

## OUR VIEW

## Gift of Life

The holiday season can be the best of times or the worst of times (and, in some cases, both in the same instance). For some, the holiday season, to include the new year, is one of the few times of the year they go to church or to the synagogue or to the mosque. Many go not because of some newfound religious conviction, but out of guilt—to fill some sort of quota—or, possibly, out of tradition. Those people have the reason for the season all twisted.

So, too, do the people who put gifts over doing good deeds and possessions (given or received) over people. 'Tis better to give than to receive, the adage goes. A twist to that phrase could be: 'Tis better to not expect to receive anything and be happy than to give with a grudging heart or receive without being thankful. When you expect a gift, it can come off as a demand, or even as payment for emotional well-being: you give me what I want and I'll be happy; if you don't, I'll be miserable. A twisted way to look at things, yes, but in how many households is this the modus operandi during the holiday season?

Judging by the holiday season's reign as the year's biggest shopping period, a lot of Americans think that it's better to give than to risk upsetting family members and loved ones by stiffing them on material things. It's why companies roll out the specials the day after Thanksgiving—traditionally the biggest single shopping day of the year. It's why you're bombarded with television and radio ads, mailers and Internet pop-ups ads and banners promoting everything from toys to magazine subscriptions. It's why retailers hire what amounts to the population of a small city to handle the onrushing hordes of consumers. Some companies make more in the 30-odd days between Thanksgiving and the new year than they do all year; the period often determines the success or failure of their fiscal year. The National Retail Federation expects the average consumer to spend \$791.10 this holiday season, up from \$738.11 last year. Added up, the federation projects that \$457.4 billion will be spent on the winter holidays (including Christmas) this year—major loot, no matter how you slice it.

And yet, with all our beneficence during the holiday season, there are lots of people who still feel lonely and unloved. That's because human connection and interaction has been subjugated, presents have been put over people. It's time we begin changing that paradigm. How many times has someone lifted your day by you giving a shoulder to lean on, offering you an attentive ear or giving you a warm, much-needed hug? It's a sure bet that you've made a positive impression on someone who was hurting by smiling or saying hello or asking, how are you doing. The holiday season is an opportunity to show human kindness. Giving, it's been said, is the reason for the season. That phrase, too, needs to be tweaked.

Sharing should be the reason for the season. When you connect with another human being, both of you are enriched. So this holiday season, give the gift of you—which is the best gift of all.

## Money Matters

If Black America is ever going to truly recognize and capitalize on its economic might—nearly \$700 billion in spending power—then financial education must start from the crib and continue to the classroom and, eventually, the boardroom.

Which is why the Theta Theta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., and the nonprofit Omega Psi Phi Charities of Nevada deserve praise for their annual Economic Summit. This year's eighth annual installment, held last Saturday, drew nearly 80 young people who participated in various sessions dedicated to enhancing their financial acumen and college preparedness. The keynote speech focused on African-American students taking control of their education, so that they can better direct their financial lives. Kudos to both organizations and to their various corporate sponsors for supporting this worthwhile endeavor. If there's a special young person in your life who needs an education in finances, make sure they're at next year's event.



## Democrats' their own foes

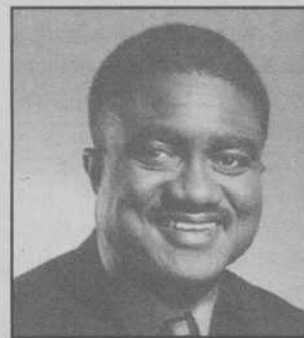
By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Congress reconvenes next month with a record number of African-American committee chairs. But the hardest part of governing, now that Democrats control both the House and Senate, may be how well Democratic Party leaders handle members of their own party.

Even before she assumes her role as the first female Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) is showing signs of inconsistency. I don't know what it is, but when White liberals want to prove that they can be tough, they invariably pick an African-American as the punching bag. Bill Clinton, running for president, appeared before a Jesse Jackson-sponsored event to criticize Sister Souljah.

Although FBI agents reported that they found \$90,000 in Rep. William Jefferson's freezer, giving new meaning to the term "cold cash," he still has not been indicted, let alone convicted of any crime.

In fact, he proceeded to get re-elected last week against overwhelming odds. Rather than grant Jefferson the presumption of innocence and wait for him to be judged by the judicial system, Pelosi saw fit to summarily kick him off of the House Ways and Means Committee. The Congressional Black Caucus objected



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to the move but, in the end, had no power to change the outcome.

Seeing several Republican operatives go to jail on corruption charges, Pelosi pledged to drain the swamp, her way of saying Democrats would be a paragon on ethical behavior.

She sought to make this point by passing over Alcee Hastings, an African-American, to become chair of the House Intelligence Committee.

Playing on the intelligence of African-Americans, she decided to pass over Hastings at the urging of Blue Dog Democrats, conservatives that frequently vote with Republicans. Hastings' opponents point to a Senate decision 17 years ago to remove him from the federal bench. The Senate voted to impeach Hastings after a federal jury found him not guilty of accepting bribes.

Pelosi praised Hastings work as she announced her decision not to appoint him, saying "Alcee Hastings has

always placed national security as his highest priority. He has served our country well, and I have full confidence that he will continue to do so."

Strangely, Pelosi rejected Hastings, supposedly on ethical grounds, while pushing hard for the selection of tainted Rep. John Murtha (D-Penn.). Murtha was entangled in ABSCAM, the FBI bribery and sting operation of the 1970s that sent several Congressmen to jail. Murtha was seen on the videotape discussing a bribe for help in an immigration case. Murtha never turned down the bribe, saying only that he wasn't interested "at this time."

Pelosi fought hard for Murtha to become House Majority leader, but that position went to Steny Hoyer of Maryland. If she was interested in draining swamps in Florida, why wasn't she interested in draining them in

Pennsylvania? That's the Who-Wants-to-be-a-Millionaire question of the year.

Over the past 12 years, House Republican leaders have been effective because they had a clear agenda and punished anyone who strayed from the course. Early indications are that Nancy Pelosi will rule by caving in to conservative disidents.

The clout of Blue Dog Democrats is vastly overrated. With 44 members, they have only one member more than the CBC—one-fifth of the Democratic delegation. If it weren't for Black Congressmen such as Harold Ford Jr., a member of both groups, the Blue Dogs wouldn't enjoy that slight edge.

The Hispanic and Black congressional caucuses often form a voting bloc and have more combined members than the so-called Blue Dog

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