

FORUM

Rush Limbaugh: Used - Idea Salesman

I am captivated - as one who consumes political ideas - with Rush Limbaugh. He is a very convincing fellow, who gawks unblinkingly into my eyes from the television, or when I listen to him as he offers up his high-energy verbal tidbits from the radio. It's as though what he is onto comes straight from a higher moral force. Here in Winston-Salem, he can be heard on station WSJS. One would think the call letters of the station stand for We are Supported by Jesus. Never one to pretend that he is not what he thinks he is, Limbaugh

Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas is apparently a big fan of Rush's. Mr. Thomas recently officiated Limbaugh's wedding and held a lavish reception at his home for Rush's third attempt at marriage.

The millions of people who tune in to Rush every week are eagerly spurned on by his seemingly genuine concern for things "in this country." In addition, he seems, at first meeting, to fulfill one's insatiable appetite for the easy fix.

Rush Limbaugh has amassed a shockingly lucrative business by combining the best of shock-value glitz and Baby Boom pop culture into a convincing megalomania that works. His books are best sellers and sponsors' requests for his endorsements are unmatched.

Limbaugh's antics are staged under a "Wannadeal Tent," an extravagant circus-like atmosphere where the sheep (US) — the religious right

and ultra-conservatives are pitted against the lions (THEM) - President and Mrs. Clinton and anyone who dares think that the federal government has a role to play in reducing human sorrow, misery, sickness, ignorance and death.

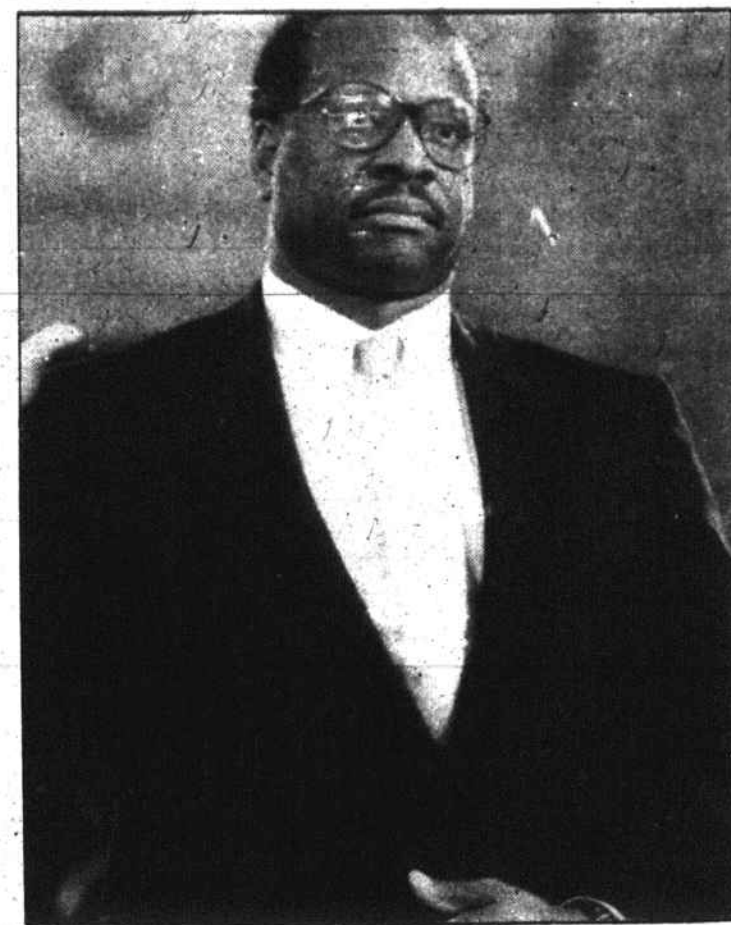
On the Rush Limbaugh Show, logic and human compassion are the popcorn and candy apples. Every 10 minutes a song from the political pages of former presi-

dents Reagan and Bush is played like Oldies but Goodies. Oliver North is the lion tamer in the Limbaugh circus, while Jesse Jackson and Louis Farrakhan are clowns. Ted Kennedy is out back in a tent with Willie Mae: the Welfare Queen with Sixty Children and Other Freaks. Many Americans - even professional and otherwise thinking people - like a good show. That is why Howard Stern takes home so much money each week.

Limbaugh has a Disney theme-park approach to politics that enjoys considerable (and dangerous) consumer loyalty. "Ditto Heads" haggle and negotiate with him, as long as they concur with his logic. The way he guides his homogeneous, grateful and almost breathless callers - those blessed enough to get through to his busy lines - is unmatched, except by Adolph Hitler's control over his followers.

I, for one, will not line-up and genuflect to Rush Limbaugh, just because he has the power to wrap himself up in the American flag, lay down some hellfire and brimstone and sell legions of people the most ridiculous points of view of which they can be proud. These same true believers would never buy a used car from a man of Rush's dubious ilk.

Mind you, I may not know the answer either, but I staunchly refuse to believe that Rush Limbaugh is doing anything more than capitalizing on our complex dilemmas. Let the buyers beware. It is nothing more or less than cheap buyer psychology employed by an extremely



Clarence Thomas

effective used-idea salesman.
(William Turner is a regular freelance columnist for the Chronicle.)



LIFT EVERY VOICE

By WILLIAM TURNER

begins each broadcast with the note that he is "Talent on Loan from God."

Rush Limbaugh is the Drum Major for Right-Wing Justice. You just "gotta love Rush" once you are smitten by his intelligence and quick wit, his sense of urgency, his excitement, his swaggering humor, his ability to dicker mentally, and other penetrating high-tech mind teasers.

Freedom Schools' Youth Working to Save Our Children

For many college students, summer vacation signals a break from classes, work and community service. But this summer, hundreds of black college students will devote their time to service in their hometowns.

They are part of the Black Student Leadership Network, which recruits and trains college students from across the country to work as servant leaders to provide a safe, fun and nurturing learning environment for disadvantaged children during the summer.

After two weeks of rigorous training through the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute at Knoxville (Tenn.) College, 200 students will run Freedom Schools at 17 sites across the country combining child-feeding programs with academic and cultural enrichment, recreation and child advocacy. The intensive training leaves students exhilarated, inspired and motivated by all they have learned and gives them an opportunity to discover a sense of purpose. It is this sense of purpose that will empower them to work effectively to reclaim our communities and educate our children.

Lisa Sullivan, field director for the Black Student Leadership Network, once told the students participating in the Institute: "It's not just going to be a summer thing. You're making a commitment to a social movement in this country, a movement led, energized and directed by African-American youth."

Summer can be a difficult time for children who are not involved in some type of recreational or culturally enriching activity. Having young role

models and a safe and nurturing learning environment will make the difference in hundreds of children's lives and keep many of them out of the way of potential dangers.



CHILD WATCH

By MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Recalling the 1960s Mississippi Freedom Schools, which reached out to black youth in disadvantaged areas, this year's schools will offer 5- to 18-year-olds a sense of their history and traditions, keep them academically active and increase their expressive abilities and self-esteem.

Founded in 1992, the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute was named in honor of Ella Baker, an inspiration to thousands of young participants in the Civil Rights Movement. Today her legacy and the legacy of that movement lives on through the works of this new generation of student leaders on behalf of children and families.

The BSLN and the Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute recognizes the important role college-age youth can play in bringing about social change and also seeks to encourage intergenerational leadership enabling young people to benefit from the wisdom and experience of mentors who are, in turn, inspired by the passion and purpose of the young. This program provides our community with a great example of how we can work together to unite ourselves on behalf of our children.

I am very proud of the college students who are working so hard to improve the quality of life for children. Their determination constantly reminds me that they are committed, caring and eager to make a difference.

If you are interested in sponsoring a Freedom School in your community in 1995, write Steve White, Director of Black Student Leadership Network, 25 E. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20001.

We all should be inspired by our young leaders who are continuing a legacy and using the lessons of history to build bridges over troubled economic and social waters — bridges that will lead to increased self-esteem and ultimately an increased sense of pride in our rich African-American heritage.

(Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund and a leader of the Black Community Crusade for Children.)

We Need Healthy African-American-Owned Businesses

There's a myth out there about African Americans that just isn't true and which, unfortunately, even too many African Americans believe. It's the myth that African Americans haven't been, aren't and therefore can never be entrepreneurs; that we don't have any business sense or history.

The reality is that African Americans have been businesspersons since we first arrived on these shores, because we brought that business sense with us from Africa. There were free blacks who owned their own businesses as blacksmiths, bakers, tavern keepers and sail makers in our country's early days. Madame C.J. Walker became a millionaire, selling hair products in the first half of this century, and her modern counterparts include Earl Graves, Joshua Smith, the late Reginald Lewis, Bruce Llewellyn and Oprah Winfrey (in her role as businesswoman and producer).

I remember U Street when I was growing up in Washington, D.C. U Street was the heart of the "black" business district, where there were all kinds of black-owned businesses, including optometrists, theaters, night clubs, cleaners and funeral homes. A few years ago there was a PBS documentary that focused on the black business district of Kansas City 50 years ago. There were other cities which, prior to integration in the 1960s and 70s, had flourishing black-owned small businesses. But the reality is that with the flight of the black middle class to the suburbs and to integrated communities, these black-owned businesses waned and most died.

Speaking at a recent meeting, NAACP president Benjamin Chavis named economic development as being one of the priorities of the African-American community as we enter the next century. Chavis said: "We thought that if we only could get the political power, we could change things. But, we've found out we need the economic power as well." Or as some have put it, if you can't buy the soda when you sit down at the counter, having the right to sit at the counter really doesn't mean much.

Clearly, we need healthy African-American-owned businesses if African-American communities are to survive. Small businesses provide the largest number of jobs in this country and with unemployment rates at least double of whites, African Americans desperately need jobs.

In Los Angeles they're not just talking about economic development in

the African-American community, they're doing something about it. Community Build Inc. is a product of the Los Angeles up-rising. It is a coalescing of efforts by African-American organizations and individuals committed to addressing the economic causes of that civil unrest. One of its key supporters has been Congresswoman Maxine Waters. While Rebuild L.A. was getting all the headlines about what its going to do for the people of Los Angeles, Community Build got busy with the people. The results are exciting — and challenging to the rest of us.

Leimert Park is one of Community Build's projects. It's a block-long area of shops, jazz clubs and a theater — all African-American owned. The names are exotic — Africa By the Yard, the Venusian Salon, the Code of Consciousness — but the businesses translate into real community development.

Culturally, Leimert park is a haven for African-American artists who can sing or tell jokes or play jazz at the clubs in the neighborhood. Artists can exhibit in the city-sponsored arts festivals. The Museum in Black houses centuries-old masks and original manuscripts by Richard Wright and Alex Haley and even shackles used on slaves.

Socially, Leimert Park has become the center of the African-American

community in Los Angeles. It's like Harlem was during the Harlem Renaissance or like Memphis was to the blues or New Orleans was to jazz. It gives the Los Angeles African-American community a point of focus and a sense of ownership like it once had in Watts, which is now half Latino/Latina.

Economically, Leimert Park has brought about not only a renaissance of black businesses, but has enabled middle-class African Americans to want to move back to that community to live. It has helped to stop the flight to the suburbs and enabled a viable community once again to flower.

One of Leimert Park's driving forces has been actress Marla Gibbs, whose Vision Theater is an anchor to the development going on there. She has invested more than \$2 million in her vision of Leimert Park as an African village. Not only does her arts complex stage productions, but is also hosts banquets, holds art classes for children and church meetings and counseling programs for victims of domestic violence



Oprah Winfrey



CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

By BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

and rape. Leimert Park is an exciting story of how, when our total community works together and makes economic development a priority, our communities will be revitalized.

Perhaps you know of other African-American economic development success stories going on in your community. Write to me at 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, Ohio, 44115, and I'll share them. We've got to create economic power with the people if our nation is to flourish in the next century.

(Bernice Powell Jackson is the executive director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.)

Winston-Salem Chronicle
THE CHOICE FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWS
USPS 067910

617 N. Liberty Street
Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102

The Winston-Salem Chronicle is published every Thursday by the Winston-Salem Chronicle Publishing Co. Inc.

The Winston-Salem Chronicle was established by Ernest Pitt and Ndubis Egemonye in 1974.

The Chronicle is a proud member of:
• Audit Bureau of Circulation • National Newspapers Publishers Association • North Carolina Press Association • North Carolina Black Publishers Association
National Advertising Representative
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.
45 West 45th St • New York, NY 10036
(212) 869-5220

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