

OUR VIEW

Obama's Race

The coronation, if there is to be one, will have to wait. Illinois Sen. Barack Obama was competitive but ultimately couldn't overcome a raft of negative campaigning by New York Sen. Hillary Clinton—and lingering fallout from his own mistakes—in Tuesday's Pennsylvania primary. As a result, he lost the state 55 percent to 45 percent, adding fuel to the Clinton-stoked argument that he can't win big states (he also lost Texas), is withering under friendly fire and thus can't beat Republican Arizona Senator John McCain in November.

Why can't Obama seal the deal? Shouldn't he have locked up the Democratic nomination by now? Asking these questions is actually disingenuous because it presumes that there is something overtly wrong with Obama, something incongruous about his politics. It presumes that he lacks the finishing kick needed in a presidential marathon. This is unfortunate, in large part, because Obama is held up to an unrealistic standard.

As the candidate of change, he's expected to walk on water, to turn the other cheek when his words are distorted, his affiliations questioned and his politics attacked. If he responds to the negativity, as he did in Pennsylvania, he's suddenly human, no longer a change agent but someone who'll react to low blows with a few of his own. No other presidential candidate in recent memory has had such a political albatross around his neck.

And no other candidate has had the baggage he carries into this race. Jesse Jackson's presidential run wasn't credible, so Obama's candidacy is historic in many ways because he's got a realistic shot to win the White House. It's that reality more than anything, that a Black man—only 150 years after emancipation and 50 years after landmark civil rights legislation—is a credible threat to sit in the most powerful political seat in the world that's hindering Obama's ability to close the door on Clinton.

So when statistics come out showing that Obama remains the top choice among the college-educated set, African-Americans and the very poor, while Clinton is favored by White women, the middle class and White men, what's really being said is that America has yet to move past its racially discriminatory predilections. It's a misnomer to say Obama can't seal the deal. Rather he's been prevented from capturing the nomination by an opponent all-too willing to play racial politics and all-too eager to make mountains of molehills—Obama's affiliation with Rev. Jeremiah Wright and a former member of the '70s Black radical group the Weatherman, and clumsily delivered but on-the-money comments about small-town America's bitterness about economic conditions.

So long as Clinton (and her husband Bill) can deftly play the race card, caricaturing Obama as a buppie, Harvard-educated elitist who's disconnected with regular America—keep in mind it's the Clintons who have made \$109 million since leaving office and Obama who took a job working in Southside Chicago in lieu of a high-paying corporate law gig—Obama could struggle to win over middle-class Whites. So long as those middle-class Whites buy into the manufactured myth that his interests aren't theirs—last we checked, affordable healthcare, quality education, skyrocketing gas prices, a flagging economy and ending the war in Iraq were universal concerns—and that a Black man can't feel the White man's pain, racial separatism will remain alive and well.

Dying too Young

On Wednesday, preliminary hearings began into the murder of 16-year-old Palo Verde High School freshman Christopher Privett. Sixteen-year-old Gerald Davison is facing murder and attempted murder charges; 19-year-old Ezekial Williams is charged as an accessory. This story is sad on so many fronts that it's hard to know where to begin. No amount of condolences and prayers will bring Privett back, nor will it console his family. Losing a loved one is always hard. It's worse when that person's life is violently snuffed out. It's important to also remember the families of the accused. They, too, are experiencing loss. Their loss isn't as acute, but it is painful. Davison and Williams have made an irrevocable mistake. Sad. Very sad.



Arrogant power, ignorant weakness

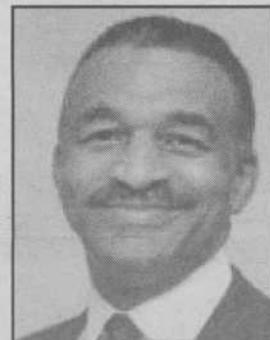
By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As I wrote in my "Letter to White Folks," this country is being destroyed by greedy, conniving, arrogant people. Our political leaders have taken this country to the edge of economic meltdown and political chaos with their lies and deceit. I often wonder if they think they will ever die and have to account for their actions.

It is shameful and sad that they are so engrossed in their own personal enrichment that they have literally disregarded most of the people in this country. But, it's also sad to think that most of us go along with the program, whether by omission or commission, by allowing these leaders to continue doing their dirt.

Even sadder is the fact that our children will surely pay the price for our apathy and our weakness in the face of impending disaster. When I ask myself, What are we afraid of? What do we have to lose? Why do we allow ourselves to be played? I cannot for the life of me come up with acceptable answers.

The people in power are so arrogant and aloof in their dealings with the folks for whom they are supposed to be working. The "American people" are so laid back and shy when it comes to our response to the nonsense, because we simply do not want to know what is happening. We want to remain in our ignorance, thereby having no



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responsibility or obligation to act in any way to change things.

We ratchet-up our enthusiasm for politics, especially this year, and traipse to the polls like lemmings, believing we will find salvation there. Fact is we will only gain an emotional up-tick from the upcoming elections, both national and local because our investment in the political process is that of amateurs. Despite being involved for decades, and despite having elected Black officials all over this country, we are still politically impotent and ineffective in most cases. In other words, we still get played.

The arrogance of our top political officials is off the chart. They thumb their noses at us and could not care less that we know what they are doing. Our ignorance, in many cases, is off the chart as well. We do not pay attention to what's going on around us; we do not have a real grasp of our history; and we do not critically analyze what is being said to us via the nightly 30-second soundbites.

The arrogant lord over the ignorant and strut their power over the weak with impunity as though there is no higher authority and price to pay for their despicable actions. But take a look at current conditions and you will see that there is a price to pay for both arrogance and ignorance.

Financial institutions are in deep trouble, and when they sneeze, we get pneumonia. The housing bubble has burst and we are paying dearly for it; families are losing their homes by the hundreds of thousands across this nation. Unemployment is on the rise, and inflation is taking hold. Mass layoffs, such as those seen in the late 1980s and early 1990s are returning to the forefront—4,000 from Merrill-Lynch alone. Food prices are reaching unprecedented levels; and who knows where the price of gasoline will end up this year. Many of the ignorant are still dying for the arrogant in Iraq, while billions

of dollars flow like oil from corrupt hand to corrupt hand, through Halliburton, Blackwater, and KBR.

Bush's "friends," the Saudis, and other oil rich nations refuse to increase production and help lower the price at the pump, while China and India have increased their demand for the precious commodity. We owe more than we have; we import more than we export; we have a deficit that is out of control; and we have a dollar that is probably worth about 15 cents by now. All of this and much more, and the arrogant tell the ignorant to mimic Bobby McFerrin, "Don't worry, be happy."

What's the answer? Experts in economics and business that can't agree on what to do at this juncture in America's history, so who am I to pretend that I have the answer. Here is what I do know though. Black folks are at the bottom of every good

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