

Clintons dubiously, curiously play race card

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

After Hillary Clinton fell off her white horse with a third-place finish in Iowa and by barely edging Barack Obama in New Hampshire despite a 17-point lead just two weeks before the election, "Hillary" Clinton began playing the race card by unfairly accusing Obama of injecting race into the presidential contest.

Billary — Bill and Hillary — had forcefully attacked Obama after his victory in Iowa, a state that is 94.6 percent White and New Hampshire, with a population that is 95.8 percent White. Heading into the South Carolina primary, they accuse him of playing the race card by exploiting an insensitive remark Hillary uttered about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

In an interview, the former First Lady said, "Dr. King's dream began to be realized when President Johnson passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964... It took a president to get it done."

Bill Clinton attempted to engage in damage control by calling Black radio talk shows, including one hosted by Al Sharpton, to contend that his wife's comments were taken out of context. Hillary, in an interview on NBC's "Meet the Press," said, "This is an unfortunate story line that the Obama campaign has pushed very successfully. I don't think this campaign is about gender, and I sure hope

it's not about race."

A White presidential contender, John Edwards, also criticized Hillary.

"I must say I was troubled recently to see a suggestion that real change came not through the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, but through a Washington politician. I fundamentally disagree with that," the former senator from North Carolina said at a Baptist church in Sumter, S.C.

Because he disagreed with Hillary, does that mean that somehow Edwards also injected race into the campaign?

The *New York Times* obviously doesn't think so. In an editorial, the newspaper said Hillary "Came Perilously Close to Injecting Racial Tension" into the contest. It stated, "Why Mrs. Clinton would compare herself to Mr. Johnson, who escalated the war in Vietnam into a generational disaster, was baffling enough. It was hard to escape the distasteful implication that a Black man needed the help of a White man to effect change."

Hillary Clinton understated the contributions of Dr. King, and now she and her high-profile surrogates are trying to blame Obama for her mistake.

The candidate has dismissed Hillary's ac-



GEORGE E. CURRY

cusation as "ludicrous."

Bill Clinton didn't make matters better by referring to Obama in "fairy tale" terms. He would later declare that he was referencing Obama's position on the war in Iraq. But Michelle Obama, the candidate's wife, doesn't see it that way.

In a visit to the state in November, she made it clear that in contrast to Hillary Clinton's upper-class background, her husband has lived anything but a fairy tale life.

"Dream of a president who was raised like Barack was, by a single mom, who had to work and go to school and raise her kids and accept food stamps once in a while," she said. "Imagine a president who knows what that's like."

It is no accident that as we move closer to Feb. 5, when voters in 22 states will cast their ballots in primaries and caucuses, that the Black vote will take center stage in the Democratic contests.

According to the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Blacks make up 56 percent of the Democratic electorate in Mississippi, 47 percent in South Carolina and Georgia, 35 percent in Maryland, 33 percent in Virginia, 23 percent in Tennessee, 20 per-

cent in New York, 15 percent in Missouri and 14 percent in Ohio.

In fact, with its January 26 voting, South Carolina becomes the first state to showcase the Black vote and an Obama victory there would force Clinton to have a strong showing on Super Tuesday or fold her tent. That's why she's racing to play the race card.

If the polls are accurate — and after New Hampshire, no one can count on that anymore — Hillary Clinton might be headed for a loss South Carolina.

A poll released recently by the Public Policy Polling in Raleigh, N.C., shows Obama holding a 42-37 lead over Clinton among likely Democratic voters, followed by South Carolina-born Edwards with 16 percent. In a key finding, Obama has overtaken Clinton among Black voters and now holds a 68 percent to 19 percent lead, with Edwards getting only 4 percent.

Hillary Clinton can only beat Obama if she can persuade Democratic voters that he is unelectable or, somehow, that she is more deserving because of her last name. At the ballot box, Obama is dispelling both myths and it is, therefore, no wonder that Hillary Clinton is having to play the race card and have her husband pretend he is running for a third term.

George E. Curry is a keynote speaker, moderator and media coach.

Bill and Hillary vs. Obama: Playing Black, White keys

By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There is a book titled "Playing Nixon's Piano." It's about how the late president Richard Nixon would use the race question and play with the emotions of both Blacks and Whites. Nixon was a master. "Joe six pack" would vote for him while at the same time a sizeable number of Blacks would do the same.

Both thought he was for them and would keep the other side in check. Yes, Nixon knew how to play those Black-White "keys" in harmony and without much friction.

If Richard Nixon was a master, Bill Clinton is the supreme guru. I have never seen my people so in love with someone who has done virtually nothing for them.

He's quick to claim all the good that has happened and equally quick to blame bad things on the other side. Bill has been called the "First Black President," and has been inducted into the Arkansas African-American Hall of Fame. It seems pretty insulting to me.

Blacks have prospered economically like never before and it is because of the Civil

Rights Act of 1964 and the fruits of the Civil Rights Movement. Yet, Bill Clinton and his public relations apparatus will have us believe it was because of his presidential leadership during the 1990's. He is so bold, we are so naive. Barack Obama has come forward with a well organized and effective campaign team. This is interfering with the Clinton's scheme to return to the White House, and they are not going to sit by idly and watch it happen.

If it appears that Black America is going to gravitate to Obama, thus, the Clinton's will probably elect to abandon the "love the Black people strategy" and go for the "White keys" to offset any losses they may occur amongst the Black population. The love will turn to hate, and this nation should brace itself for some serious contentious times. The Clintons are concerned about themselves. Do not think that they will do something for the good of the nation and put their ambitions and shame-



HARRY C. ALFORD

less intentions aside.

Hillary's ethnic views will sometimes slip out. In a display of anti-Asian humor, she recently said "I know Mahatma Gandhi; he runs a gas station in St. Louis."

She has also remarked about Barack Obama's name saying that "I thought Barack was an odd name, but then I found out it means Bubba in

Swahili."

I think there is something more than just a slip of the tongue here. Also, Bill's brother Roger is fond of using the n-word in his vernacular. What's with the family here?

No one other than Bill Clinton has been able to play the Honorable Jesse Jackson publicly before the American people. The Sista Soulja tirade he did during his first campaign was a big embarrassment to Rev. Jackson and, yet, Bill was able to smooth it out with him later. He signaled White America that he doesn't take anything from these Blacks and that he can put them in their place.

Later, he would say to his verbal targets, you know I love ya, and all would be forgiven.

A bigger example is the Monica Lewinsky caper. Shameless President Clinton was having repeated oral sex episodes with a 19-year-old White House intern during his daily activities. He stood up and lied to the American public, and got caught, disbarred, impeached and impugned.

His image was shattered and he needed some contrast to take the heat off of him. So, there he was in the national press, standing in the White House with his new "moral counselor," Rev. Jesse Jackson. A picture was taken with Bill, Rev. Jackson and his assistant standing together and reaching out for salvation. It was later leaked that the assistant standing with Rev. Jackson was his pregnant (his baby) mistress.

A Black preacher giving counsel about adultery with his pregnant mistress standing by his side — it was terribly embarrassing, but it accomplished its mission: To take the embarrassment off Bill and focus the shame on Jesse. Bill Clinton is a master — no one could play Rev. Jesse Jackson the way he has.

Bill betrays those who love him. Count the ways.

— His wife: mistresses and sexual targets during the decades.

— Million Man March: "Mend it, Don't End It" against affirmative action.

— Gay Pride: "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in the military.

— Union Support: NAFTA and China Favored Trade Status.

It goes on and on. He takes friendship as a tool to exploit and further his gains.

Now that his wife may be in political trouble, the stops will be taken out. Get ready America; the Clinton "piano" may start banging hard on the "Black keys" and easing up on the "White keys." Don't say you weren't warned this time.

Harry Alford is the co-founder and president/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

Clingman

(Continued from Page 10)

in reference to Palmer's commentary.

So, what is in this thing for us? Will we get Hillary, wife of the "first" Black president? Or, will we get Obama, the half-White, half-Black president, along with a heaping dose of euphoria? Beyond the excitement, the promises, the rhetoric and the hope, what's in it for us?

Right now, we have a Congress that is more interested in steroids and Clemens than they are in clemency for William Mayo. We have a president who, after seven years, is desperately trying to create a legacy in the final year of his disastrous presidency. Nothing in either of those entities for us.

Now, we are on the verge of getting a female or a Black man in the highest office in the land, and still we must wonder how we will fare. Will Hillary take the Susan B. Anthony route to her victory? Will Obama, in keeping with his "help everyone" mantra, continue the status quo by maintaining the same economic gap between Whites and Blacks in this country?

Maybe a Clinton-Obama (or vice-versa) ticket is in order. They had better have a side conversation about that before they kill both of their chances to win, and leave us with one of the Reaganites who will take us back to Reaganomics and the "Reaganomic Blues."

What a dilemma for Black people this election year, both Repubs and Dems. I have never been a political hack; I get informed and I vote, but I have little "hope" for positive change for Black folks until we get our economic act together. Just imagine what strength Blacks would have in the 2008 election if, collectively, we were economic players as well as mere voters. Garvey and Malcolm told us that; our dilemma is that we have yet to follow their advice. So, have fun this year, y'all; but continue to pose the question, "What's in it for us?"

James Clingman is an educator and author of a Black economic empowerment book series.