

FORUM

Beware of what you read



Nigel Alston

Motivational Moments

The most influential person in my life was my grandmother. How did she influence me? With a switch.

- Chuck Jackson

It sounded too good to be true.

It was another invitation from cyberspace.

"See the note below," it began, "it's worth it!!!"

It was another forwarded e-mail message. A contest this time.

"Everyone is to resend it to 15 individuals," it continued. "Please read and forward to as many friends as possible. We've checked up on this and this is no joke or a chain letter or something. So, please help and pass on. Thank you, and here you go!!!"

And here ever I went. This time it seemed real. I

had a chance to win a trip for two or cash. Microsoft and Disney were working together to conduct an experiment: e-mail tracing. A program developed to track everyone who received the message via e-mail. The incentive - 1,300 people would receive \$5,000 in cold hard cash and up to 13,000 more would get a free trip for two to Disney for one week during the summer of 1999 at Disney's expense.

The message was forwarded to me from a friend with this disclaimer: "I rarely do this. Toss if you don't want to play."

He was one of 41 people who received it from another friend.

"It's no lie," one person said.

Several people who forwarded the message said they called Disney themselves. That personal assurance was enough to keep the message moving.

"Guys it's true," another person wrote. "I too called Disney myself; they are standing behind it 100 percent. So send, send, send, send, okay?"

How could you resist participating in the contest?

After all it had been verified.

"This is no joke guys. I called up Disneyland myself and they are really going to do this," added yet another typed message. "The reason is

that they don't believe it could be possibly done. So why don't we show them what's up and get a free trip to Disney World."

It might not be true, but it sure is worth a try was the attitude of a recipient of the message who reluctantly kept it going. What do you have to lose?

The message originated with Walt Disney Jr. himself. You can't get any better than that, can you?

The catch?

There is no Walt Disney Jr. It's a rumor that took on a life in cyberspace. With the push of a button it is imposed on you and you feel obligated to include others.

How are you suppose to know if it is true or not? Especially when others tell you they have confirmed it. What do you base your decision on to determine whether to believe or not? Why do we accept so much as the gospel truth?

It's like Ripley's Believe It or Not! The odd and unusual could be real. Like these messages I have received recently.

Urban legend has it that a police officer tells people not to flash their lights at any car on the road at night without their lights turned on. It's part of a gang initiation. If you flash your lights at the person, he then has to chase you and shoot at you.

Is it true or false? What about the warning for business travelers and college students to be careful because there is an organized ring stealing people's kidneys after getting them drunk. True or false?

Or maybe you've heard this one.

Did you know that black folks are going to lose the right to vote unless certain provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act are renewed in 2007?

True or false? This is the most recent one. "Spread the word," it begins. "On July 3, 1999, during a ceremonial event at sea, a monument honoring the millions of men, women and children who lost their lives en route to and at the hands of slavery between the 15th and 19th centuries will be lowered into the Atlantic Ocean's Middle Passage perhaps never to be seen again."

Believe it or not, only the last one is true.

Don't believe me, check it out yourself. Checking for yourself is a good thing to do anyway.

See you in Disney World.

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The unspoken legacy of King

Guest Columnist

Earl Ofari Hutchinson

On countless occasions President Clinton has talked of his deep appreciation of the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the struggle for peace and social justice.

But there's another part of the King legacy that Clinton can't appreciate.

In a perverse irony many of his harshest political enemies have been the southern Republicans and they owe their existence to King and the civil rights movement.

For nearly a century following the collapse of Reconstruction in the 1880s the Republican party was virtually extinct in the South. As late as 1964, not one of the 41 Congressional representatives from the five Deep South states were Republic-

cans. The barrage of Civil Rights marches, demonstrations, sit-ins and protests that battered down the legal barriers of segregation during the early 1960s changed that. Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater rode the first tide of white backlash in 1964 and opposed the Civil Rights bill, railed against big government and championed states' rights.

At the 1964 Republican convention, 366 of the 375 Southern delegates backed Goldwater. King strongly denounced the bigotry of the Goldwater campaign, and worked tirelessly to rally black voters against the Republicans. King correctly saw that the wave of newly enfranchised black voters would energize the racially moribund Democratic party.

But he also realized that many white Democrats were unreconstructed segregationists and race baiters who would stampede into the Republican party after the passage of the Civil Rights bill, and that they would be major political players in the South for years to come.

Republican presidents Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan and George Bush saw the same political possibilities. They milked the Southern strategy for all it was worth with generous doses of

racially tinged code words, slaps at big government, rants against Civil Rights and social programs, and by ignoring black voters and actively courting whites.

The new breed of Southern Republican congressional leaders such as Senate Majority leader Trent Lott, the defrocked Newt Gingrich, House representatives Lindsey O. Graham, Bob Barr, Dick Armey and independent counsel Kenneth Starr who are spearheading the charge to dump Clinton cut their political teeth on the anti-federal government, anti-civil rights and anti-social programs movement in the South.

There is also the deep suspicion that Lott and Barr are not just Republican conservatives outraged by Clinton's moral misbehavior but Southern politicians who cozy up to race baiting groups such as the Council for Conservative Citizens.

Even worse for Clinton, the Southern Republicans have had the political clout to get their way. During the impeachment debate Southern Republicans occupied 82 out of the 228 Republican seats in the House. They form the biggest and most unified political block and marched in near lock step in voting for all four articles of impeach-

ment. King did not panic at the racial counter-assault he foresaw from white Southern politicians. His antidote to combat it was to create alliances with whites and other non-blacks, massive vote turnouts, intense political organizing and that black elected officials be effective advocates for minority needs within both parties and not just serve as mouthpieces for the Democrats.

King would have been pleased to see that many blacks turned out in big numbers in last November's election and their votes made a big difference in state and local elections in the South.

He would have loudly condemned impeachment as part of the strategy by the Southern Republicans to roll back Civil Rights, further gut social programs and win the White House in 2000. And almost certainly, he would have been among the first to hit the streets to protest their naked power grab.

This would have been his way to undo a part of his legacy that he could and did not want.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of The Crisis in Black and Black. He can be reached at ehutchi344@aol.com

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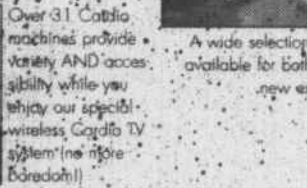


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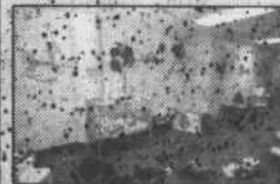
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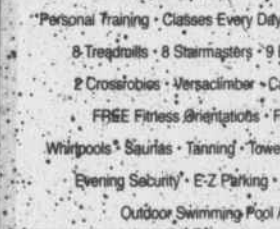
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