

# Democratic Party has lots of work ahead

By Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that Barack Obama has cinched the Democratic nomination, the pundits seem determined to make it difficult for him by showing how impossible the odds are that he can be elected president of the United States.

Their favorite line that Obama has "lots of work to do" is generally designed to point out problems he has had in the primary election season with certain states, such as Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia and others, or certain parts of the Democratic electorate, like White women, Hispanics, the elderly or blue-collar Whites.

But the fact is just as true, that if all Democrats truly want change, they also have "a lot of work to do" in accepting the fact that Obama is now the nominee of their party and work hard to elect him. No doubt, Obama has a heavy task of campaigning to win the presidency, but to make that task outlandishly difficult by serving up myth is ridiculous.

One such myth is that a sizeable portion of those voters won by Hillary Clinton who are disaffected that she did not win will go toward John McCain.

However, history has shown that most voters usually coalesce behind the party candidate, except where the alienation was as

deep as it was with George Wallace in 1968 or Ross Perot in 1992.

But when Hillary finally ceded the nomination, in truth, she could not cede the constituencies that she won to anyone because she does not own them. They are free agents to decide what choices to make between Obama and John McCain. And even though there is some disaffection among 10-20 percent of her female base, time usually heals the strength of their initial opposition.

There is the myth that states won by certain eventual nominees in the primary election bear a direct relationship to what may happen in the general election.

In truth, Obama like any Democrat would probably win New York or California, and Michigan and Pennsylvania have gone for Democrats the last four elections.

Even New Mexico has voted for Democrats in three of the last four elections. And yes, Obama has his "work to do" in reaching out more forcefully to Hispanics in states such as Nevada and New Mexico, but he also has powerful surrogates in Gov. Bill Richardson and Los Angeles Mayor Tony



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Vilaragosa, who has recently endorsed him, and other prominent Hispanic leaders.

Another myth is that the head-to-head polls taken in the primary season hold up in the general election. This was true of few of the candidates in the last 40 years because candidates who affect the polls drop of the race — like Hillary Clinton — and things happen in the general election that affect the standing between the candidates. In 1992, even Bill Clinton was seldom in the radar screen to win during the primary, because the general election has its own political culture.

The big problem is that those who do not now or will not eventually accept Barack Obama as their nominee seem to be privileging opposition to his race, his gender or his untraditional credentials, over their own self interests.

I would argue that on the face of it, they would seem to have a much greater interest in supporting a candidate who can lead America with the dexterity and intelligence that Obama has illustrated in this election, to address the monumental problems facing this country.

# Obama, please stop pandering to Cuban exiles

By Bill Fletcher Jr.  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As someone who supports the candidacy of Sen. Obama, I must say that I was left very unsettled by his speech to the Cuban American National Foundation, an organization formed by Cuban exiles intent on the ousting of the current government of Cuba.

While Sen. Obama emphasized his willingness to speak with the government of President Raul Castro, he fell back into the old Cold War rhetoric that has been used, since 1959, to demonize the movement and government that overthrew the corrupt puppet regime that dominated the country beginning in 1952 and left the country open to pilfering by the Mafia and U.S. corporations (the two often difficult to distinguish).

Sen. Obama does not need to like or even agree with anything that the Cuban government does, but he should step beyond Cold War propaganda for a moment.

Perhaps the senator needs to be reminded that from virtually the moment that the revolutionary government, led by Fidel Castro, came to power the U.S. has done all that it can to overthrow it.

It was not just the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, but the numerous attempts to assassinate President Castro (and other Cuban leaders), along with the landing and supplying of

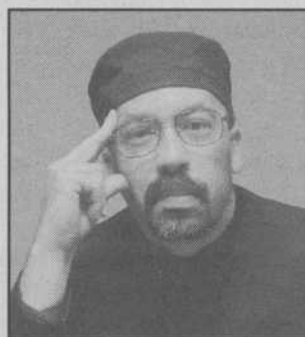
military units (what would be described by some people today as terrorists) who carried out a guerrilla war against the Cuban government in the 1960s.

Perhaps the senator needs to be reminded of the U.S. support for Cuban exile terrorists, such as those who bombed a Cuban airliner killing the entire complement of civilian passengers, or bombed tourist hotels?

So, when I hear Sen. Obama describe the lack of freedom in Cuba, I find myself a bit uneasy. While I do not agree with the Cuban government on every feature of its work, I have this sense that had the USA not been so intent on destroying the Castro administrations and not putting Cuba back under its heel, we might be looking at a very different situation today.

It reminds me of the old saying that just because you are paranoid does not mean people are not out to get you.

The Cuban government has every reason to fear the objectives of the USA because the historical record is clear and without doubt: the USA has been intent on destroying everything that the Cubans have set out to build since 1959.



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For many of the leaders of the Cuban exile community, any notion of a dialogue with the Cuban government is impermissible, if not an outright betrayal. In that sense, when Sen. Obama suggests a dialogue with the Cuban government, while people of good will support this, it runs counter to those in the exile community who wish to

squeeze the Cuban government and population until it screams.

Despite the squeezing of Cuba by the U.S. government, the Cubans have offered to help the USA on more than one occasion. Most recently, the Cubans were prepared to deploy personnel in the aftermath of the Katrina disaster on the Gulf Coast in 2005. The Cubans, very experienced in handling the aftermath of hurricanes, were rebuffed by a Bush administration that was either incapable and/or unwilling to provide the survivors with necessary assistance.

A different approach by Sen. Obama might begin with acknowledging that short

The danger is that their opposition may cause the country to miss this moment to invest in Barack Obama the authority to pursue the tremendous opportunity at hand: to pass the baton of leadership to a new generation, to finally fix healthcare and achieve universal coverage, to wind down an illegal war costing precious final and human resources in the midst of an economy in full tailspin, to get a handle on why resources are not flowing to fix the Hurricane Katrina disaster and to stop the banks from taking people's homes.

This should make many of the objections to his presence appear small in comparison. So, voters have "lots of work to do" in changing their perceptions.

Already the news of Barack Obama's nomination victory has excited global interests and begun to change the perception of many abroad that perhaps the negative slide in America's image is over. Is this something Americans want to stop? I think not, but if not, then all Americans have a "lot of work to do."

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of supporting an armed invasion of Cuba, there is little to suggest that the exile community will, in any significant numbers, support his candidacy. Given that, he should consider a *real* change in USA-Cuban relations. Such a change could include:

- A commitment by the USA to abstain from military action—overt or covert—against the government and people of Cuba.
- The opening of a dialogue with the Cuban government toward normal relations.
- Support and ease for family travel and remittances.
- The return of Guantanamo to Cuba.
- Cultural and educational exchanges between the people of the USA and the people of Cuba.

Fundamentally, this means giving up on the Monroe Doctrine arrogance that has shaped the relationship of the USA towards Latin America and the Caribbean since the 1820s and, instead, embracing the idea of a mutually beneficial hemispheric partnership.

Is this too much to ask from a Presidential candidate who promises genuine change?

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## Lawsuit

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sued are from the South, mostly from Alabama and Mississippi.

John Boyd, a Black farmer who founded the group, said he expects another 5,000 to join the lawsuit soon.

The suit is the latest development in the federal government's April 1999 settlement of a class-action lawsuit from Black farmers who claimed they were systematically denied loans and other aid from local USDA offices. About two-thirds of the nearly 22,500 farmers who filed suit were awarded damages.

Those who filed late argued that their lawyers made mistakes or that they were not aware of the deadline.

The deadline was extended once for those who could show extraordinary circumstances. But federal courts repeatedly denied subsequent requests to reopen the settlement until Congress intervened with the farm bill.

The enacted bill permits plaintiffs to seek expedited claims of \$50,000 under a lower threshold of proof than a typical civil case. Plaintiffs also can seek larger damages in court.

The USDA and the Justice Department declined to comment on the lawsuit.

Critics have charged that farmers had plenty of time to win claims and that reopening the case will reward questionable claimants who may not have suffered losses.

## Alford

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ill repute who put up the library money. That is if they still have any juice. After all, they were selling the "fact" that they were going to get back into the White House and run across the ethical line for contributors again.

Shall we talk about the race card being played during the primary? No, that's enough. Let's forget about that ugly scene.

What I am saying is this: Sen. Obama has to make his most important decision yet in picking a vice presidential running mate.

Hopefully, he will go slow and meticulous. The vetting process must be complete. If that will be the case, no one with a track record like the one above will stand a chance to clear.

Sen. Obama please do it right. Manage it well. You have already proven that you are capable of doing. Then, maybe, we will see an African-American president in our lifetime. Praise the Lord!

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