

**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

May 28, 2009 - Issue 326

[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

"Barking at the Light of the Moon..."

By Dr. Carlos E. Russell

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator

1

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

I do not envy President Barack Obama. Yes, he may be, as some would argue one of the most, if not the most, powerful person on the planet and, as such, is the object of envy of many. Also, he is where he is because he tenaciously sought and fought for the political space which, thanks to so many people, he now holds. That too is a cause for envy. Still, I do not envy him! Cynically, given the "slings and arrows" of his first hundred plus days in office, I wonder if he may now be considering that old adage "be careful what you wish for. You may get it!" I sense not! He got what he sought and is now caught in the eye of a terribly "perfect" storm. I feel and fear for him but, as I said, I do not envy him.

Here is what I mean.

The racial, political, economic, religious, moral, issues that envelops the world transcends his presence in the oval office and, more precisely, his existence on Earth. Historically, human kind has been hell bent on the continued control and domination of other human beings and of the resources of the planet. They have created innumerable arguments to promote and protect their self perceived rights over others. Often, these arguments are clothed in mystical trappings in an attempt to give "divine" stature to their rapacious and avaricious appetites for power be it material or spiritual - the alleged "divine right of kings" is an example. Too often in pursuit of these goals, human beings have unleashed the most inhuman instruments of destruction to meet and satisfy self determined needs and interests. Hitler, Stalin, the attempted extermination of native American nations and systemic racist policies of this country comes to mind., And so, we find ourselves in a world in which human beings are today continuing the contradictory journey of self destruction motored by the engine of greed and self

delusion.

Is it possible for us to extricate ourselves from this insane malady? Is it pre-ordained that we, as human beings, must destroy ourselves, then, like the mythical "Phoenix" re-appear in another form and another place of peace and piety? These are but a few of the questions that I ask myself as I consider the present state of the world. Those specific answers still escape. Perhaps, as some have suggested, there are none!

Enter stage left-center a lean, an attractive, brilliant, eloquent and exceptional African...oops, bi-racial, American man desirous, of righting the wrongs of the universe. "Change is coming" he echoes from the mountain tops. On a mission of righting wrongs..."making the world a better place for us all" says he. Is he delusional? Is this feat accomplishable? Time will tell!

A virtual contemporary Don Quixote is he as he rides his stead "Rocinante" - symbolic of the governing body he must head, and like his stead it too is - covered with the scars and sores of self inflicted wounds that ooze from its pores with the sickening stench of that insatiable desire of coveting power that has plagued mankind since the dawn of day. With lance in hand, a dream of a better land and a few Sanchos at his side he must do battle with the windmills of hate, rigid absolutism. His foes will appear stealthily from not too hidden nooks and crannies somewhere in the political forests - stage left and stage right - desirous of constructing a world defined in the prisms of their eyes ... They too will attempt to build the "best of all possible worlds." And so the battle ensues!

I do not envy President Barack Obama!

Caught in a thunderous storm of competing ideological interests and motives and forced by real world circumstances to calibrate and tacking the course of his vessel, replete with campaign promises, to the port he so eloquently called "Change" This he must do, as on the march, he painfully learns the existential difference between "campaigning" and governing. As he does, he is accused, by some as "flip-flopping. One can hear strident voices saying "I knew it! ... "Change is a farce!" With equal venom others, displaying a sly sense of self satisfaction articulate the notion that he is implementing existing policies which their "leader" initiated. Clearly, in this climate, of rigid ideological beliefs, where little, if any, political space is held in abeyance it will be difficult for him to reach the ends he espoused!

Consider the following. Center Stage! Guantanamo! A veritable chamber of horror and terror! Human beings, for years, have been held there. Some accused of "terrorism" and others openly acknowledging having participated in dastardly and inhumane deeds. Others, perhaps innocent of these deeds but caught in the net of a rightfully fear filled world, are held in dark dungeons of despair and who may never again breathe the air of freedom. Then, there are those who sit waiting for the time when they may unleash their hatred upon the world, but for whom there is no certain unmistakable evidence to keep them there except their smirks and their posturing.

- "Close Guantanamo" those who emerge stage left of the forest holler with righteous indignation. "It is an abomination" they say.

- "Don't you dare", with equal indignation cry those emerging stage right from the other side of the forest. "Do not expose us to future terror" **they** say.
- "I will close Guantanamo!" the President has said, signing an Executive order to that effect. However, those in his band denied him, temporarily at least, the funds to make that possible asking for a "master plan."
- "Do not release the virus of terror on our land!" continue the howling vitriolic sounds from the right.
- "We are not going to release anyone if it would endanger our national security" responds president Obama adding the he would attempt to "construct a legitimate framework" to address the issue of "prolonged detention" of dangerous suspects who could not be tried - insufficient evidence perhaps- or released. In so doing he sets off ancient alarm clocks disturbing the ever attuned eardrums of those on the left who heard in his words "preventive detention" which, in their view, is inhuman and against the law of the land.

As I said, I do not envy President Obama. What can he do? Obviously, as he as said, he will close Guantanamo. Obviously this is not in keeping with the desires of the right. Then, when he speaks or intimates the necessity of a "prolonged detention" this is read, by those who once were his staunchest allies, perhaps rightly, as "anti-civil rights." Is it possible to guarantee the civil rights of human beings, in this case the potential harbingers of death and destruction, in a climate such as ours and keep the nation secure at the same time? "Ay, that is the rub of it!"... Perhaps those conscientiously concerned with civil liberties should now join with the President to "construct" the legal framework that could answer the question.

While this occurs, some in the media - left and right - regurgitate the absolutist positions of their owners and producers becoming puppets mouthing the words of some hidden puppeteer. There is little analysis or attempt at finding solutions. Some "report" the news as if watching a spectator sports event as if they were howling at the moon and listening to the sounds they send!

Let me be clear: There are no easy answers. All of the issues on the table, given our history on the planet, are complex and complicated. One cannot expect immediate answers, that is, if there are any. A true democratic government, if any such animal can exist, must be aimed at finding a solution that satisfies the needs and interests of the most people possible. In this divided world is this possible? Unfortunately, very often, the masses, the ultimately deciding element, having been swayed by the voices of those who control the society, can and often do vote against their own interests. This, generally speaking is owing to their lack of information, and the manipulation of most information by the powerful. Tragically, to their objective conditions, they have little if any time to fully study and digest the information presented to them.

I am not an unabashed "Obamanite." He too must be challenged and held accountable. What did Lord Acton say? "Power tends to corrupt..." However, I do believe that the challenges he faces are herculean in nature and must be understood as such. That is, if we truly believe that it is desirable and possible for social, economic, political

transformation to occur. Dr. King spoke of the need for "Agape" and "Social Justice." In Obama I hear refrains and strains of the same melody.

I believe that those are ideals and as such must be sought after and fought for. Politically, I situate myself left of the aisle - meaning that I believe that government should play a major role in protecting and promulgating the needs of the poor and the marginalized and, at the same time, do so with "liberty and justice" for all people.

However, I also recognize that there are those who differ with this position and as such, there is a need to develop a strategy that can bring, when and where possible, opposing interests and views into synch. There most definitely will also be times when irreconcilable differences arise. But, until that point has been reached I would argue that we must attempt to find an approach that does not lead us into a non ending war for "moral" supremacy.

Are we presently in another stage of that historical eternal battle for control and power? Sadly I believe that we are on the brink of rearming and refueling ourselves. If so, that battle will never end until one side completely vanquishes the other. As in the past this new phase will become cyclical. One side, for a period, may hold the upper hand; the other, continuing to fight, finds a flaw in the armor of the temporary victor, and, one day, that side may be on top of the heap! Thus, the cycle will continue until, perhaps, in this a time of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and international alliances, humankind will self destruct.

At all costs, it seems to me, mankind must avoid self annihilation. It is imperative that we collectively develop a strategy for our survival as human beings. This will only be forthcoming if we are prepared to relax the trappings of ideological and religious absolutes. As I said, I do not envy President Obama. "You got it ... brother!"

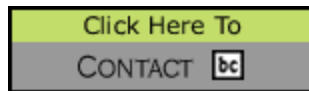
[Click here to comment on any article
in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator, Carlos E. Russell, PhD is Professor Emeritus C.U.N.Y. - Brooklyn College. In the sixties, he served as an Associate Editor of the *Liberator* magazine. As such, he was one of the first to interview Malcolm X after he left the Nation. He is best remembered as the founder of Black Solidarity Day in New York in 1969 and as the Chair of the Black Caucus of the Conference on New Politics in 1967. In addition, he was a consultant to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during the planning for the [Poor Peoples March](#). Excerpts of his participation can be seen in [Citizen King](#) and [Eyes on the Prize \(PBS Mini Series Boxed Set\)](#). Born in the Republic of Panama he has served as that country's representative to the U.N and the O.A.S. with the rank of Ambassador. He has also served as the nightly host of "Thinking it Through" a talk show that was aired on WLIB in New York. He is a playwright and poet as well. [Click here](#) to contact Dr. Russell.

[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)



Your comments are always welcome.

e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002-2009
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved