

Horn of Africa new focal point in war on terror

By Nicole C. Lee
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The term African-American has, over the last 40 years become larger than the populations of African descendants who were brought illegally to the Americas during the middle passage. In the last decade, immigrants from Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia have migrated to the U.S. in increasingly large numbers making them, after Nigerians and Ghanaians, the third, fourth and fifth largest African populations in the U.S.

As the numbers of Africans and Afro descendants from the Horn of Africa settle in the U.S., the social-cultural fabric of African descendants is changing.

While not a monolith, the new African-Americans universally advocating for peace in the region and for a change in U.S. foreign policy from one that blindly supports the government of Ethiopia to a policy which takes into account the human security of the people of the region, regardless of nationality. To many Pan-Africanists the nation of Ethiopia is associated with antiquity, the resistance to colonialism and the formalization of the Pan-Africanism movement.

For many Afro descendants the aura of historic Ethiopia overshadows the current political realities. To get stuck in the romance of Ethiopia's history we run the risk of threatening its future.

Over the past eight years, Ethiopia's gov-

ernment has become one of the U.S. government's strongest allies in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The Bush administration's foreign policy in Ethiopia has focused on buying "regional stability" at the expense of the liberty of the people who live there.

While international human rights groups report that Ethiopian jails are filled with thousands of political prisoners, and the opposition party leaders slated to stand trial for treason, the Ethiopian government remains free to operate with the impunity in cooperation with the U.S. in the so-called GWOT.

Under the Bush administration, the U.S. government quietly poured weapons and military advisors into Ethiopia—in violation of an UN-backed arms embargo—in the hopes that Ethiopia would become involved in Somalia's civil war and help to overturn the fundamentalist Islamic government, the Islamic Courts Union, which the Bush administration maintained was supported by al-Qaeda.

As evidence of this alliance, in 2005, U.S. Special Forces stationed in Djibouti as part of the Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa began to train Ethiopian troops to fight "terrorists" in Somalia.



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The U.S. government provided air support, training, financing and private military contractors to prepare the Ethiopian army for the invasion and occupation of Somalia. In late 2006 a few thousand heavily armed and U.S. trained Ethiopian troops invaded Somalia and opened a new front in the Bush administration's GWOT.

This intervention and the resultant U.S. air strikes and Ethiopian occupation are illegal and immoral under the UN general principles and UN resolution 17245. This invasion and ousting of the Somali "government" set in motion a series of events which have engulfed Somalia in the "worse violence in 15 years," according to the International Red Cross.

Now, almost two years later, the Bush administration has never publicly taken responsibility for their role in further destabilizing Somalia and the Horn of Africa region.

Inside Ethiopia, as the government pays for the costly occupation of Somalia, 4.6 million Ethiopians are in need of emergency assistance as drought and high food prices take their toll. Ethiopia is still, after all, one of the world's poorest countries and among the top recipients of U.S. development aid. Unfortunately, because Ethiopia is a U.S.

political ally in the "war on terror" the majority of that aid money is in the form of military funding, not food assistance.

In neighboring Somalia, occupation and internal conflict have taken a detrimental toll on the livelihoods of Somalis resulting in massive economic disenfranchisement and forced migration to refugee camps.

In early December 2008, the Ethiopia Government announced that it would pull out of Somalia before the New Year amidst escalating violence targeted at African Union peacekeepers and Ethiopian troops stationed in Somalia.

This news has caused many Somali and Ethiopian Americans to hope that a resolution to the region's conflict may be found within the next four years if U.S. Congress and the Obama administration work to change U.S. policy in the region from the current reality to one that supports peaceful self-determination. The GWOT has got to stop being a war on Africans.

TransAfrica hopes to work closely with the Obama administration to correct the political and economic turmoil created in the Horn of Africa during the Bush years. If change was the mantra for the Obama campaign, his administration can start his first term by making a change in U.S. foreign policy toward the Horn of Africa.

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Kennedy, Clinton, Bush: Is it dynasty or democracy?

By Julianne Malveaux
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Is our nation a democracy or a creator of political dynasties? Or are we a combination of both?

As the United States Senate continues to gel, and as people jockey for appointments and anointings, it is interesting to ask how much "name" matters, and whether other factors propel politicians to prominence. President-elect Barack Obama came to the table with scant lineage.

Neither his mother or his father, nor anyone he knew had been in politics. Yet, Obama snatched the crown from an ambivalent insider, partly because he was able to create energy around the concept of "change."

Democracy or dynasty-creator? Obama's election says democracy.

On the other hand, former President George H. W. Bush touted his son, Jeb, as a future president. He said, "I think he's as qualified and able as anyone I know on the political scene."

Qualified and able to, what, shrug off his lineage? While the Bush family is surrounded by a cadre of loyalists, it might be difficult for Jeb Bush to overcome the legacy of war and economic devastation that has been left by his brother, the current president.

If Mr. Bush had his way, it would be by dynasty, not democracy. Other than president John Adams, he is the only president who has a son who has also served. I find it a special kind of hubris that Bush 41 would assert that Jeb Bush should be President.

But for some, politics is a family business. I don't envy New York Governor David Patterson. He is living in a situation best described as "can't win." When the daughter of one of our nation's most popular presidents indicates her interest in a vacated Senate seat, he has to pay attention. And when the na-



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tional media comes raining down on their perception of her scant credentials, he has to be concerned.

Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg has been more than an author and mother. She has also been a civic leader, raising money for public schools and for conservation issues. Is that enough to qualify her for a seat in the United States Senate? And in

choosing her, can Patterson ignore another dynasty, the Cuomo dynasty, since Andrew Cuomo has also indicated that he is interested in the Senate seat.

Speaking of Hillary Rodham Clinton, there was bristly talk about a Clinton dynasty when she stepped out to run for Senate from New York in 2000.

People bandied about terms like "carpet-bagger" to describe the former first lady, and many suggested that she didn't deserve the seat once held by Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

But New York Congressman Charlie Rangel had her back, as did others. So despite the talk, she won an election in 2000 and performed so well she was elected again in 2006.

Still, the dynastic nattering intensified when Clinton ran for president in 2008.

It is not clear whether she won or lost votes because she is married to our 42nd President, Bill Clinton.

While I think that both Hillary Rodham Clinton and Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg are outstanding human beings who bring value added to the political landscape, I am concerned about the notion of dynasties.

While these dynasties appeal to some, they raise the bar for African-Americans, who represented just 2 percent of all elected officials in 2001, thus less likely to get the dynastic leg up than others.

If we grandfather political status by fam-

ily, we are likely to perpetuate the underrepresentation of African-Americans in local, state, and national politics, who are less likely to get the dynastic leg up than others.

To be sure, there are African-American dynasties.

Jesse Jackson Jr. had a foundation from his dad's visibility and years of public service. Harold Ford Jr., the former congressman from Tennessee and 2006 candidate for that state's Senate seat, succeeded his father in Congress.

Kendrick Meek, from Florida, received the baton from his mother, the outstanding Carrie Meek. While Latinas are relative newcomers to the national political game, two sisters from California, Loretta and Linda Sanchez, now serve in Congress.

So, people of color can do "dynasty," too. Should we? I have already heard people buzzing that Michelle Obama should run for president in 2016 (assuming two terms for Barack Obama), or that Malia and Sasha should consider Congress. Is that really what we want?

While the entry of Michelle, Sasha or Malia Obama into the political scene would be most exciting, political dynasties ultimately undermine the concept of democracy and a level playing field.

New York governor David Patterson is himself part of a political dynasty. His father, Basil Patterson, was a member of the New York State Senate, deputy mayor of New York City, and ultimately the first Black Secretary of State in New York.

If he selects Caroline Kennedy to succeed Hillary Clinton, I hope he also considers the value of an open democracy and makes his reason for selection clear.

Sometimes political dynasties yield good candidates. Sometimes, though, they signal that our system is relatively closed to newcomers.

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who live in metro areas.

This would appear to place great weight on Carrion, a Puerto Rican and the former Bronx borough president in New York, who campaigned heavily for Obama in largely Hispanic areas across the country and has managed to stay above the political fray in his locality. He won election in a contest with another Puerto Rican, State Senator Pedro Espanada Jr., and a White female, Council woman, June Eisland, in a borough that was at least 40 percent Black.

It should be said, then that Blacks were the deciding vote in his election and, therefore, would support his elevation this post.

Whether support for Carrion holds true for Blacks nationally depends upon the enthusiasm and excellence with which he deals with

issues that empower them. A graduate from Hunter College with a degree in Urban Planning and a former employee with the city planning department in one of the largest cities in the nation, he could be a credible appointee to this position.

But whether he grasps the history of the failures of urban policy in the past two decades and crafts new approaches that stimulate economic development of poor neighborhoods, provides upward employment mobility for working class Blacks, and promotes fair access to jobs and business financing, remains to be seen.

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