

FORUM

Bill Clinton 'almost' apologizes to Black Lives Matter activists



Bill Turner
Guest Columnist

Former president Bill Clinton furrowed his brow, locked his jaws and knees, leaned in, narrowed his gaze, wagged his left-handed trigger finger and proceeded to eloquently and condescendingly dress down a group of devotees to the Black Lives Matter movement in Philadelphia last week while defending his presidential candidate wife's use of the catchphrase "super predators" to describe those powerless, impoverished, and without alternatives Americans; those who prepared the rest of us to accept the 1994 Crime Bill, the result of which has been the mass incarceration of young black men.

POTUS William Jefferson Clinton got his authorization to say what he said and how he said it from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Toni Morrison — think of the title of her book, "The Bluest Eye" — when she christened him, in 1998, in a comment for The New Yorker, declaring that "his white skin notwithstanding, this is our first black President. Blacker than any actual black person who could ever be elected in our children's lifetime." Phi Beta Sigma — one

of the nine predominantly African-American Greek-lettered organizations — made the former president, nicknamed "Slick Bill," an honorary brother in 2013.

Arkansas-born Clinton, like many black men, is from a female-headed, working-class household; he knew Ebonics, played a soulful saxophone characterizing the "white-boy-as-ah-shucks player," had the unanimous support of civil rights-era icons like Rev. Jesse Jackson and Congressman John Lewis and the entire Congressional Black Caucus. He golfed with Urban League president Vernon Jordan and the number of blacks he appointed to top jobs in his administration became a matter of legend. It's said that Clinton didn't look at program booklets to croon every verse of Lift Every Voice and Sing when he graced the dais at black, black-tie, affairs. Indeed, President Bill Clinton, an exceptionally bright man, a Righteous Brother, took credit for the fact that thousands of blacks entered the professional classes when he ran things, even if not in the same proportion as did those who entered prison. Clinton mattered to black people; he was, after all — as the Atlantic Monthly noted shortly after Morrison christened him colored — "the ultimate do-gooder," with "street cred."

In 1992, Bill boldly trash-talked black activist Sista Souljah, who said in the



Former President Bill Clinton speaks during a campaign stop for his wife, Hillary Clinton.

music video of her song "The Final Solution: Slavery's back in Effect" ("If there are any good white people, I haven't met them"). "If you took the words 'white' and 'black,' and you reversed them, you might think KKK head David Duke was talking," Clinton answered back.

Mr. Clinton almost apologized late last week for drowning out the Black Lives Matter protestors while campaigning for Hillary, saying, "I know those young people yesterday were just trying to get good television; I was not effective in answering it." On the campaign trail, the former First Lady — on track to be the first woman president — has apologized for her usage of the words "super predators," as well as acknowledging the unintended consequences of the 1994 Crime Bill that contributed to the high rates of imprisonment of black men and the present strains between police officers and black communities.

Things, as they always do, have changed. When Bill Clinton aggressively responded to the Black Lives Matter enthusiasts last week — as smart as he is — he forgot that he was talking not only to those who take their inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement, his aces in the hole, but the new generation's crusade combines the Black Power, the black fem-

inist, the LGBTQ, the hip-hop, and the Occupy Wall Street movements. They sprang from the 1968 Poor Peoples' Campaign, when Dr. King was envisioning the interconnected, overlapping, and interdependent dynamics of race, class, and gender. He was sounding just like Black Lives Matter — wide-ranging — just before he died.

Those of us in Clinton's generation must constantly remind ourselves, when talking to this generation, that they are neither our, nor his Mama's children. They have ushered in a new worldview on racial matters, just as new realities require. They go right over our heads at times, like we did to our parents. We must work, deliberately, not to talk down to them, to put them down, nor ever patronize them. Instead, we must listen to them, take them seriously, give a round of applause when they act like the critical thinkers we taught them to be and eagerly join them to make of this old world a new one.

I sincerely apologize to them on behalf of almost Brother Bill Clinton.

Dr. Bill Turner is a noted educator, writer and thinker who called Winston-Salem home for many years. Reach him at bill-turner@comcast.net.

The Modern Samaritan as DAVENPORT employees see it



The entrance to the new Samaritan Ministries



(L-R) Mary Giunca gives the DAVENPORT team a tour of the new facilities: Brittany Hairston, Dionne Brown, John Davenport, Nathan Baskett, Mary Giunca, Grandin Howell, Tysha Smoot (behind) and Tia Smith (not pictured).



(L-R) A few DAVENPORT employees are in the kitchen serving lunch alongside of a few veteran volunteers: Dionne Brown, Brittany Hairston, Gayle and Brian.



Grandin Howell
Guest Columnist

get everything done that we want to do? In today's world, we may not always have the ability to dismount our donkey and tend to the injured, as is often pictured historically.

Nor may it be feasible to quit our jobs and go on a life-long journey into the depths of a foreign land to heal the sick, as is often envisioned vocationally. Even with our lives being pulled in every direction these days, there must be a way we can maintain the fabric of society while helping those in our own community.

DAVENPORT employees did that very thing by setting out to discover what a modern-day Samaritan might look like and how would one remain effective as a Samaritan given this modern time-crunching landscape.

DAVENPORT employees had the opportunity to volunteer at Samaritan

All too often does it feel like it gets increasingly difficult to dedicate time to help those in need when we still can't

Ministries in Winston-Salem late last month. The handful of volunteers were paired alongside a group of existing volunteer "regulars" and within minutes they were receiving directions to and fro with orders like that of a military drill sergeant. There was no messing around, especially for those who were in the kitchen.

If you have ever worked in a kitchen environment, you may be well acquainted with the pressures of short deadlines, quick turnarounds, and fast but efficient movements. This soup kitchen was no exception. The regulars knew the pace at which people and processes needed to move in order to get food out and our volunteers needed to move at that pace or get out of the way!

The whole experience was just like that. Straight to the point with no funny business. And it was refreshing to see. That's not to say there was no levity or laughing involved, because there was certainly plenty of that. But for an organization like that to run in any other way would be perilous, both in the way they house the 80-plus residents each night or when it comes to feeding as many people as possible that may come through their doors.

Samaritan Ministries resides in a brand new building that is only two years old, but

as Mary Giunca, Marketing Director at Samaritan Ministries of Forsyth County, explained, "This is a big step up from our old location." What we saw in this new place was a sense of dedication and energy. As well as a sense of urgency. An immediacy that people's lives were being transformed one plate and one stay at a time and there was no time to waste.

During our time at Samaritan Ministries, we got to meet a few people that exuded the modern sense of the word Samaritan. Such as that of the story of Brian, who works for a technology company here in Winston-Salem. His company often volunteers on the third Thursday of the month. However, with the need being so great, on the following Thursday he chooses to come by himself to volunteer, and again when there happens to be five Thursdays in that month. He's a man who runs a viable business, but also has a heart for the people of his city and makes time to ensure that its people are taken care of.

And just like that we saw the epitome of what a modern Samaritan looked like. And it wasn't anything specific to Brian or Gayle, or any of the other volunteers or staff we met that day. It became immensely clear that being a Samaritan was more than just random, occasional acts of kind-

ness; it really was a lifestyle.

In our time at Samaritan Ministries, we were able to see by example the drive that the modern day Samaritan needs to possess in order to remain relevant.

There were two driving factors that made these everyday people effective Samaritans: 1. Effective Samaritans make time for the things that matter; and 2. Effective Samaritans stay consistent regardless of personal or professional pressures. Just as we saw in the mission of Samaritan Ministries, people should consistently be given the dignity and respect they deserve while being fostered to grow holistically in a consistent and sustainable manner.

We are excited to see there are others out there who are also striving toward that same goal as seen in the devotion of Brian, his company, and in the continuing work at Samaritan Ministries. We look forward to working with Samaritan Ministries in the future and encourage anyone looking for a place to volunteer to contact Samaritan Ministries. They will gladly enlist you.

Grandin Howell is marketing coordinator for engineering consultant DAVENPORT in Winston-Salem.