

Helping Haiti during nation's time of crisis

America has to make decisions on Aristide

WILLIAM RASPBERRY



What should the United States do about Haiti?

That Caribbean country, already the poorest in the Americas, is - again - on a mad dash to chaos. As of this writing, at least 47 people had been killed in violent demonstrations against the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and it was generally acknowledged that the majority of the protesters had voted for Aristide.

Government forces managed to forestall a major demonstration set for last week by erecting huge, blazing barricades. But rebels remained in control of some

eight towns, including Gonaives - significantly, the starting place for the 1985 uprising that led to the ouster of the dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

The government's police force is ill-trained and poorly equipped, and there is no army because Aristide disbanded it for deposing him in 1991. He returned to Haiti from his American exile in 1994, with the aid of about 20,000 American troops, and finished his term. Barred from seeking consecutive terms, he ran again in 2000. Legislative elections that his party won are widely seen as corrupt. It is a thoroughgoing mess. So what should we do?

Doing nothing, the Rev. Walter E. Fauntroy told me when I put the question to

him, is not an option. The former D.C. congressman and current president of the National Black Leadership Roundtable in Washington pointed out that the hordes of refugees certain to be headed for American shores may be the least of it.

The corruption and instability of the island, he said, have encouraged organized crime, and Haiti looms as a major shipment point for illegal drugs bound for the United States and elsewhere. Unless the chaos can be headed off, he warned, Haiti's problems will become the problems of the Americas.

What can we do? A refugee camp at Guantanamo Bay naval station in Cuba could handle 15,000 to 20,000

refugees, a spokesman for the U.S.



Aristide

Southern Command headquarters said last week, outlining one short-term option. Or we could send the refugees back to Haiti

the moral equivalent of capturing people fleeing a blazing building and returning them to the fire.

And for the longer term? For several years now, Fauntroy has been advocating that America take eight steps, most of them dealing with ways of forcing the Haitian government to negotiate its way toward true democracy and strengthen-

ing a fledgling movement toward civil society. He has urged the United States to move against drug trafficking, revoke visas and make arrests, and he has urged support for those groups - amazingly, still operating in Haiti - that call for greatly increased transparency and accountability among Haiti's leadership.

Unhappily, he says, we may have come to the time for his eighth step: establishing Aristide in comfortable exile.

"I used to believe that Aristide, being a priest and a man of God, would avoid the temptations of greed and power and violence," said Fauntroy, himself a Baptist minister and a disciple of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. "My great disappointment is

his willingness to use violence as a tool of intimidation and repression. We have a particular interest, because a Haitian society in disarray becomes prey to all the forces that destabilize us here in America. We can't just stand and watch.

"In 1986, when there was a similar situation of crime and corruption and violence, we essentially offered Duvalier a nonviolent transfer to one of his villas in France, letting him take with him whom he would and enough money to take care of him for the rest of his life.

"Perhaps it's time we made a similar offer to Aristide. That, of course, won't solve Haiti's problems. But it might make a solution possible."

WILLIAM RASPBERRY is a Washington Post columnist.

2004 shaping up as campaign of non-issues

VAL ATKINSON

Democrats want to talk about kitchen table issues and Republicans want to talk about character, values, the flag and patriotism.

Since 1968 we've only had two presidents that weren't Republicans - Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. But no matter who the Republican president was they always had the same diversionary message. The country could be suffering from inflation, joblessness, war, public health issues and a bleak future.... It doesn't matter because real issues will not be discussed for very long.

In 1968 the Vietnam war was the center-piece issue, but Richard Nixon claimed that the No. 1 issue in America was law and order. In 1972 when the war was still raging and race riots were the talk at cocktail parties, he ran against "busing" and that dreadful political label - Liberal Democrat. In 1980, we had gone from inflation to run-a-way stagflation, but Reagan talked about riding "tall in the saddle", on his way to the shining city on the hill. And in 1984 when we had record deficits, polluted air and water because of relaxed environmental standards and eroded worker gains and workplace safety violations due to Regan's pro business, anti labor positions, Reagan was still unwilling to discuss the issues. He continued to talk about that shining city on the hill and how proud we all should be to be Americans. He almost made us forget that we were

unemployed.

In 1988 George H.W. Bush prediction came true. When he ran against Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Republican Primary race he said that Reagan's economic plan was little more than "Voodoo" economics. And that only blue smoke and mirrors could make it work. Well, that's exactly what H.W. inherited. But instead of trying to fix the economy he too got in bed with the wealthy that financed his campaign. He ended up in Iraq and forgot about the economy. But he and Vice President Dan Quayle didn't forget about "family values".

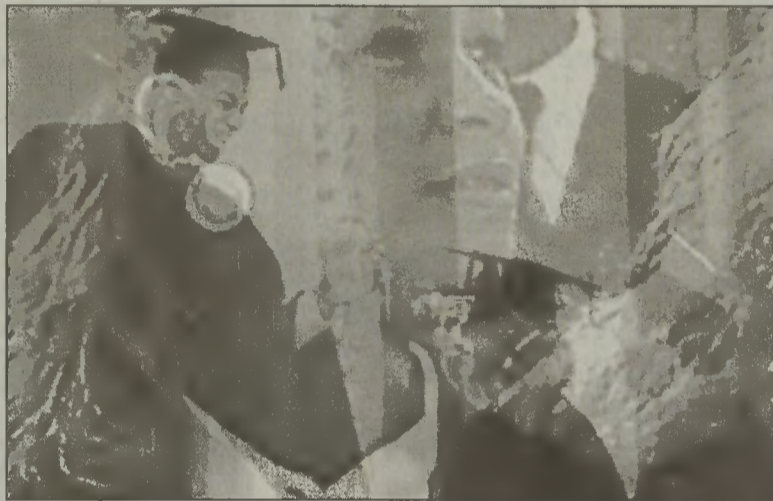
And in 2000 with a huge surplus and the country at peace he managed to get us into an unjustified war and change a huge surplus into a half trillion-dollar deficit. And while all this was happening Dubya Bush ran on prayer in schools, school choice, abortions, and guns.

While Republicans were capturing the hearts and subconscious minds of America, Democrats were trying to appeal to America's cognitive reasoning and intellectual prowess. Republicans knew what motivated America better than Democrats did.

The big question in my mind is how long will America continue to be paties for the extreme conservative wing of the Republican Party? During election campaigns they talk about God, country, guns and family values. And as soon as they get in office they start their reverse Robin Hood act by taking from the poor and giving to the rich.

How long America, before you awaken from your pathetic, gullible slumber?

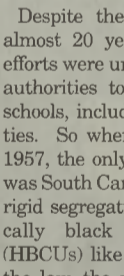
VAL ATKINSON is a syndicated columnist.



HBCUs important to education

By James E. Clyburn
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Two months before my 14th birthday, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed segregation in our public schools. This landmark case, *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, embodied five cases, the first of which, *Briggs v. Elliott*, began in Clarendon County, South Carolina just 20 miles from my hometown of Sumter. On May 17th the nation will celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Brown*. Its impact has been both astounding and confounding.



Clyburn

Despite the court's ruling it would be almost 20 years later before any serious efforts were undertaken by South Carolina's authorities to integrate the state's public schools, including its colleges and universities. So when I graduated high school in 1957, the only state institution open to me was South Carolina State. And although the rigid segregation that gave birth to historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) like my alma mater is no longer the law, the missions of these institutions remain relevant and valuable. And some would argue more so than ever before.

Before desegregation, HBCUs were responsible for educating 90% of African Americans receiving post secondary education in the nation. Today, 15 percent of blacks attend the nation's 103 HBCUs. Those institutions, however, are responsible for 30% of African American students who earn undergraduate degrees. HBCU graduates now comprise 65% of all black doctors, 50% of all black engineers and 35% of all black lawyers.

Many of the benefits of HBCUs are intan-

gible like the sense of empowerment and self confidence students report they gain on these campuses. And, because many HBCU students come from low income families, and are the first in their families to attend college, they find a sense of camaraderie and support on these campuses they might not enjoy at non HBCU institutions.

The socio-economic conditions of these students, however, create significant challenges for HBCUs like North Carolina's Bennett and St. Augustine Colleges. Bennett recently regained full accreditation after being on probation due to mounting debt. St. Augustine is currently on probation for the same reason. The next step - losing accreditation - means losing access to federal grant programs, another crushing blow to an institution already in financial trouble.

Unfortunately, HBCUs do not receive the same level of financial support from the federal government that other schools enjoy. In fact, the 18 historically black land-grant colleges are currently owed as much as \$18.8 million by the federal government. The 2002 Farm Bill mandated the lowest threshold that must be allocated annually to HBCU land grant institutions. I find it confounding that the Republican-controlled Congress refuses to meet that minimum level.

I shudder to think of what our world would be without the astounding contributions of HBCU graduates such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Toni Morrison, W.E.B. DuBois, Wilma Rudolph, and many of my colleagues here in the Congress. And, we will continue our fight to insure that HBCUs continue to provide a nurturing and affordable high quality of education to those destined to succeed us and the likes of the others mentioned above.

JAMES E. CLYBURN (D-S.C.) is U.S. House Democratic Caucus vice chair.

OUR VOICES

Stand with MLK's principles

The writer is co-founder of the Coalition of Peace and Justice and president of the Charlotte Chapter of the Islamic Political Party of America.

Speaking as one of the organizers of the Martin Luther King Jr. peace rally, I can bear witness to the fact that some of those that profess to support King in this city (they know who they are) only want a watered-down version of this great civil rights leader and peace advocate. I was amazed to find out that many who claim to support MLK did not want to be associated with a peace rally in King's honor.

Many of King's contemporaries turned against him when he spoke against the war on Vietnam. It is safe to say that many who claim to honor him would not stand with him if he were here today. In days like these, when we are facing much of the same issues 40 years later, such as unjust wars and the struggle for civil liberties/rights and a right-wing Bush administration that he would surely oppose, King would encourage protest over parades and actions over dreaming.

The past celebrations surrounding the King holiday in Charlotte brought forth vast differences in the message of MLK. As we remember King, who was a great supporter of the First Amendment, remember his words: "The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. The true neighbor will risk his position, his prestige and even his life for the welfare of others."

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