

# How do Blacks view Bill Clinton?

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP) - Bill Clinton, once dubbed the nation's first "Black president," is the focus of a book chronicling nearly 100 Black Americans' thoughts on the 42nd president.

Clinton celebrated the release of his former diarist Janis Kearney's book, "Conversations: William Jefferson Clinton, From Hope to Harlem," as an unprecedented look at his eight years in office.

"I found it fascinating what some people had to say when they didn't agree with me," Clinton said at a recent reception for the book at his presidential library in downtown Little Rock.

"This is a really important book and it gives a voice to all kinds of African-Americans."

The book, which features

## Obama

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else can get on a plane and be anywhere on the planet in 18-24 hours, then we need to be concerned about what happens in far away places," she said. "We can't just be reactive. We can't just be short term. We have to be proactive." In being proactive, Rice and the other panelists said the U.S. must help the UN offer more peacekeeping forces in Darfur and invest in Africa, as other countries are doing.

With Nigeria coming into its own as one of the world's leading oil-producing nations, the Chinese and other countries have begun to court these nations, helping build roads, buildings and other forms of infrastructure. The U.S. needs to start doing the same, said the panelists.

Lyman said currently, 15 percent of imported oil comes from West Africa and, in the next decade, that number will jump to nearly 25 percent.

Obama said the U.S. is missing a golden opportunity on the continent.

"We should care about Africa economically," Obama said. "One of the surprising things going through Africa was everybody we met said the United State's absence is as noticeable and prominent as the Chinese's presence. The Chinese are everywhere throughout Africa," he said. "We're not doing that because we don't think it's important and over time, that's going to have an enormous impact on us."

interviews from U.S. Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., former Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell and baseball great Hank Aaron, is part history and part historical narrative, Kearney said.

"I don't know how Janis found some of these people and got them to say the things that they did," Clinton said. "They're all stories of people who basically believe we can do better and have spent their

lives trying to do better and help us all."

Kearney, who served nearly six years as Clinton's White House diarist, said she decided to focus on what other Blacks thought of Clinton because she didn't think she could be objective about the former president.

"He is a man I think who's way before his time," Kearney said. "He asked the right questions before any-

one else asked them... Whether it's important to you or not, his legacy is tied to a great extent to many of you."

Nobel laureate Toni Morrison has called Clinton "the nation's first Black president," because Blacks played a large role in Clinton's election and tenure in office.

Clinton joked during the book's release that he may have the distinction of being

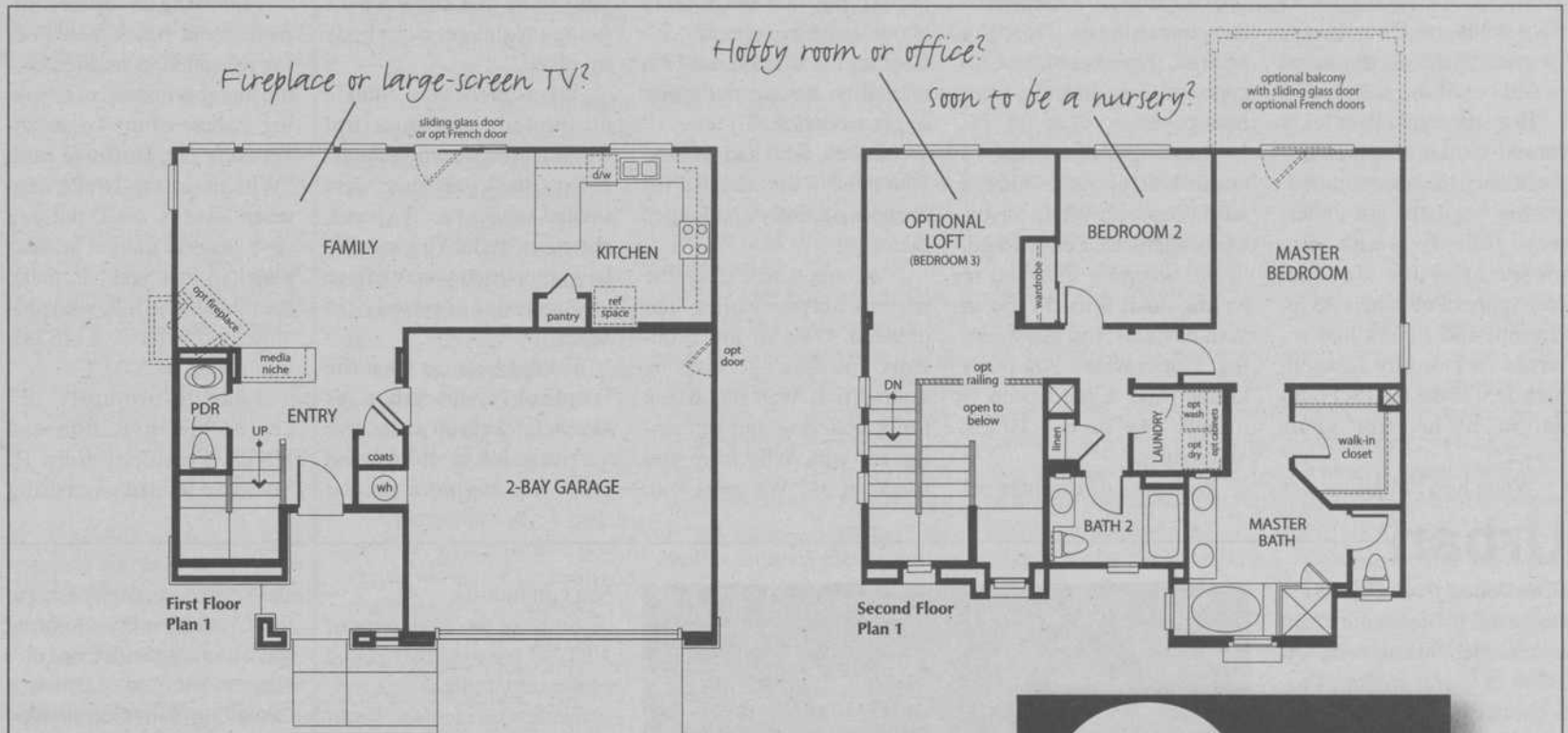
a member in the only band in the state's history to "provide background music for a race riot," and he went on to explain the occurrence.

Clinton said in the summer of 1969, during a time of racial tension in his boyhood town of Hot Springs, he and a friend formed a rock band with both Black and White players.

When a curfew that had been imposed was lifted,

Clinton said the band decided to play at a dance in a Kmart parking lot. While the band was playing, a White girl and a Black boy began dancing together, Clinton said.

"Before I knew it, we were in the third verse of this tune, playing the background music for a race riot," Clinton said. "I looked up and there were police cars all around, and I thought this is not what we signed on for."



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