

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

Colleges Must Graduate More Athletes

Investing beyond the playing field

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

According to a study released by the NCAA, only 59 percent of black college athletes receive their degrees in six years or less, while 82 percent of white athletes receive their diploma in that same time period.

Though black athletes graduate at higher rates than black students who don't participate in athletics, it is still disheartening to see higher educa-



tion disappoint so many of our brothers and sisters. When you consider how much money these student athletes generate for their respective universities, it's unthinkable that these schools would allow them to leave without their degree.

Student athletes receive several thousands of dollars in scholarship money. In return, they generate millions - enough to pay the coaching staff, trainers and team administrators. Despite their hard work on behalf of the university, many of the students will leave without their degree. True, some leave school early to pursue lucrative, multi-million dollar professional contracts. While

a college degree is critical to success, I don't begrudge the athlete who goes after the large contract - there is only a small window of opportunity for a professional career; the elite athletes have to go after it. After all, the vast majority of people go to college so they can have the credentials to find a well-paying job.

There have always been doubts about the quality of education a student athlete receives. Since much of the athlete's time is spent at practice and training, in team meetings and traveling to games, many opt - and some are encouraged - to take an easier course load. While they may be challenged on the basketball court or football field, many student athletes aren't flexing their intellectual

muscle in the classroom. Because only a small percentage of student athletes have what it takes to make it to the pros, the universities they work for - and they do in fact work for the schools - should make sure they have the tools they need to follow through on Plan B: an education that they can take with them anywhere.

Universities should invest in their athletes beyond the playing field. By identifying barriers to success, setting up one on one tutoring for struggling athletes and counseling those that are considering leaving school, colleges can insure more student athletes walk away with their diplomas.

According to the U.S. Census Bu-

reau, a person with a Bachelors degree earns more than \$2-million over the course of their lifetime. University officials and team administrators must get through to their athletes, making sure they understand all of the benefits - financial and otherwise - that come with a college education. By helping students set realistic goals for themselves, goals that anticipate a life after sports, educators will show that they actually care about the well-being of the student and not just the money their athletic prowess can bring in.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Presidential Doubletalk When fully prepared isn't fully prepared

If a picture is worth a thousand words, a video must be worth a million. Six months after Hurricane Katrina destroyed the homes and livelihoods of millions along the Gulf Coast, the truth about what the President knew and when he knew it has come to light.

The President's declaration that we were 'fully prepared' is as incredulous as his statement that 'Brownie [was] doing a heck of a job.'

Unfortunately, this is just the latest in a series of revelations about how this Administration has failed to prepare for the threats facing the American people - both natural and man-made. It's crystal clear that the Bush Administration doesn't get it. While the Administration stumbles to cover its missteps, the people of the Gulf Coast struggle to rebuild their lives.

We can do better. The American people deserve straight-talk and not double-talk.

—U.S. Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, D-Miss.



Crisis of Genocide in Darfur

Quick action needed for security, hope

BY U.S. REP. JAMES CLYBURN

I recently returned from a trip with 10 of my colleagues to five African nations, including Liberia and the Darfur region of Sudan.

The main purposes of our visit were to see firsthand the horrific conditions in Darfur, to assess the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to consult with heads of state in the region about the crisis, which the United States has characterized as genocide.

We are convinced that action must be taken quickly to bring security and hope to Darfur. The African Union military force is doing a great job. However, as President Bush has said, 'to secure and stabilize Darfur, the African Union force must be doubled and international organizations like the UN and NATO should play a coordinating role.'



As the world responds to the suffering in Darfur, the Sudanese government must live up to its responsibilities to bring about a true cease-fire that protects civilians. The needs of the people of Darfur must be addressed, and the government of Sudan cannot be allowed to continue to shirk its responsibility to protect its people and provide for

many ways reminded me of a young America. In fact, their flag is modeled very closely to ours and its capital city, Monrovia, honors our nation's fifth president, James Monroe. It's a nation on the path of rebuilding after civil unrest, with 15 and 16-year-olds who are four-year veterans of war.

But with a spark of hope, the people of Liberia have elected the first female head-of-state, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a woman they call the "Iron Lady." We are emboldened by the recent successful democratic elections, but our job is not done.

The Congressional Black Caucus has outlined a series of initiatives to maintain our support for the nations

of Africa.

We have an obligation, not just as people of color but as Americans, to assist the people of Africa in working to end genocide, improve their countries and make a change.

Congressman Clyburn of South Carolina is chairman of the House Democratic Caucus and former chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

We all went to Darfur with a sense of deep concern and we all left with a sense of outrage and urgency.

their needs.

We all went to Darfur with a sense of deep concern and we all left with a sense of outrage and urgency. We are committed to working with President Bush to make sure the world community responds effectively and efficiently to end the genocide in Darfur.

Liberia was the bright spot of our trip, and in

Priorities Same for Bush, GOP

Women and children suffer

BY MARTHA BURK

In a stunning act of corporate foreign aid, last week President Bush gave away management of America's ports to one of the wealthiest countries in the world, Dubai. It shouldn't have been a surprise.

This administration always dances with the ones that bring 'em (the corporations and the rich) while thumbing its nose at the wallflowers languishing on the edge of the floor (the rest of us, but primarily the poor and elderly).

Republicans and Democrats alike are crying foul over the Dubai deal, threatening to pass a bill that nullifies the contract. However, Bush says he'll veto any law that kills the deal; business interests, even foreign ones, count more than ordinary Americans do.

The brouhaha serves a useful purpose both for the administration and the Republican Congress - it takes our minds off the draconian budget already passed by the House, and the further cuts proposed by the White House. As usual, women and children are going to suffer the most. It's an equal opportunity budget in another way though. Pregnant women and infants lose right along with school-aged kids and older women.

New to the Bush hit list is the Agriculture Department's commodity food program, which pro-

vides food packages to expectant mothers, babies, and the elderly poor (the majority of whom are female). Protection from domestic violence is a casualty too, as money for shelters and help for victims of sexual assault will be reduced by \$35 million.

When it comes to cuts handed out by the House, it's also women and children first. Medicaid benefits will be reduced by \$29 billion over the next 10 years. Recipients will have to meet higher premiums and copayments to hang on to these meager health benefits-of-last-resort. Estimates are that 255,000 kids in low-income working families will be denied care in the next four years. That money is needed for "marriage promotion" initiatives, which will now be mandated in all states. Those programs are flush, with \$150 million a year, even as welfare-to-work programs provide incentives for states to cut two-parent families off Temporary Assistance to Needy Families.

The increased spending side of the budget balance sheet benefits the already wealthy. According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, most of the gains from tax cuts will go to families with incomes above \$1 million annually (not your typical female-headed household) and corporations. Like the Dubai deal, when it comes to handing out largesse, this administration sticks to its priorities.

Martha Burk is the author of "Cult of Power: Sex Discrimination in Corporate America and What Can Be Done About It."



Join with us in our war against HIV/AIDS

HIV / AIDS Healing Worship Celebration

Please join us and hear our keynote speaker

REV. MATTHEW HENNESSEE
OF THE VANCOUVER AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

Sunday, March 12, 4:00 p.m.

Allen Temple C.M.E. Church

4236 NE Eighth Avenue - Portland, OR

contact: Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Service Coordinator at (503) 287-0261

The Albina Ministerial Alliance (AMA) has broken the silence on HIV/AIDS in the African American communities by educating the Christian Churches in the North and Northeast community and fighting against the spread of HIV/AIDS. AMA invites community members, pastors, ministers and missionaries to the annual local observance of the national Balm of Gilead's Black Church Week of Prayer and Healing.



\$ 25 OFF

**TAX PREPARATION FEE
RAPID REFUND**

JACKSON HEWITT®

TAX SERVICE

Two Locations:
2808 #P NE MLK
4100 NE Kilingsworth

503-287-1317

CODE CLZPF Expires 4/17/06 Not valid with any other offer

The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

OFFICE MANAGER: Kathy Linder

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association, Serving Portland and Vancouver.

Send address changes to Portland
Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland,
OR 97208

Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year

503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

news@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

classifieds@portlandobserver.com