

McCain eyes affirmative action ban in Arizona

By George E Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Despite eating chicken in Selma, Ala., and making the rounds of the NAACP and National Urban League conventions, John McCain is backing a Ward Connerly-sponsored ballot initiative that would ban affirmative action in Arizona.

The presumptive Republican nominee for president disclosed his position under questioning recently on ABC-TV's "This Week with George Stephanopolos."

STEPHANOPOULOS: Opponents of affirmative action are trying to get a referendum on the ballot here that would do away with affirmative action. Do you support that?

McCain: Yes, I do. I do not believe in quotas. But I have not seen the details of some of these proposals. But I've always opposed quotas.

STEPHANOPOULOS: But the one here in Arizona you support.

McCain: I support it, yes.

Obviously, John McCain is ignorant about affirmative action. If he weren't, he'd know that the concept of affirmative action does include quotas.

In fact, Executive Order 11246 outlawing discrimination in federal contracting forbids the use of quotas in affirmative action programs.

The original order was issued by President Johnson in 1965 and extended by every subsequent president, including Ronald Reagan and Bush I and II.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

defines affirmative action as "a contemporary term that encompasses any measure, beyond simple termination of a discriminatory practice, which permits the consideration of race, national origin, sex and disability, along with other criteria, and which is adopted to provide opportunities to a class of qualified individuals who have either historically or actually been denied those opportunities, and to prevent the reoccurrence of discrimination in the future."

That's a long way of saying that race, national origin, sex and disability are allowed to be considered along with other factors when looking at qualified candidates for jobs and government contracts. That's what John McCain is opposing.

Barack Obama was quick to note the contrast in his position.

Addressing a conference of journalists of color in Chicago recently, Obama said: "I am a strong supporter of affirmative action when properly structured so that it is not a quota, but it is acknowledging and taking into account some of the hardships and difficulties that communities of color may have experienced, continue to experience, and it also speaks to the value of diversity in all walks of American life."

Interestingly, opponents of affirmative action are trying to use Obama's political success as an argument for eliminating affir-



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mative action. In March, *Newsweek* magazine, under the headline, "Obama's Post-racial Test," asked: "How will the Democratic candidate deal with potentially divisive ballot initiatives calling for an end to affirmative action?"

The story said, "The next test of Barack Obama's 'post-racial' persona may come from some unlikely places: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma. That's where Ward Connerly, the country's most innovative and successful opponent of affirmative action over the past decade, is launching an effort to get an initiative on the ballots that would prohibit public institutions from considering race, sex or ethnicity in areas such as hiring and college admissions."

Even with affirmative action, there is not a level playing field.

The National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium reports that although White men make up only 48 percent of the college-educated workforce, they hold 85 percent of the tenured college faculty positions, 86 percent of law firm partnerships, more than 90 percent of the top jobs in the news media, and 96 percent of CEO positions.

The number of Fortune 500 Black CEOs fell from seven in 2007 to five in 2008. If African-Americans were represented among the CEO ranks in the same proportion they are in the population, there would be 63

Blacks CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, not five.

Most Black CEOs and other top achievers readily acknowledge that they rose to the top, in part, because affirmative action provided them an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

Ward Connerly, the Black conservative who personally benefited from affirmative action by receiving a minority set-aside contract in California, is traveling from state to state, as though he were Paul Revere, organizing ballot initiatives to outlaw affirmative action. He has been successful in California with Proposition 209 and in the states of Washington and Michigan.

Progressives have made some costly tactical errors in the battle over affirmative action. Rather than waiting for Connerly to ride in on his white horse, they should beat him to the punch by putting forth pro-affirmative action ballot initiatives. By going on the offensive, they would put Ward Connerly on the defensive for a change.

In the meantime, John McCain trots out the same old tired and misleading arguments about quotas. He fails to understand that the concept of affirmative action has been upheld even by a conservative Supreme Court and the U.S. military and major corporations have been among the chief advocates of affirmative action.

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You got next! Time for young America to step up

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When I played basketball, and probably still today, those on the sidelines would say, "We got next," to let everyone know they were next on the court.

The game would be in full swing sometimes and we would yell out, "We got next," which would be acknowledged by the current players with responses like: "You don't want none of this!" "Yeah, c'mon and get take your whippin' too;" or "We'll be right with you cause beating these scrubs won't take long."

No matter how much trash-talk we did, we knew it would soon get serious when the new game started and that we would have to prove ourselves on the court in order to continue playing in the next game.

So it is with us today; elders are on the court playing the game and the young folks are on the sidelines saying "We got next!"

In my case, having been in the game for quite a few years, I am saying to the young people all over this country, "You got next!"

I did a three-part television series using that title and interviewed young entrepreneurs, all in the context of how important it is for young people to step forward into business.

The shows were powerful, inspiring, and rewarding.

We highlighted entrepreneurship and the opportunities therein while showcasing young people and their entrepreneurial endeavors.

Having started an inner-city entrepreneurship high school in Cincinnati, after much persuading of the school board and superin-

tendent I might add, it is inspiring to see the students, after seven years now, completing their business plans and being bitten by the entrepreneurship bug.

They may be on the sidelines right now, but they know they will definitely be in the next game.

We must support their efforts by encouraging them and providing them the tools and information they need to continuously improve their lives.

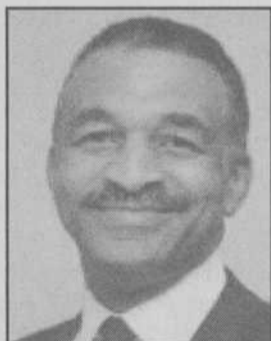
One segment of the CNN broadcasts on Being Black in America presented a rotating panel discussion on various issues and featured the President of the Chicago Urban League, Cheryl Jackson, whose answer to a question regarding the lack of progress by Black people in this country delighted me to no end.

Her answer was straightforward and simple: Economic Empowerment through Entrepreneurship. WOW! "Now that's what I'm talking about," as Ken Bridges would say. That Sister knows what's up; and more should follow her example. (See www.cul-chicago.org for more information).

In a local news interview, Sister Jackson emphatically stated, "The Chicago Urban League is getting out of the social service business and will focus exclusively on economic development."

All I can say is, kudos to Cheryl Jackson and the Chicago Urban League.

They have created a model for others to follow, and they have the answer to most of



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the problems plaguing our brothers and sisters across this country.

Supported by relevant education and access to the opportunities therein, entrepreneurship will bring to fruition the dreams of young people who have been heretofore locked-in, locked-down, and locked-up in crime-ridden neighborhoods, dysfunctional schools, and broken families.

As a side note, the Chicago Urban League's Program is called "Project Next."

Back in 2001, immediately after the civil unrest in Cincinnati, among the "solutions" presented to deal with socio-economic problems among Black youth was my contention that economic empowerment through entrepreneurship was the answer, not a panacea but a major step in solving the problem.

Although I was able to get the Entrepreneurship High School started, which has now graduated three classes and is doing a great job in educating future entrepreneurs, an overall program of economic empowerment among our youth has not yet come about.

My impression of the Chicago Urban League's program is exactly what I had in mind back in 2001.

Access to information and opportunity, guided by experienced and dedicated practitioners, are all our young people need to get in and stay in the game.

Because they truly do "Got Next," we must give them the necessary skills to be real players.

My hat is off to Cheryl Jackson and her

team in Chicago for changing the traditional paradigm that ostensibly suggests the only way Black youth can be helped economically is by displaying dysfunction.

The more dysfunction they show the more funds various organizations can receive; that's a Catch 22 proposition because dysfunction — not success — must be continued in order for the funding to continue.

Again at the risk of dating myself, in the 1970's and early 1980's when I worked in social service programs, I had this "radical" notion that we should be working our way out of a job by helping our clients move completely away from being dependent on "programs" and falling into the what I called a "program hopping" mentality.

I posited that we as counselors should be more interested in eliminating the endless repetitive parade of clients starting and stopping and starting again to enroll in any and every program that came along.

Man, was I met with resistance. But now I am buoyed and quite frankly justified in my contention, then and now, that the answer is not just finding jobs for clients but having clients create jobs through entrepreneurship.

Thanks to the Urban League of Chicago, and I might add to the Urban League of Cincinnati which, under the leadership of Donna Jones-Baker and her staff, for having the insight to implement an entrepreneurship initiative as well.

Cheryl Jackson's initiative asks, "Who's got next?" The answer: "You (young people) Got Next!"

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