

# Dems face issues: Experience vs. change

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The fight for the Democratic nomination for President has stabilized into the choice of that person who represents either experience or change. The confusing thing to me is that although respondents from the general public, in opinion polls, say that they are alienated by the drift of the country, Congress and the Bush administration. The Democratic Party — that ostensibly stands for change — has Hillary Clinton in front.

My view of the candidates is that Hillary Clinton is not the candidate of change. She has stood for a moderate course, and both she and her husband have been allied with the conservative wing of the Democratic Party, the Democratic Leadership Council.

From this posture, she has not moved quickly, but been drawn slowly into the position of espousing change in her former position of voting to give George Bush the authority to pursue this war. And since she has not disavowed that vote, I do not know whether she genuinely regrets it or is holding to a moderate course in the process of resolving it if she becomes president.

Some indication of the former position is that in the dispute between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama over whether they would

meet with leaders current American politicians consider objectionable. Hillary says that she would not meet with them without preconditions, and Barack Obama says that is the politics of the past, a moderate politics that has prevented the change in the American position on both foreign and domestic policy that Americans need so urgently.

This dispute boils down to one of process over principle. Hillary elevates the process of holding out carrots for meeting with objectionable leaders to give them incentive to follow the U.S. position in negotiations; Obama elevates the desire to meet on the basis that something can be accomplished in this process of engagement.

Here, we seem to have Hillary attempting to show that she has more experience than Obama, because of her previous statement that his position was "naive" and that has contributed to her front-runner status.

Obama, however, nosed out Clinton to take the top spot in the race, as reflected in a post-debate poll after the Iowa debate, based partly on his stunning statement that other



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politicians with experience such Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld had great experience in government but had led us into this mess in Iraq. In this case, their experience had led them to privilege ideology over the practicality as the basis of their actions, which led them to miscalculate badly what they could accomplish. Obama, therefore, skillfully challenged Americans to match their hunger for change in the Iraq War, universal health care, abolishing poverty, and other things by voting to choose aggressive leadership.

The mystery here is why Democrats, especially Democratic politicians, appear to shrink back from an aggressive policy posture when every visible indication is that the American people are betting on them to lead in that direction.

They appear to be hedging their bets that the American people will vote against them for "over-reaching" and challenge their elections, rather than to risk going in the direction that is indicated. In other words, they appear to lack courage.

Hillary wants it both ways. She wants to

assert her experience — a posture that calls for moderate leadership moves — and at the same time, she wants to grab the mantle of "change leader" from Obama.

That is delicate politics and it will be interesting to see if she can pull it off. The open question is, if Barack Obama were perceived to be more experienced and also was the strongest candidate for change, would he be ahead of Hillary in national polls? Possibly. The answer here may be found in the comparison to John Kerry in the last election.

He emerged as the most credible candidate among Democrats, but when faced with the opportunity to advocate strongly for a changed course, he used his credibility to take the position that he could prosecute the war better than Bush. Even then, this was not a winning argument, because no president has been unseated in the middle of a war on that basis.

So, Barack Obama has no choice but to continue to push for change as aggressively as possible. But, to make this work, he has to pull the covers off of Clinton's attempt to have to both ways. If he emerges as the best — and perhaps the only real change candidate, then he may have a fighting chance.

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# MLK memorial project's ethical problems

By Harry C. Alford

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Oh, I have seen it before. It "smells" like White manipulation.

There was a group of White, New England architects who came up with the idea of putting together a fundraiser for erecting a monument to the Tuskegee Airmen. They wanted a ridiculous sum of money, which was to be used to pay them to build it. As a son-in-law of one of the four original Tuskegee Airmen, I was appalled and thought about driving up to New England and whipping their butts.

It was about pure greed and manipulation of the hearts and memories of devoted Black folk. Is this what we have here on the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Project? There are some very out of character things happening here. Why is the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity starting to look like it has lost its mind?

First of all, the cost of the project should run about \$18 million, according to CNN News. Why in the world are they trying to raise \$100 million. If the land is free and the National Park Service will maintain it forever, what is the excess \$82 million for? Who

will get that money?

This seems way out of bounds for a public fundraising effort. Public disclosure is definitely due on this one.

Let's award the design job! They did not actively open competition for this or do a thorough search for an African-American or at least an American minority. No, they went straight to China.

That's right. The designer, a citizen of China, will build the memorial over there and ship it across the Pacific Ocean.

The granite will also be from China. Keep in mind that Georgia, the birthplace of Dr. King, is known for some of the finest granite in the world. So, here we have a slap in the face to all American designers, particularly those of color, and to the fine people of Georgia.

Also, and more importantly, the granite mining process will probably border on an operation of slave labor. Imagine, the statue honoring the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King being made from slave labor.



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After that abomination, let's award a contract to a construction firm. The job is going to be about \$15 million. There are hundreds of Black construction firms that can handle that. Let's send the two largest Black firms (one of which is owned by a lifelong Alpha) to interview with the Alpha's.

That was weird.

The Alphas seemed preoccupied with the decision process and abruptly elected to choose Turner Construction Company. This is a huge White-owned, multinational firm with German roots. So now, we have two abominations, the designer and the construction company.

There is much significance and symbolism to all of this. No White power structure wants a Black designer or Black-owned construction company putting in their portfolio that they have done remarkable work on a national monument placed on the Washington Mall. This would destroy a lot of myths and stereotypes. Funny, isn't that what Mar-

tin Luther King was all about? — the destruction of it, not the perpetuation of it.

Turner Construction has ramped up their propaganda on this. They have brought out the "Spook who Sat by the Door" show. They will hire two or three Blacks and claim them to be the bosses. Look deep into their resumes and backgrounds; it ain't happening, but we are supposed to believe it.

Go to [www.turnerconstruction.com](http://www.turnerconstruction.com) and click on the Management link. There you will find nothing but middle-aged White men. Look at the picture for five straight minutes then take some medicine. It is sickening.

Keep this in your mind: Right now, the MLK Memorial is going to be designed by a citizen of communist China, and a lily-White-owned and managed construction company will finish it off. Plus, there is a fundraising surplus of \$82 million.

Who is really behind this? Probably the ones waiting to take the profits (it's supposed to be a nonprofit fundraising project). We need to know. Surely, the Alpha's aren't dreaming up this scheme. Who is using them? This is a fine fraternity with a rich history and legacy of its own. Why are they putting themselves up like neophytes?

America, we are faced with a very serious problem here. The legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King — who, in my book, is rivaled only by Jesus Christ for his importance to humankind — is about to be insulted and maligned. We, as a people who have prospered because of his sacrifice, should be outraged and take some quick action. Let's call for total disclosure and an auditing of this process.

It is being put on national property and, therefore, is open to public scrutiny and accounting. We need to know: Which White people are behind it? Then, let's straighten the whole thing out.

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## Clingman

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things happened to old Pharaoh, his heart was still hardened.

Maybe the important lesson for us is found in Exodus 9:16, when God spoke through Moses to Pharaoh: "I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."

After 400 years of crying out and praying for relief from slavery, and after seeing all the plagues that came upon the land and its rulers, the people were finally convinced that only God could change men's hearts. But men must have the backbone to stand up and "possess the land."

Maybe it's our turn now to see God's purpose through what has happened to us. Maybe He "raised up" this evil system and put evil people in authority to show mankind His power; and maybe we are the instruments he wants to use to demonstrate His power, which begs the question: How long will we refuse to let His power be shown through our resistance to the blows upside our heads?

No matter what you believe about this country or about those who have been in charge for centuries, you have to admit that if, since 1619, Black people in America have been mistreated under this system, we have very sound reasons to believe it will not change on its own.

Yes, I believe in God's divine purpose, but I also believe that we have a role to play in that purpose. He could have struck down Pharaoh and his boys in one fell swoop, but he chose to let Moses and the people play a role in their own freedom.

Those people had been hit upside their heads for years, just as we have been, until they adopted a different strategy. When are we going to do the same?

When someone hits you upside your head, over and over, why would you keep accepting a simple "Oops?"

James Clingman is an educator and author of a Black Economic Empowerment book series.