

Live your dream vs. American pipe dream

By Farrah Gray
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The federal minimum wage went into effect recently. This is good news. The minimum wage has put a sense of equality back into a worker's relationship with their employer.

Whatever a person's age or experience doing a job, the minimum they can expect to be paid up to \$7.25 per hour by 2009.

Earlier this year, Congress approved and President George Bush signed a law that will raise the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 per hour by 2009. The increase will be phased in over three years.

The first phase raises the wage from \$5.15 per hour to \$5.85 starting immediately. There will be two more .70 increases in the next two years.

The increase will be phased in over a two-year period and will be accompanied by tax breaks for small businesses. The White House negotiated a \$4.84 tax break to help employers pay for the increase in wages. The chairman of the Ways and Means committee in the House of Representatives, Democrat Charles Rangel, said the new measure would benefit employees and employers.

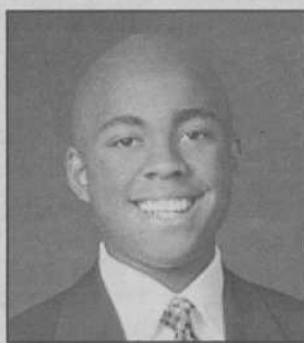
"This package will help millions of American workers better cope with the rising cost of living while helping our businesses expand and hire new workers to keep our local economies vibrant," Rangel said.

Minimum wage workers are typically young, single and female and are often Black or Hispanic. Without a livable wage per hour, the minimum wage earners will struggle to stay afloat above the poverty level after taxes.

The likelihood of the livable wage campaigns becoming success in the next 20 years is next to nil.

In today's world, many breadwinners can't cover the cost of living expenses for their families and young people can't afford to move out as property costs too much and only by earning more will they be able to get on in life.

Getting on in life to become a peak wage earner can happen, believe it or not, by going back to when you first started contemplating our first personal vision at age 4 or 5



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years. We wanted to be a school teacher or fireman or nurse or singer or doctor. Although the innocence that gave rise to such desires has since passed, there can still be time to imagine the "what if's?" and the "could I's?"

Just ask yourself, "What would I like to be when I grow up?" Or "What would I do if I could have a chance at a brand new second life?"

Why is your personal vision so important in your search for income earning generators? What could your personality or your own personal thoughts have to do with your current job?

The answer is simple.

Your personal vision makes up the basis of everything you do in life — including the means by which you make a living.

If your personal vision is identified and maintained throughout life you will be well on your way to a rewarding career alternative or lucrative entrepreneurial venture to fuel the engines of your dream versus being dependent the rest of your life on the Ameri-

can Pipe Dream for minimum wage earners.

It's true that many may get complacent, but the minimum wage could be looked at as more of a stepping stone rather than a hand-out. If complacency and defeatism sets in, remember that comfort is the enemy of achievement.

If you have a fear of failing, take note that failure can only occur from trying, but success can only occur from trying, too.

I enthusiastically recommend that you read this poem that Napoleon Hill included in the original edition of "Think and Grow Rich," which can help you conquer your fear of failing.

"I bargained with Life for a penny, and Life would pay no more, However, I begged at evening when I counted my scanty store. For Life is a just employer, He gives you what you ask, But once you have set the wages, why, you must bear the task. I worked for a menial's hire, only to learn, dismayed, that any wage I had asked of Life, Life would have willingly paid."

You may be delayed, but don't deny yourself the chance to branch out on your own!

Farrah Gray is a best-selling author, millionaire entrepreneur and speaker.

It's on! Clinton, Obama tussle on foreign policy

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It's hard to know whether this is a function of the news media or the real thing, but the differences between Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama have hung over from their debate in South Carolina.

Whether it is a media creation or not, both candidates have sent their foot soldiers into the arena to contest what the question meant when asked whether they would meet with the likes of Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, Muammar Khadafy, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Iran.

To that question, Barack said yes, he would; Hillary said no, she would not meet with them at a high level without preconditions and adequate preparation.

This seems to me like they were answering two different questions. But it came out that Barack would take the opportunity to strike up a dialogue that could have positive

circumstances, while Hillary was more concerned about being tough and following some sort of rigorous process.

The difference between substance and process was observed by the pollsters at the debate, and Barack clearly won the day with his answer.

But in the ensuing days after the debate, the back and forth has taken on a life of its own with Barack saying that by meeting with the enemy he would want to move beyond the Bush/Cheney policy of not talking to adversaries.

Hillary fired back that Barack was naive, attempting to signal to voters that he was unprepared to be president because he didn't understand the gravity of the signal that would be sent by meeting such leaders, which the U.S. considered beyond the pale.

This now has developed into a full-blown



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dispute over which foreign policy would serve the Democratic Party and the American people in the future, and Barack has stepped it up by sensing that if he backs down from this one and rolls over, he might as well give the whole thing up.

He has sold himself to the people as the candidate in the race who wants to affect

change as suggested by his early position in opposition to the Iraq war. He now has to back it up when Hillary counters with a moderate policy that elevates process over substance. Her objective is not to get caught off base, to appear above the fray, leaning on her experience as a senator and the wife of a president and her experiences in meeting many dignitaries and heads of state. But Barack Obama has to take her up on this and try to trump experience that leads to more of the same with a new and bold approach that is in line with the sentiment of the American people.

Thus far, the American people are giving high marks to the candidates and low ones to the Democrats in Congress — essentially because they have not broken through the process to deliver the substance the people want. Barack has an opening to get on the stage and lead the whole show, but he must not back down and continue to make nice with Hillary, respecting her formidable resources, and losing the debate in the process.

Losing the debate means staying in second place and hanging tough; winning the debate may mean developing the momentum — and the credibility that he has presidential timber, among the very folks in the media and the intellectual establishment that are keeping this story alive in the first place.

It is somewhat ironic that this debate breaks out just as Barack Obama has an ar-

ticle in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs*, one of the premier journals of foreign policy in the country.

In it, he spells out the elements of his foreign policy with a decided focus on change. For example, he talks about the resurrection of diplomacy in the Middle East, a ball that was dropped by the Bush administration and recently has become the subject of an attempt by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to refurbish. But this is seen by most analysts as too little, too late given the bad blood laid down by Bush and Cheney against Iran and Syria, and the difficulties of mobilizing their allies such as the Saudis and Egypt.

Barack talks about initiating "tough-minded diplomacy, harnessing all of the American assets, political, economic and military in the quest to achieve objectives in both Iraq and in the Palestine/Israeli crisis.

He argues, this would free the United States to focus more aggressively on confronting al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. His views center too much for my money on shoring up the military and continuing the fiction of fighting a global war on terrorism. My objection is that the "war" metaphor is not only overblown, but that the approach is part of the problem that keeps opposition to American initiative alive.

But I like his desire to support the United Nations, to rebuild American partnerships, to invoke the humanitarian objectives and to attempt to restore trust in the United States.

This will be a difficult agenda to accomplish because it will take more than a progressive president to accomplish it. It will take a substantial change in the foreign policy infrastructure that is used for dominance in the global arena rather than real partnership, but Barack should get high marks in this campaign for setting the bar relatively high.

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

Meek

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fields of science, technology, engineering, health education, teacher education and programs geared toward improving the educational outcomes of African-American males.

Upward Bound, a program that seeks to increase high school completion and college participation among low-income students and first-generation college students, would be eligible to receive \$228 million in funding over four years.

African-American students make up nearly 50 percent of all Upward Bound participants.

As a 19-year-old student readying to graduate from Atlanta's Morehouse College in 1948, Martin Luther King wrote a speech entitled "The Purpose of Education."

Speaking in the language of the day, King

said: "It seems to me that education has a twofold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life."

Education, community responsibility and personal prosperity are all interlinked: You can't have one without the other.

The College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 is a landmark piece of legislation that future generations will remember as the GI Bill of our era.

And it was passed by this New Direction Democratic Congress.

U.S. Representative Kendrick Meek is a Democrat from Florida and an NNPA guest commentator.