

Blackcommentator.com co-founders split

By Lorinda M. Bullock
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Glen Ford and Peter Gamble have been friends and have worked together in the media and for more than 30 years. In 2002, they launched the controversial Blackcommentator.com, a Black-oriented political commentary website. Earlier, they had created "America's Black Forum," a nationally syndicated news interview program.

After a long history as business partners, Ford and Gamble recently parted ways due to what both say are not personal but "philosophical" reasons.

Ford has forged ahead with his own new venture, another political website, BlackAgendaReport.com, launching next month.

"We think we will be able to do a better job starting off with a clean slate. All of my editors are in basic political agreement," Ford explained. "I know what kind of work they can do because I've worked with them. It will be a richer weekly menu of content."

"We'll have political satire, something we (at Black Commentator) have not done on a regular basis. We'll do more Africa coverage. That wasn't our strongest suit at Black Commentator, but by expanding the circle, we'll be able to rectify that."

And it's free.

Ford said the only issue he and some senior staffers had with the Black Commentator was its current policy on subscriptions. According to Blackcommentator.com, an annual paid subscription fee is \$50.

"We didn't have any political disputes with the other co-founder, it was a business model dispute," Ford said. "What was instituted was a subscription regime. We don't have any problem with asking our readership for money. National Public Radio doesn't have a problem, public television doesn't have a problem, and many of the most successful sites on the Net don't have a problem with soliciting funds, but we saw the subscription model as it actually existed as being unsustainable."

Among other things, Ford

said guest writers or teachers who wanted to use the articles for class discussions were unable to access the archives without a subscription.

Gamble disputes those charges. "I was aware in an e-mail that was sent out by Glen Ford that people were refused access to archives. That's not true," Gamble said. "We offer a complimentary subscription to anyone who's not able to pay for a subscription and that's always been the policy and we've given out hundreds of them and we never turned anyone down," he said.

The website does offer a link that says, "If you need the access available to a paid subscriber and cannot afford the \$50 subscription price, request a complimentary subscription here."

Ironically, BlackCommentator.com is shifting to a paid model when other companies are moving away from that arrangement. For example, AOL is offering its service free and will lose billions of dollars in advertising in order to make the transition. With more eye-

balls, AOL is confident that it will earn more money by charging higher ad rates.

But, Gamble is confident that the subscription model will work.

"We're simply trying to use a subscription and contributions system to raise funds to support the effort. As far as I know, that is the only difference (in opinion)," Gamble said.

Despite their "differences," Ford spoke highly of the Black Commentator and what it does to engage Black leaders — old and young, novice and veteran.

"Black Commentator's content, we can say with confidence, was unique in the nation," Ford said.

But, the unique bond that Ford and Gamble had forged began cracking.

"We saw this subscription regime as seriously limiting Black Commentator's ability to carry out its mission and we believe we had no choice but to start Black Agenda Report," Ford said.

Now, the pair that took on the world will be competing against each other.

The new website will

have the same "original mission" as Black Commentator with the extras Ford mentioned.

BlackAgendaReport.com will also take from Black Commentator, a monthly contribution from Leutisha Stills of the *CBC Monitor*, a Congressional Black Caucus watchdog publication. They will also continue the series "The 10 Worst Places to Be Black" that originated on Black Commentator's site.

Similarly, Gamble said Black Commentator will also make some changes and among them, a new column "Between the Lines" has started to run featuring a semi-regular contributing writer, Anthony Asadulla Samad.

Gamble said that his staff and the quality of Black Commentator have not suffered since the departure of Ford and senior editors Bruce Dixon and Margaret Kimberley.

"We have numerous contributors. We're about to make some changes here ourselves... There are any number of people who continue to be interested in us, and

we've spent a vast amount of time developing Black Commentator," Gamble said.

BlackCommentator.com has an average of 100,000 visitors each month, Gamble said.

Gamble agreed that there is enough room in the marketplace for both websites and believes more than one outlet to spread information to the community is a positive thing.

"There's plenty of room on the Internet for everybody. In fact, the more people who speak out on behalf of economic and social justice and peace, the better."

Ford said that if the Black Commentator continues to thrive with its subscription "regime," he doesn't see his old publication as competition for two reasons. First, he believes educated readers will look to numerous sources for information anyway.

Secondly, Ford said, "People will soon find out the folks who made Black Commentator are at Black Agenda Report, so we could not be competing with our former selves."

CAAN

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seen as an apathetic voting state, and not would not be as effective as other presidential caucus states. This is our chance, with the influx of new residents and long-time residents who have worked very hard to become part of the political process. Congressman Rangel will articulate how people can get involved and what to anticipate."

Impact Award honorees are chosen for their contributions to the general community, according to Stokes.

He illustrated CAAN's selection process as he commented about the recipients.

"Think about driving along [I-] 215. This was something needed for all of Nevadans, not just African-Americans. Commissioner [Bruce] Woodbury worked hard for this freeway to benefit all, and he is now working with eminent domain issues. We [CAAN] are non-partisan, and we want to recognize his work."

Stokes said Barber is an unquestionable choice: "Now, here is an individual we did not endorse, not because she wasn't qualified or capable, but we decided at the time to endorse another

"I will continue to work for our education as CAAN continues to be very supportive of me and what I want to accomplish."

— Shirley Barber
CCSD Trustee



candidate. However, she won her election; the caucus stood by her and supported her in education-related issues that would directly impact her constituents. She is a great lady."

Barber acknowledged that, saying, "I have many close friends at CAAN and everything worked out." She added, "I am very appreciative of the recognition, and I will continue to work for our education as CAAN continues to be very supportive of me and what I want to accomplish."

Stokes continued, "Patricia Cunningham has been on KCEP for the last 20 years and has provided a political venue, tackled all of the hard issues and has helped our people. She is a phenomenal lady."

Cunningham commented on her selection: "...This is such an honor. I love the work I am doing, so this award is really a win-win situation. I am looking forward to this honor."

Stokes spoke about the Pollards' community service: "Diane and Anthony are connected at the hip to each other. They are both committed to educational endeavors, especially in the African-American community. They worked with charter schools, philanthropy and various other organizations, and we want to acknowledge this."

A cocktail reception starts at 5 p.m., one hour before the debate commences.

For tickets and more information, contact CAAN at 349-0969 or online at nevadablackcaucus.com.

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