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A New Breed of Bigoted Politicians

Among the many windswept cliffs that stand guard on the shores of the island of Okinawa, one is known for its particularly gruesome history.

“Suicide Cliff” is located on the southern portion of Okinawa. It is so named because thousands of Okinawans took their own lives at the site as American forces advanced across the island in 1945 during the last months of World War II.

Twenty five years later, flying low over cliffside memorials honoring the dead of various towns and villages who perished there, I was struck by the fact that so many people felt compelled to rush to their own destruction. I soon learned that for tactical reasons, and to further their own doomed war effort, the Japanese army had terrified Okinawan civilians with tales of extreme cruelties they should expect at the hands of the approaching Americans. The island’s people had their minds manipulated to the point that many chose to kill themselves rather than fall into the hands of a ruthless enemy.

Eventually, the people of Okinawa came to realize that these were “useless deaths” as the Americans turned out not to be the monsters portrayed by the Japanese army.

In the years since viewing this tragic site, I learned it is not unusual for people to be manipulated into a mass hysteria that makes them act against their own self-interest, or even to rush toward their own self-destruction. In this cycle of the U.S. presidential election, we have extraordinarily clear examples of the type of propaganda



Oscar H. Blayton
NNPA Guest Columnist

and demagoguery that leads to this type of madness.

Donald Trump is the poster child for destructive demagoguery. This bloviating bigot has pulled the Republican Party down to new lows and, in the process, dumbed down the national political discourse to a point where America is gnawing

This is a person who feels so entitled that he can determine what America is and who Americans are

at its own flesh in an attempt to expel nonexistent horrors.

Echoing the likes of former Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama and the two Virginia senators, Harry F. Byrd Sr. and Harry F. Byrd Jr., Trump feeds his followers platters of noxious vitriol that are devoid of facts.

In addition to demonizing Latinos and “Black Lives Matter” activists, Trump, a privileged White man who inherited his wealth from his father, once declared that the Pequot Indians “don’t look like Indians to me.”

This is a person who feels so entitled that he can determine what America is and who Americans are.

Like the thousands who followed a manipulative Japanese army to their hurried end on Okinawa, individuals who flock to Trump’s banner of bigotry and foolishness eventually will see the senselessness of championing someone who makes extremely ill-considered pronouncements and whose campaign completely lacks sound policy ideas.

Fortunately for them, however, Trump will not be president of the United States. Unfortunately, however, other Republican presidential hopefuls are mimicking his audacious and bigoted posturing because his followers are giving so much credence to this cartoon

give in to its liberalization.

During the past seven years, most of them have urged their followers to reject the Affordable Care Act, with little regard for the fact that many of them cannot pay for basic medical needs. These Republican candidates have called upon their followers to oppose an increase in the minimum wage, despite the fact that many of those supporters are low-wage earners. They ask conservatives to join them in opposing the multilateral nuclear deal with Iran, even though the sons and daughters of those conservatives might bleed on the battlefields of any ensuing war. And, of course, they oppose extending equal rights to the LGBT community, while many of their backers have family members and loved ones who are in the LGBT community.

They are urging their followers to go over the cliff and pull the rest of America over behind them.

For those of us who refuse to swallow the venom of the likes of Trump, Cruz, Huckabee and Paul, we have a pressing obligation. We must do all that is necessary to prevent the forces of self-destruction from taking hold. We must not allow a group of hysterical bigots to determine the future of America. We must stand against those who are taken by a type of self-destructive madness and would throw America over a political cliff to drown in a sea of hatred and despair.

Oscar H. Blayton is a former Marine Corps combat pilot and human rights activists who practices law in Virginia.

Revolutionary Lessons from Burkina Faso

The Sept. 17 coup against the interim president of Burkina Faso, Michel Kafando, contains important lessons regarding the struggle for justice and democracy. Under pressure from demonstrators, striking labor unions and the West Africa regional bloc, the coup leader, Gen. Gilbert Diendere, stepped aside and Kafando and Prime Minister Yacouba Issac Zida were restored to power as transitional leaders of the country formerly known as the Republic of Upper Volta.

The background to the September 17 coup can be traced to October 2014 when a popular uprising ousted long-time dictator Blaise Compaore, who had overthrown and murdered his former friend and comrade, the near legendary, Thomas Sankara in 1987. It reversed the revolutionary changes that the central African country of Burkina Faso had experienced under Sankara’s leadership.

Compaore returned Burkina Faso to its neo-colonial status under French and U.S. domination, and instituted a repressive dictatorship. In the fall of 2014, after an attempt to extend the length of his presidency, millions of people turned out in defiance of the government, ultimately driving Compaore not only out of office, but out of the country.



Bill Fletcher Jr.
The Global African

The excitement generated by this insurrection was infectious, not only in Burkina Faso but in neighboring countries.

Yet there was an almost immediate problem. Was this an an-

Democratic uprisings can drive dictators out of office, but in order to pursue a revolution, more is needed than masses of people in the streets

ti-Compaore insurrection or was it a revolution? And, if it was to be a revolution, then how was it to be pursued?

The Sept. 17 coup against the interim president was carried out by units led by the presidential guard, which had not been dismantled and remained loyal to Compaore. In carrying out a coup, shortly before the upcoming elections, the

objective of the coup-people was clear.

Regardless of whether Compaore is returned, the coup leaders wanted a return to the old regime.

Since the Arab democratic uprisings that started in late 2010, we have witnessed in the Middle East and Africa a phenomenon of similar democratic protests and insurrections.

In many cases, the leadership of such movements are not visible, and in other cases, they are quite dispersed.

Popular, democratic uprisings can drive dictators out of office,

in order to neutralize the organization of the “other side.” That is, the side that represents the old and corrupt regime. After all, the old regime would never have been able to stay in power absent organization. And there are few examples in history where the old regime has voluntarily surrendered and walked off into the night of history. Usually, they attempt to find their way back into power.

Recognizing that, Kafando announced Friday the disbandment of the presidential guard, a unit of about 1,300 soldiers, and fired its commander and the minister of security. On Saturday, the country announced that it would freeze the assets of Gen. Gilbert Diendere and 13 others suspected of being associated with the coup.

Gen. Diendere and presidential guard staged the coup because they were upset that supporters of former President Blaise Compaore couldn’t run in elections, originally scheduled for Oct. 11.

They are expected to be postponed for several weeks and a 30-day investigation of the coup will be conducted.

In the wake of disbanding the presidential guard, the county issued a statement Saturday saying, “The government invites the populations to remain calm and exert restraint.”