

**The
BLACK
C o M M e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

Issue 165 – January 5, 2006

Bruce's Beat

Do "War People" exist?

Does Condi deserve loyalty?

Black Mayors don't get a pass

e-Mail from readers

by BC Associate Editor Bruce Dixon

[click here to become a](#)

bc PAID SUBSCRIBER

(Use the back button on your browser to return to the previous page)

Printer Friendly – PDF Format



Copyright © 2002 - 2005
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved

In **BC**'s quest to illuminate some of the unpleasant truths confronting black America, outrageous ridicule is a most potent weapon. Near the beginning of the Iraq war **BC** skewered the war pornography of the embedded press, dressed the already very scary Janice Rogers Brown in a Clarence Thomas fright wig, and echoed Amiri Baraka when he called Condoleezza a skeeza. We even ventured to offer our own helpful suggestions concerning the real relationship between the president and his most trusted advisor.

But being outrageous in a time when outrages are the stuff of everyday public policy is increasingly difficult. Cartoonists in the mainstream media are boldly going to truth-telling places where till a short time ago, only **BC** would have ventured. The Bush administration has, in the year just past, lowered its ethical, moral and legal standards to nightmarish depths we could not have imagined. As they lower their standards of behavior we at **BC** intend to raise the level of our analysis in the coming year and stay ahead of the pack, delivering what our readers demand.

Some **BC** readers expect no better of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice than they are seeing, though we disagree with the reasons they offer:

"Bruce, peace, you have to understand the History of Europeans to understand what is going on today. Rice is a product of the teachings of War People. She was raised in a Euro educated household and went to a Euro college and lived in a Euro society and therefore looked African but was really Euro so don't be upset at what you see. Don't be upset, just try to play defense and be ready when she and other Black Euro turn on the race."

Peace

Phil,

Dear Phil,

We at **BC** don't believe there's any such thing as a "war people," or that race is the real dividing line here. Mobutu, Idi Amin and Papa Doc were all black. The unelected crews that masquerade as the government of Haiti today are black. The folks who engineered the genocide in Rwanda were and still are as black as their victims. Clarence Thomas is black. The "race" Condi Rice and her ilk have turned their faces against is the human one.

That said, African Americans are different from the rest of America. At the beginning of this illegal war, two out of three blacks opposed it, compared to one in three whites. I recall as a young man almost forty years ago hearing brothers recently returned from the war in Vietnam telling how until some time in late 1966 or early 1967 Vietcong deliberately tried to spare black soldiers when possible. When the Iranians took US embassy personnel hostage in the late 1970s they initially offered the black ones a different deal from the white ones. The world outside North America recognizes that we are different from our white neighbors.

Abroad, we may all be Americans, but we come from and most of us will return to very different Americas. Part of our outrage at the Colin Powells and Condi Rices is due to the fact that their careers are helping to destroy the good name of black America around the world.

Respectfully,

bd

A deeply misguided reader, Anita insists that we ought not "bash" the Secretary of State. A portion of her email to us reads as follows:

"This note is in reference to negative statements made about Condoleezza Rice. It is my opinion that she does her job well. She may be our president someday. We as Blacks in America need to stand behind our Black folks right or wrong who are close to white leaders in power. I believe no one ever forgets where they come from and what we as a people have endured. Support and love Condoleezza Rice. She may be your first Black woman president. Stop bashing her."

Dear Anita,

We don't bash at **BC**. We do truthful and incisive commentary. Black Republican appointees like Clarence Thomas, Colin Powell and son and Condi Rice are tokens who owe their symbolic importance to the existence of a black polity, but whose every public act violates the interests of that polity. Black Democrats on the other hand, are generally obliged to pay enough lip service to the Black Consensus to get elected, after which their performance in many cases has been less than stellar.

The notion that the black faces, whether Republicans or Democrats appointed or elected to high office are automatically entitled to loyalty of the black masses is just plain silly.

Respectfully,

bd

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

Back in September, on the eve of what used to be called Congressional Black Caucus week, **BC** and CBC Watch issued report cards for all members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Hard copies were handed out at the Congressional Black Caucus affair. They were graded on nine "bright line" issues that included the vote to authorize the illegal war in Iraq, and the hideous bankruptcy bill which passed early in the current legislative session. Several members of the black caucus flunked outright, with the lowest grades going to David Scott of Georgia and Harold Ford of Tennessee, who was so chagrined that he absented himself from most of the affairs of the Congressional Black Caucus that week.

Brother Clay wrote us thusly,

"We have a few CBC members who hope to exist without accountability. The stakes are too high in this political climate and the losses for black people are already staggering. These fence sitters should not be allowed to pursue personal political goals on the back of constituents who so desperately need a voice in the halls of the Washington. What other cause is more noble than the call of the poor and deprived? No black politician should be allowed a pass. Keep tapping the shoulders of these backsliders."

Dear Clay,

We thank you for your support. Please be assured that **BC** and CBC Watch will be doing further follow-up on the performance of members of the Congressional Black Caucus, from its stellar performers like Rep. Conyers of Detroit and Cynthia McKinney of Georgia to underachievers like Senator Barack Obama and derelicts like Harold Ford and David Scott.

BC thinks it is time to step outside the uncritical celebration of black business people who've "made it" and black officials who get elected or appointed. We've been boastin', roastin', toastin' and coastin' too long. It's time to confiscate all the free black passes and do some critical analyses of where the black political class is leading us, and whether it's anyplace we really want to go. Toward this end we intend to deepen the conversation around the performance of the black political class who serve as mayors and functionaries in such cities as Atlanta, Detroit and New Orleans.

Jerry Watts asked the question directly in the **BC** cover story of November 17, 2005: "What Use Are Black Mayors?"

"...scholars of black urban politics spent far more energy explaining how a certain black candidate was elected mayor as opposed to explaining whether his election meant anything substantive to the residents of the city. ...

"Many of us did not ask simple but crucial questions. For instance, did black mayors govern in ways that differed from their white predecessors? Were black mayors good for the urban poor? Did black mayors expand housing opportunities for the impoverished? Did they commit more resources to schools in poor and black neighborhoods?"

As the new year begins, too many of these questions remain unasked and unanswered. **BC** will do its part to move that discussion along. And we promise that nobody will get a pass.

Respectfully,

bd

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

Finally, the recent Radio *BC* commentary which addressed the question of whether Hispanics are an ethnic group continues to generate informed comment from our readers.

Mr. Johnson writes

"I found this book to be most enlightening: Afro-Latin America, 1800–2000 by George Andrew Reid, one of quite a number of works on race and ethnicity in Latin American societies.

"I've made it my personal mission to visit as many Afro-Latin societies in Latin American countries as possible. In general these communities are for all extensive purposes invisible; literally hidden out of sight by a completely Eurocentric elite. There are Afro-descended people wherever the Spanish or Portuguese kept slaves, i.e., everywhere. Even Argentina once had a mulatto president. However, extreme poverty and discrimination has reduced the Afro-Latin populations over the past 200 years in a de facto genocide. As a general rule, Latins officially talk about class and ignore race, while North Americans talk incessantly about race and ignore class as a result of the respective national narratives – the USA is a classless society; racism does not exist in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, etc. Both narratives are national propaganda to keep the white elites ensconced. We in the US are moving toward a Latin model – the colorblind society – because, it diffuses black consciousness and political protest...

"However, in both cases there is a change in consciousness afoot. It was very heartening for the Afro-descended Hugo Chavez to state that, 'I am African' in front of an international forum. I'm sure it sent tremors throughout Latin America. Lula of Brasil is Afro-descended, and, today the indigenous Evo Morales won the presidency of Bolivia. The potential of the indigenous descended and Afro-descended populations of Latin America to coalesce in order to challenge the established order is promising. Because there are well over 100 million Afro-descended Latin Americans, we 30 million Afro-descended North Americans would do well to become aware of their situation. Thus, in a very real sense we have a stake in how the 'Hispanic' identity evolves. We can influence to what extent the African presence in Latin America continues to be marginalized and purposely hidden from view.

Unfortunately, the "Hispanic" immigrants to the United States are heavily Eurocentric because of color and class. Cuban and Brazilian immigrants are indicative of that trend. Miami is full of "white" Cubans and Brazilians, but both Cuba and Brazil are anywhere from 40 – 60% Afro-descended depending on who you ask. Colombia is at least 30% Afro-descended, and the rural people being killed in the U.S. fueled war against cocaine and U.S. inflamed Colombian civil war are a majority black. Mr. Johnson continues:

"Of course the greatest influx of immigrants are from Mexico and Central America, which is mostly indigenous descended working class poor, many of whom are inculcated in the racist hierarchies of their respective countries. However, they are usually clear that they are not white, which is as it was in their respective homelands, and if not, they are certainly made aware by the racist US society.

"In conclusion, folks of color had better learn about, appreciate, and assist each other, and specifically Afro-descended people. In the globalized 21st Century, to be poor and powerless is to be colored. It's the W.E.B. DuBois's 20th Century color problem evolved into the 21st Century. The logical response is a globalized identity for people of color of not being "white", which is a social construct enforced by brute force. After all, we folks of color have far more in common in terms of our respective history vis a vis the Euro-American

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

hegemony of the last five hundred years, than not. In that sense I feel far more solidarity with Iraqis than the white folks I work with everyday. The Iraqis and my people have both been the targets of unfettered white American aggression and terror. There is even greater solidarity when I consider Latin America and especially Afro-Latin America, whose history is my history, just in a different language."

We value the comments and feedback of **BC** readers. We hope, in the coming year to give you some things to think about, some others worth writing to us about, and most of all, some information you can act upon.

Happy New Year.

bd

Please send your correspondence to **BC** Associate Editor Bruce A. Dixon at Bruce.Dixon@blackcommentator.com.