick together. If Black people would just stop trying to "be equal," stop trying to assimilate, stop trying to change hearts, stop going along to get along, stop pretending, stop apologizing for our Blackness, stop hating ourselves, we would cause a sea change in this country and, at least, live the rest of our lives as real men and women who are willing to fight rather than die as hogs (or wildebeests, as Claude McKay wrote).

Yes, we are fighting some of the most evil forces on the face of God's earth; just study and analyze the history of this country and you can draw no other conclusion. They have committed so many evil acts over the past

four centuries, but they won't get away. A due date is coming. In the meantime, Black people must realize that we are, indeed, inside the "belly of the beast." We are a nation within a nation and we should conduct ourselves accordingly. Presently, we do not — and that must change.

If we continue down the road we are presently on, we will most assuredly fail. Black folks in the U.S. must acknowledge our collective situation and then be willing to contribute whatever we can, as individuals, to change it. Status quo is a prescription for failure.

Laurence J. Peter said, "Bureaucracy defends the status quo long past the time when the quo has lost its status."

Why are some of us defending the evil that we face? Things could hardly get worse than they are right now.

Like other groups, we must settle on a common denominator that will bring and keep us together despite our many surface differences. That commonality is that we are Black people of African descent. If we hold that reality high and close to our hearts, we will find new hope, new love, and a new spirituality that propel us toward the greatness of those ancestors we celebrate. Don't let the Devil get you down; he is simply being true to who he is. The greater question is: Are you being true to who you are?

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

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(Continued from Page 8)
some cases, they are worse?

Why is it that the percentage of Blacks without health insurance far exceeds that of many other ethnic groups in America?

These are issues that can be addressed and answered at the ballot box, but only if you have politicians who are not elected just to be elected but who know that their true calling is to be elected to serve.

There is a lot at stake in this year's elections. There are more than a dozen Black politicians running on the Republican ticket in 2006 for Senate and House seats. There are 15 seats in the House and six seats in the Senate that are up; we have a gubernatorial

race here in this state and several statewide races.

We are the only ones who sell our votes cheap, and because of that, the Black vote is the most marginalized in the country. Why? It is because Democrats know that no matter what their candidates look like, do, or say, Blacks will vote for them, and, in many cases, Republicans will find a way to win without Black voters.

Use your vote wisely. Don't let anyone else tell you who to vote for. Investigate the candidate and only vote for candidates who are willing to substantively address the disparities between Blacks and Whites — and virtually every other minority.

Having Black Republicans and Black Democrats is good for America, but only if they know that they have options. It is timeout for the Democrats' insistence that Blacks rely on socialism, welfare, public housing, public schools, etc. — a mindset that is destroying our communities. Democrats are economically driven, but they want us to be socially driven. See why they are so far ahead of us?

And finally, as I pen this, my last column for the *Sentinel-Voice*, I would like to thank Publisher and Editor-in-Chief Ramon Savoy and the production team for providing me with the opportunity to reach so many people and, most importantly, the passionate read-

ers who have been more responsive than I could have ever imagined. I hope you all know that it was never my intent to entertain (which is why I took such a strong stand on many issues) but to enlighten, to inspire, to educate and to wake up all of the sleepers out there to the true realities of our cultural, social and economic world.

As I sign "Off the Record," I would ask that you pray that as the Lord used Esther to make a difference in her time, He will continue to use me as I strive to maintain my strength and dignity to shape and change the times in which we live.

It has truly been a pleasure.

God bless each and every one of you.