

**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 169 – February 2, 2006

Bruce's Beat
Oprah's protect-the-brand strategy
The two Democratic parties
Mass incarceration and economic development
Fetishizing the United Nations
e-Mail from readers

[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 - 2006
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved

Corporations are immortal, amoral externalizing machines. They exist above and outside the laws of man and God to rake in profits while making sure someone else pays the cost. When insurance companies lose billions in the stock market, they raise premiums and are awarded government bailouts. When electric utilities squander their monopoly profits on dangerous nukes, their rate payers and taxpayers must pay the price. When manufacturing corporations pollute the soil, air and water, any health effects and cleanup costs are somebody else's problem. Corporate accountability is unaccountability, pure and simple. So when media billionaire Oprah Winfrey acts like what she is – a marketing machine, a corporation – nobody should be the least bit surprised.

Brand Oprah and Corporate Accountability

In the January 19, 2006 installment of Freedom Rider, "Oprah's Best Self" **BC's** Margaret Kimberly expertly skewered Oprah Inc. for promoting the bogus work of a white ex-junkie she had every reason to believe was based on lies. More than a few **BC** readers wrote commending Ms. Kimberly's work. This is what one subscriber had to say:

Oprah failed to mention that she had been informed months before she anointed the book that it was a LIE. Nonetheless, for reasons that only she knows, she ignored this information, and declared the book a "must read." Only after being severely attacked by the country's press did Oprah withdraw her endorsement of the book and acknowledge that she had been wrong to imply that it was OK to tell a little lie as long as it was embedded in a larger truth. She then

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

decided to publicly attack the author in what I consider a vicious manner, striking a "Don't mess with Oprah" posture. I find her behavior extremely duplicitous and far from honorable and am totally unable to understand why she has been deified.

I don't know if Margaret K is going to write on this again, but my own view is that Oprah is a machine, an industry, a brand. Her prime motivation is to protect the brand. So after being outed for letting this liar on the air and hyping his book, her protect-the-brand strategy is to attack the author just like you said. Don't mess with Oprah.

By the way, I have sent in my \$50 membership check.

EB

Regular **BC** readers will know this is neither the first nor the worst instance of Brand Oprah's cynical abuse of the public trust to turn the dubious book of a self-serving liar into a best seller. Back in April of 2004, corporate Oprah boosted the book and launched the career of HIV-AIDS huckster J.L. King, who has made a nice living ever since spreading the racist, homophobic myth that the rise in HIV-AIDS among black women is due to secretive and predatory bisexual black men on the so-called "down low".

Unlike the Oprah show, **BC** actually consulted the Centers for Disease Control. We interviewed real HIV-AIDS researchers, public health professionals, and advocates of testing and treatment. In our [September 8, 2005](#) cover article, "The Low Down on the Down Low," they unanimously agreed that J.L. King's and Oprah Inc.'s lurid myth of bisexual black men on the DL as the principal transmission vector of HIV-AIDS in the African American community was unfounded and a dangerous misdirection away from real efforts to educate the public, combat the epidemic and save lives.

There is no doubt that the Oprah show, which featured low down J.L. King and helped legitimize his ghetto-centric and homophobic boogeyman theories about the spread of HIV set back the cause of addressing the epidemic which is ravaging black America.

America, and especially black America, is still waiting for the apology to come from Oprah Inc. for boosting the fraudulent "Down Low" book of J. L. King. As is the case with most corporate actions, obstructing the cause of HIV-AIDS education and treatment has arguably benefited Brand Oprah and boosted book sales for yet another of her favored huckster-authors, while others have paid the price.

Those others, arguably, have been those who contracted or unknowingly spread the virus who might otherwise have heard accurate information and acted on it, as well as some of the already infected who have come forward later than they might have, or not at all, thanks to the misdirection of "down low" hysteria. They, and we, are still awaiting Brand Oprah's apology for that one.

Solutions

We try our best to answer email from our readers, and mostly succeed. Most write us about specific stories or events, but some readers come to us with more general questions, like this reader in the UK:

Good Morning Black Commentator,

I am a subscriber to your website but can I make a point, without offense? In what ways are you encouraging solutions? I really believe in solution based projects. The piece with regard to Hillary Clinton was based on why she is the way she is. That, in my opinion is a "so what" question. It is important to keep the "triangulating, back pedaling and pandering" in mind,

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

but why is it we spend so much time criticizing when more important things need to be done? The more time we spend concentrating on other people and "things" the less time we spend on ourselves and what "we need to do."

Much Love,

Sandra

Our estimable editor and co-publisher Glen Ford answered Sandra thusly:

Dear Sandra,

We deeply appreciate your readership and critique. You voice a common complaint, one which is understandable, in that everybody wants "solutions" to the manifold problems that plague us. However, BlackCommentator.com is not The Book of Solutions, nor does such a publication exist. Our masthead reads:

"The Black Commentator: Commentary, Analysis and Investigation on Issues Affecting African Americans."

Before one arrives at the solution phase, one must grasp and describe what is happening. A conscientious publication is obligated to place events/trends in context; to strip away the conventional and perceived wisdom to reveal the actual nature of things, as in "analysis." Then one discusses and comments on the situation, as in "commentary." Hopefully, one has done enough digging and checking – due diligence – to be confident that the subject has been adequately "investigated." And one also has an obligation to investigate subjects that are ignored or distorted by hostile media.

Just because we do not promise our audience "solutions" does not mean that we never propose remedies and actions. Here are just a few examples:

When we "out" Black Trojan Horses in service of the Right and call upon Blacks to "shun" and "denounce" them so that their value to the enemy is diminished, that is a kind of solution to the infiltration problem.

When we provide dramatic and compelling evidence that the Congressional Black Caucus has been fractured and largely neutered by the defection to the Right by a number of named congresspersons, causing **BC** readers to create a CBC watchdog organization (the CBC Monitor), it is clear that our work has summoned forth an historic response to the crisis.

When we call for creation of a Black Progressive PAC to fund challengers to "derelict" Black officeholders, that is the beginning of a solution. We have learned that such a PAC has since been formed, and will soon become operational.

We are very careful not to overbill ourselves, or stretch our mission to the point that the operation collapses. **BC** is not a think tank; it attempts to stimulate others to think more deeply, and to provide information, analysis and commentary that should lead to action. We are not a mass organization; we speak to the "influencers," the folks whose opinions and actions matter to masses of our people.

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

There are vast holes in the institutional Black political framework, which inevitably tempts (or drives) African American individuals and organizations to wear a rack full of hats. As a result, they are often incapable of fulfilling any of the assumed responsibilities, leading to failure on all fronts.

BC is not all things to and for all of our people. But we hope we are of some value to you, every Thursday.

Sincerely,

Glen Ford, Editor and Co-Publisher

Back to the Plantation

Margaret Kimberly's weekly Freedom Rider offerings are always on the mark, and a favorite topic of reader email. Her insightful column of [January 26, 2006](#) "Hillary Clinton's Plantation," sparked several reader responses, including this one:

Your comments on the item referring to Hillary Clinton's speech were right on target. However, the Democratic Party is the only instrument strong enough to compete with the new Republicans, so we have no choice but to work with (or through) them. We must re-orient them and get them out of the bad-mouthing business. They need a positive program that is more attractive than the mess in which we now find ourselves. I propose that this be a well thought-out program for achieving and maintaining peace through cooperation with the United Nations rather trying to run it. This should involve withdrawal of troops from Iraq and closing our bases there (and possibly elsewhere), joining with the United Nations to repair the damage we have done to the country, restoring our honor by re-joining those pacts we have broken, disarming our nuclear arsenal or placing it under international control, honoring the World Court, etc. Terrorism needs to be a priority but war on a country or countries is not effective in controlling anything!

Dr. Bob

We thank Dr. Bob for his compliment, but wonder about the viability of several of his suggestions.

To name just a couple, our own views are that for the time being, we must work inside as well as outside the Democratic party, and that our work inside it must focus on active opposition to both Republicans and to the Republican-lite and corporate funded DLC-style misleadership of the Democratic party. This must include holding the Black Caucus accountable to the wishes of its constituents, to the demands of the Black Consensus.

The old and still-true saying is that there are two Democratic parties. One is the electoral party, the activists and voters who they call on every year or two around election time, and who are expected to go back home and be spectators till the next election. The other Democratic party is the permanent party, which meets with corporate lobbyists every day, and adheres to the boundaries of acceptable dialogue laid down in the corporate media. Hence Barack Obama and Nancy Pelosi, to name just a couple of national Democrats, depend on mobilizing large bases of explicit leftists and antiwar activists – the sensible kind of people who know that imperial war is "doing the wrong mission". Once safely installed in office, Democrats revert to membership in the permanent party, and will only say that the mission is being "done wrong." The same is true of state and local officials including dozens of African American mayors

We are also wary of fetishizing the United Nations. In Haiti right now, there are almost daily reports of UN troops from Canada, Jordan, Brazil and elsewhere drawing cordons around neighborhoods while Haitian police and paramilitary forces do the door to door wet work of massacre, targeting Lavalas supporters and their families. In some other cases, UN troops have conducted the arrests and killings of unarmed civilians themselves. When the UN in Port-au-Prince is willing to be used in the same fashion as the US Marines in Baghdad, the introduction of its so-called "peacekeeping forces" is but a wilted fig leaf covering the naked reality of empire and occupation.

Economic Development, African America and the Prison Industry

Several recent **BC** articles, including last week's **BC** cover, have mentioned the upcoming National Black Peoples Unity Convention in Gary, Indiana this spring. Here is an exchange between a reader and **BC** editor and co-publisher Glen Ford on that subject:

What was the plan after the last Gary Convention? What objectives were accomplished?
What objectives were not accomplished, and why were they not accomplished?

GGW

Mr. Ford replied:

You are asking for a book...maybe two books. The convention was an amalgam of tendencies. It is as interpretable as the Bible. My opinion is that only the aspiring politicians achieved their goals – to eventually gain office.

We hope someone will soon write that book, and send us a free copy to review. We also hope that the upcoming convention, like the MMMs of 1995 and 2005 will also provide a space where representatives of differing tendencies will meet to see what common grounds exist, and explore how to pursue them. Along with our co-publisher Mr. Ford, we note with some apprehension that although economic development is supposed to be the focus of this gathering, it nowhere mentions one of the biggest economic facts of life in black America today. That fact is the massive expansion of the world's largest crime control and prison industry and its effect on our families and communities.

The United States is 4.7% of the world, but accounts for a quarter of all its prisoners. African Americans are one eighth the U.S. population but almost half the incarcerated. An alarming percentage of young black people in their prime productive years are taken out of the "free" work force and upon their return saddled with the lifelong stigma of a criminal conviction. The economic development consequences for our community are far-reaching, almost incalculable, and are not being talked about, much less dealt with. We are forced to wonder aloud what relevance any black "economic development" summit that fails to aggressively tackle this issue can have to the black polity, especially to the entire generation of our youth which is being criminalized.

Finally, a **BC** reader involved with the grassroots relief and empowerment efforts writes from Mobile AL about our prior coverage of black self-help efforts in the post-Katrina Mississippi and Alabama Gulf Coast.

What a great piece on how the grass roots organizations formed and set up after Katrina!
Will **BC** be doing follow-ups to let its audience know the peoples efforts to empower themselves and rebuild as the next hurricane season approaches?

For the past few weeks as I have watched and been around those with S.O.S. Mobile, AER (Alliance for Environmental Recovery) and 1ForLife. I am glad to see there are forces

The Black Commentator – Bruce's Beat

working to sustain those communities and stand up for those that can't stand on their own yet, giving them voice and a new starting point.

Williams

We remain in touch with the good sisters and brothers in the Mississippi and Alabama Gulf Coast, and expect to report on their activities again soon. Send us your suggestions, your comments, and yes, your \$50 subscriptions to keep **BC** going. Click the "subscribe" buttons that appear somewhere on each and every page to do the latter, and email me at bruce.Dixon@blackcommentator.com for the former. We try to answer most of our reader email.