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The million-dollar club brainstorm

By James Clingman
NATIONAL NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Brainstorms are not unfamiliar to me. Sometimes they are great and sometimes they are not so great. My latest one came when I was busy continuing my campaign asking everyone to send at least \$5 to the Piney Woods School in Mississippi. I wondered how we could sustain the tremendously positive response we've received from you, the readers of this column, and from others who learned about it on the Internet.

The new brainstorm hit me, and I was at it once again, trying to do something that would bring us closer together and aid us in our quest for economic freedom. I would establish the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club (BMDC).

I can hear you lovingly saying, "All right, Jim, what are you trying to get us to do this time?" I say "lovingly" because you have responded that way to my articles on economic empowerment for more than 10 years now. I am truly blessed to have made so many friends throughout this country and in other parts of the world because of the articles I write. So, here's the deal.



Clingman

I am looking for 200,000 dedicated individuals to commit to being members of the BMDC, which will simply mean that you will send \$5 to a worthwhile project, institution, or cause, when the call goes out. There will be no more than five calls per year, thus, the cost of being in the BMDC will be no more than \$25 per year. Of course, we will increase our membership and the number of causes as we progress, but starting out we simply want to show, by doing of course, what can be accomplished by working together, regardless of class, status, or any other superficial barriers that lie between and among us.

Eventually, we will seek out those of you who have an interest in working with the BMDC to recommend beneficiaries of the \$1 million raised every time the call is issued and the 200,000 respond. As the BMDC grows, and it will grow, we will also expand our reach and our assistance to causes in Africa and in the Caribbean. There is much to do and much we can do if we work together, each one doing just a little, so that many of us can have a lot.

The BMDC will not be my organization, nor will any of the funds ever be sent to me. They will always be sent directly to the beneficiary, just as we are sending our \$5 to Piney Woods School. For instance, as I noted in the first mention of this idea, we could start a similar campaign for the other black boarding schools (there are three others) in the country. We could assist black colleges or help various communities such as Princeville, N.C. and Pembroke, Ill. We could help purchase medical equipment in Africa or help build schools in African villages. The possibilities are endless, but we must commit first – and then follow through on our commitment.

Members of the BMDC will probably know about causes and projects that could use a million dollars, and your input in that regard will be quite valuable. I have never claimed to know everything, but one thing I do know: If we work together in support of one another, we will win. Also, if we use the instantaneous call-and-response of the Internet, there will be less need for protracted campaigns and advertising, no banquets necessary, and no begging corporations to give us the money.

The BMDC will have formed a solid foundation that can immediately respond to a need; if someone or some other entity wants to jump on board, that's fine, but at least we will be making the first step and putting our own money on the table first.

With all of the past efforts to "show" others our presence on the Internet, to demonstrate how much we spend via "Black Out Days," and to make every attempt to convince others that we are valuable economic assets to this country, the BMDC will devote its resources to showing black people our own value, and illustrating to our youth that we are indeed the remnant of those slaves who could not be killed, those who survived so that we could be free, those who put their nickels and dimes together to help one another.

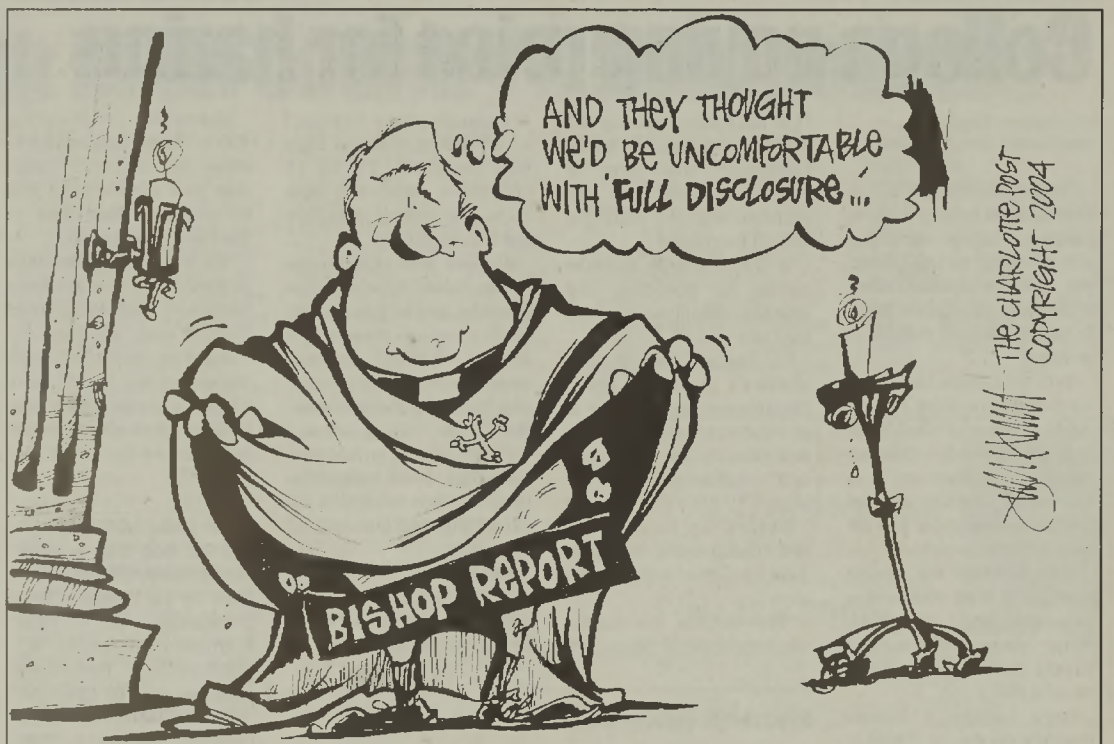
Please don't start analyzing this effort yet. Don't get beset by the paralysis of analysis, with which we are quite familiar. Let's keep this as simple as possible. Don't start worrying about who will get your five dollars and who is going to keep tabs on the money. Don't immediately start trying to figure out how YOU can benefit from this effort. We get by giving, so let's do this based on the very sound principles of Sowing and Reaping: You always reap what you sow; you always reap later than you sow; and you always reap more than you sow.

Here's a quote from a BMDC member:

"Just a brief message to express how moved I am by this effort. A five dollar contribution is such a small amount on an individual basis to push the economic growth of our people. Sign me up!"

Let's sow some seeds through the Blackonomics Million Dollar Club. All it takes is a commitment of \$5 to be a member. How do you join? Just send an e-mail saying, "Sign me up!" to jlclingman@blackonomics.com. I will keep you informed of our progress. Or, mail or fax your name, address, and phone number to P.O. Box 6722, Cincinnati, Ohio 45206, or fax number 513/489 4132. Let's do this.

JAMES CLINGMAN is a syndicated columnist and a professor in Cincinnati, Ohio.



Save people – not Social Security

By Star Parker
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan recently raised eyebrows when, in Capitol Hill testimony about the federal budget, he suggested that we need to cut Social Security benefits. The chairman's testimony was a reminder that in the process of trying to fix government, we inevitably turn to the same individuals who helped create our problems.

Perhaps it is presumptuous for a black ex-welfare mom to lecture the chairman of the Federal Reserve about public policy. However, African Americans suffer daily and disproportionately under a broken and unfair Social Security regime. For blacks this is not an abstract and academic exercise in public policy as it apparently is for Mr. Greenspan. We need real solutions and it is time to start getting clear

about the facts.

Let's recall that Mr. Greenspan chaired a commission in 1983 whose mission was to fix Social Security. The reforms produced then supposedly put the system on sound fiscal footing that would take it well into the current century. However, within a decade it was clear that Social Security was still in as bad a shape as ever.

As result of the work I have done through my organization, CURE, it is clear to me that our priorities must be refocused on saving people and not a bankrupt and broken Social Security so-called system.

Social Security is not a system at all, but simply a tax program and a government spending program. Use of the word "system" is a great marketing ploy for politicians to justify a payroll tax as the source of funds for the Social Security checks sent

out during the course of the year to retirees. It is a testament to the public relations skills of our political class that Americans believe that their Social Security taxes are actually some kind of investment in a fund that will pay them benefits at retirement.

This cute tax scheme worked for years because we had many people working for every retiree. At one point there were more than 40 working Americans for every person retired. However, today this is down to three to one and we are well on our way to it dropping to two to one.

Simple math shows that the only options to maintain the current Social Security arrangement is to raise payroll taxes paid in, cut the amount of money paid out, and/or raise the retirement age so that workers pay the tax over more years and retirees are on this planet for

fewer years to collect. The Greenspan commission of 1983 opted for raising taxes and the retirement age. That didn't work, so now Mr. Greenspan wants to increase the retirement age even more and reduce payments to retirees.

Median black household income in 2001 was less than \$30,000. The current Social Security tax, five times what it was when the program started sixty years ago, extracts the funds that these families could have saved if Alan Greenspan's retirement spending program was not financed on their backs. If these families could put their payroll tax in a fund that just invested in government bonds, they would get twice what Social Security promises them at retirement.

STAR PARKER is president of Coalition for Urban Renewal and Education, and author of "Uncle Sam's Plantation."

Affirmative action war still rages

GEORGE E. CURRY



You knew that it would happen – you just didn't know when.

A group of conservative students at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island are offering a whites-only scholarship. Valued at only \$250 each, African-Americans weren't going to be lining up for the scholarships under any circumstances. But that's not the point.

Jason Mattera, president of the College Republicans, the group offering the scholarships, said, "We think that if you want to treat someone according to character and how well they achieve academically, then skin color shouldn't be an option."

Skin color is not an option – we are all born the way God created us. But taking advantage of scholarships for people of color is an option, as Mattera, who is of Puerto Rican descent, knows. He received a \$5,000 minority scholarship offered by his university. Now, he can join Clarence Thomas and Ward Connerly in the Affirmative Action Hypocrites Hall of Fame. To qualify for membership, one has to personally benefit from affirmative action and later denounce the race-conscious and gender-conscious programs.

In addition to whites-only scholarships, other sopho-

moric attempts at humor include so-called affirmative action bake sales.

At Southern Methodist University in Dallas, for example, Young Conservatives of Texas offered cookies at different prices. White males were charged \$1 for each cookie, white women 75 cents, Hispanics 50 cents and African-Americans 25 cents. Similar "bake sales" were held at Columbia University, the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Texas, Northwestern University, the University of Michigan and the University of Indiana.

A flyer distributed by Columbia's Conservative Club asserted that Republicans "need to get preferential admissions treatment so they can receive equal representation on campus." Many white students were not amused. Asad Sheth, a student at Columbia, told the school newspaper, "I think this approach trivializes the importance of the subject matter."

If affirmative action weren't such a serious issue, these campus antics would be laughable. Antics aside, we should not be lulled into believing that because the Supreme Court ruled last year that it is lawful for the University of Michigan Law School to operate an affirmative action program, within certain boundaries, that the war over affirmative action has ended.

Within two weeks of the Michigan ruling, Ward Connerly, who spearheaded passage of the Proposition

209 anti-affirmative action measure in California, announced that he was going to launch a similar ballot initiative in Michigan.

It's important to remember that the Supreme Court permitted – but did not require – universities to use affirmative action programs. That means that universities, employers and administrators of local and state contracts are not compelled to have an affirmative action program. It also means that California's Proposition 209 outlawing affirmative action at the state level remains in place.

Threats to affirmative action come in different forms. Americans for a Fair Chance [www.fairchance.org] published a recent report titled, "Anti-Affirmative Action Threats in the States: 1997-203." The report notes that over the past six years, legislation or resolutions that would have banned affirmative action were introduced in 28 states, ballot initiative campaigns were launched in two and an executive order was issued in one. Most of those efforts failed.

Therefore, it should be clear that this fight is far from over. We should not let these silly white scholarships and phony bake sales blind us to the real threat posed by the right-wing campaigns to eliminate affirmative action.

Some voters are duped into supporting Proposition 209-like measures, in part, because the news media does such a poor job defining affirmative action. It does such a lousy job because it

has adopted the language of the far right. Journalists should be reminded that affirmative action and so-called preference programs are not interchangeable terms.

News outlets should also be criticized when they conduct or write about poorly worded surveys on affirmative action and then erroneously proclaim that most Americans are against affirmative action. Most polls show that the contrary is true, if the questions are asked in a neutral way. It's only when the news media adopts the inflammatory and misleading language of the far right that the true meaning of affirmative action gets obliterated.

With affirmative action being attacked on so many levels, progressives can't afford to rest.

"Supporters of affirmative action must remain vigilant in their efforts to educate voters and legislators about the importance of affirmative action," the FAIR report stated. "Further, efforts must continue to protect and expand these important programs; so access to education and opportunities in the workforce can be achieved and guaranteed for all."

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. His most recent book is "The Best of Emerge Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. Curry's weekly radio commentary is syndicated by Walls Communications and is carried on more than 100 stations. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.