



“Challenging People to Shape a Better Future Now”

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Malveaux: Leaving Bennett College

When I went to Bennett College for Women in 2007, I declared that I was “on fire” for the institution. I still am. And I also yield to the biblical verse that says for everything there is a season, a time for everything unto heaven. I had a season to build four buildings in four years, to increase enrollment, to influence curriculum shifts, and to assemble an awesome senior team, to engage with most of my students, and to influence young lives. I also managed the development of a new strategic plan, and I’ve been privileged to be a national Bennett brand advocate. I’ve maintained a speaking schedule partly because it enhances Bennett’s visibility, and wherever I go, I meet potential students, parents, and others, that want to engage me in Bennett matters.

I most value the ways we have looked at our campus foci – entrepreneurship, leadership, global studies and communications. If a young sister masters these, she can operate in almost any arena. The number of students who have traveled internationally has increased exponentially during my leadership. Personally, I’ve taken students with me to Copenhagen, Haiti, and Nigeria, as well as to many sites in places in the United States. I am also grateful to have had support for the development of our entrepreneurship program. Given the job market, there is a point in time when many of us will be entrepreneurs, whether we want to be or not. I have had a team to develop this concept and to integrate it into Bennett’s curriculum.

So why go? Things are going well. We had a bump and were put on SACS probation when a major donor defaulted on a large pledge, and when we had to pay (go figure – and that’s another column) the government more than a million



BENNETT COLLEGE

Julianne Malveaux

dollars on a prepayment penalty. We overcame that in just six months and are in the clear with SACS until 2014, when we have a five year review. We celebrated the removal of SACS probation in January and it was, indeed, an exciting moment.

The United Negro College fund has slashed its appropriations to private colleges by more than 50 percent. When I looked at the factors in play, I saw an uphill climb. And five years of working at full speed, wearing myself down, convinced me that I didn’t have the energy for another uphill climb.

When I first came to Bennett a valued staff member chuckled at my pace. It’s not a sprint, she said, it’s a marathon. I replied that it is a sprinting marathon. Now I yield to her wisdom. Impossible. You can’t run at the pace that I tried to run without paying a price. I did.

I hate to leave it, but it’s time.

When I say that I have never had a job for more than five years, I’m being flip. I wrote for Black Issues for 15 years, have been affiliated with USA Today since 1986, and have written columns (my first love) since 1984. But I am a free spirit that rebels against structure, and I accepted the structure of leading a college, I realized that conformity would be a stretch goal. I stretched for five years. Now I need to exhale.

There is a Japanese haiku that my sister, Mariette, shared with me. My barn has burned down, now I can see the moon. Bennett has been the space that I chose to come to because I am committed to African American people, to our education, to college access. I thrived at the college, and yet I am mindful of the concept of season. My barn has burned down, and the moon that I see is spaceless and endless. Bennett will always have a piece of my heart, and yet, for so many reasons, this is the season for my departure. I am leaving my college with satisfaction with my accomplishments, and with a sense of poignant reflection on that which has been done, and that which might have been done. I leave my college enriched, informed, and regarded in the fight for social and economic justice. I am leaving my college – it will always be my college—because it is time, because God is good, after you’ve done all you can, you just stand. I’m standing in the power of education. Standing in the power of access. Standing in the energy of HBCUs. Standing grateful and strong. Standing, ready for the next chapter of my life.

Julianne Malveaux is President of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina

Do I have the stomach for spending 80 percent of my time raising money?

Why go? Because it’s time. Because leading the college is easy and fun, but raising money is hard. In order to move into the next phase at Bennett, somehow we need to both enhance our endowment and raise enough moment to implement the strategic plan I led. Do I have the stomach for spending 80 percent of my time raising money? When asked the question, I had to go into deep prayer and meditation. The answer? No.

External forces work against HBCUs. President Obama has been great in managing to keep the Pell grant level, but it needs to be larger. In North Carolina, the private colleges have been excluded from state lottery funds, reducing the money Bennett students can bring to the college. Key stakeholders committed for four years and may or may not renew com-

I so fully appreciate the difference between being 53 and being 58. I fully understand the toll that stress, sleeplessness, and diabetes can take on one’s life. I fully understand that while I talked about balance, I never practiced it. And I fully understand that my need to go is as much a result of my own exhaustion as anything else.

I am not an HBCU graduate, and I had I been, I would likely have been a very different person. At my undergraduate college, African American students fought to establish their intellectual chops, while at Bennett, the development of intellectual chops is applauded and encouraged. Without being an HBCU graduate, I am an HBCU fan, and my experience at Bennett convinces me that I will always be. I love my college so much that

GOP: Circle of Clowns Playing with Fire

It is difficult to watch the spectacle of the Republican primaries and not agree with whoever it was that originated the description of those candidacies as nothing more or less than a ‘circle of clowns.’ At each moment one or the other candidate seems to go deeper into the swamp, whether through denigrating science, attacking women or attempting to ridicule President Obama for supporting college education. With this evolution of the campaign it feels as if we are going deeper and deeper into a new ‘dark age’ with mysticism, fear, militarism, racism and misogyny as the defining characteristics.

What never ceases to amaze me is the manner in which these politicians have, with the exception of the right-wing libertarian Ron Paul, jumped up and down on the band-wagon in favor of war with Iran. In concert with an element of the Israeli political establishment and their supporters in the USA, they have been beating the drum for military strikes against Iran as a means of stopping the alleged efforts of Iran to achieve a nuclear weapon. Never



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Bill Fletcher Jr.

mind that no one has been able to establish that the Iranians are

structing weapons of mass destruction. Never mind the fact that retired and current US military officials (and actually substantial numbers of Israeli military officials) oppose any discussion of military strikes on Iran, seeing such strikes as nothing short of foolhardy. The circle of clowns ask us to ignore this and to proceed forward with a disastrous war with Iran. This, all based on the crazy rhetoric of the Iranian

you. Besides you being in a grave, where do you think that this would end? How many courts—unless race were involved—would ever go for an argument that it was fine to attack you because the neighbor thought that you might attack. Yet this is the same logic that the circle of clowns are operating on and this must be repudiated.

While it appears that President Obama is not interested in, at least for now, a war with Iran, he has fallen over himself to demonstrate his loyalty and support to Israel. This is unsettling; US foreign policy should not be based upon supporting Israel on everything that they do. For that reason, if the voices of the people of the USA are not heard loud and clear, the banter from the circle of clowns may prevail and we could be looking at events that will spiral out of control.

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The circle of clowns ask us to ignore this and to proceed forward with a disastrous war with Iran

doing anything more than they propose—to develop nuclear power for peaceful purposes—and never mind the fact that Israel possesses nuclear weapons, is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and assisted apartheid South Africa in con-

regime and the possibility of what they might be able to do.

Think about it this way. Let’s say that you had a neighbor who did not like you. You go and buy a gun because you are a hunter. Your neighbor concludes that you bought the gun to get them, so they come into your house and kill