

COMMENTARY

Buchanan point man for race baiting group

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The announcement that perennial right wing candidate Pat Buchanan will make another bid for the presidency in 2000 should not be surprising.

Buchanan must have been encouraged by the ease with which White Southern Republicans for the past year dominated Congress, the media and public policy debates in their failed drive to dump Clinton.

He probably took note that the race-baiting Council of Conservative Citizens, with which he and other Republicans and Democrats reportedly have close ties, has gained much media attention and drawn almost no criticism from leading Republicans.

Buchanan will try again to dress up his campaign with populist-sounding rants against welfare, Wall Street bankers, the cultural elite and the liberal media. But his real mission is still the complete destruction of social programs and the reversal of civil rights in

America.

Since President Richard Nixon made him his special assistant and speech writer in 1969, he has been the far right's most effective point man on race. Memos that Buchanan wrote to Nixon and that have been made public show that he has never wavered, compromised, or conciliated in opposing civil rights. He opposed a planned visit by Nixon to Coretta Scott King in Atlanta claiming that Martin Luther King, Jr. was "a fraud," "demagogue" and "one of the most divisive men in contemporary American history."

When Nixon nominated segregationist judges Clement Haynesworth and Harold Carswell to the Supreme Court, the howls of outrage reached fever pitch. Nixon wanted to dump the nominees. Buchanan wrote: "Either they kick their Black friends in the teeth or they kick the South in the teeth." Buchanan made it clear whose teeth should get kicked in.

When Nixon proposed reforms in welfare and poverty programs,

Buchanan argued that it was "good politics" to get rid of them." He wasn't satisfied with simply slashing and burning social programs. His goal — as always — was to stir and deepen racial divisions.

He urged Nixon to take the money from Blacks and Latinos, and give it to "poor Jewish and Italian neighborhoods."

He wanted to go for America's racial jugular and wreak maximum damage on civil rights. He wasn't content with vanquishing the Democrats in the 1972 election.

He aimed to create a permanent reservoir of hatred and distrust among Whites of black Democrats. He aimed to harden his Southern strategy to stoke White fear and resentment of Black crime and dereliction, play on the frustrations of blue collar ethnics, tar the Democrats as the party of special interests (i.e. pro-Black) and collect the broken racial pieces on election day.

Buchanan also suggested that

Nixon convince Whites that Democratic candidate George McGovern planned to move Blacks into White neighborhoods. Buchanan banked on this evoking terrifying images in Whites of poverty-stricken, crime-prone Blacks invading their neighborhoods. Nixon would then appear as their protector who would "retain the integrity and value of ethnic neighborhoods."

When President Ronald Reagan made him his communications director he had another chance to relentlessly assault civil rights. He insisted that Reagan stay the Nixon course. Reagan did. He painted the Democrats as reckless big government spendthrifts that shoved the hard earned tax dollars of income-strapped, tax-overburdened Whites to lazy, immoral Blacks and Latinos.

Reagan won big twice. The Democrats further unraveled. The assault on civil rights, civil liberties and social programs intensified. Racist violence increased. The

nation lurched even harder to the right. And Buchanan's political influence soared.

Buchanan's training in the politics of racial division came together at the 1992 Republican convention. His race and gender code-worded speech drew a hard battleline between "them" and "us." While he never directly mentioned race, Blacks, Latinos, women, the militias, patriots, Klan, Aryan Nation, rabid Christian fundamentalists, and millions of angry Whites understood whom he meant.

While Buchanan doesn't have a ghost of a chance of winning the Republican presidential nod in 2000, he's banking that stoking the racial fears of Whites again will force the Republican presidential nominee to further assail civil rights and social programs. If that happens he will once more have fulfilled his role as top point man for race baiters.

Earl Ofari Hutchinson is the author of "The Crisis in Black and Black."

Money unable to cleanse justice system of blemish

By Eric Zorn
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Never has \$36 million looked so puny.

The case against Cook County for the wrongful prosecution of the Ford Heights Four gained power when the men were exonerated and released in 1996.

The settlement of the civil suit reached two weeks ago divides \$36 million unequally among four defendants, an average of \$6 million each after legal fees.

Four young men with virtually no criminal histories were accused of a brutal rape and double murder in the south suburbs of Chicago in 1978.

They spent a total of 65 years in prison — two of the men on death row — until it became obvious that cops and prosecutors hid and destroyed evidence and twisted the remaining evidence to close the murder case.

Three of those other four men now stand convicted of the crime, the fourth is dead.

Pre-trial discovery process in the civil case made what happened even more obvious. Consider what a jury would have learned:

- That the original investigators' notes of the interview with Paula Gray, once alleged to be an eyewitness to the murders of Larry Lionberg and Carol Schmal, showed that her first statements exonerated the Ford Heights Four. Those notes turned up only recently.

Defense attorneys at the time could have used the notes to challenge the incriminating story Gray told on the stand — a story that contains details fed to her by lawmen.

- That a prosecutor's notes of the first interview with the only other alleged

eyewitness, Charles McCraney, a man who lived near the scene of the murder, said McCraney "saw no faces" on the men he saw that night. Those notes turned up only recently.

Defense attorneys at the time could have used the notes to challenge the incriminating story McCraney ultimately told.

- That McCraney testified several times about having given a signed statement to authorities early in the investigation about what he'd seen, but that statement vanished from the files.

- That missing from the files until recently was all material relating to police interviews with McCraney's wife, whose account served to discredit her husband.

- That also missing from the files is the affidavit that police would have had to submit to a judge to get the search warrant that was issued for a particular car. May sound like a minor detail, but that long "lost" affidavit stood to demonstrate just how lazy and cynical the investigation was.

Here's why: Less than a week after the murders — but after the Ford Heights Four had been arrested — an informant told police what turned out 18 years later to be the real story about the real killers.

Notes about that tip disappeared, too, for at least five years. And until recently, lawyers for the Ford Heights Four assumed that authorities had ignored this intelligence, as every record suggested, because it was inconvenient to the case they were manufacturing.

But in getting ready for trial, the lawyers learned several months after getting the tip that police did get court permission to

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Census plan needs a little massaging, common sense

By J. Kenneth Blackwell
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The United States Supreme Court, two federal courts, the majority of Congress and expert statisticians across the country have all agreed that the U.S. Census Bureau's plan to add and subtract people from the 2000 Census — according to statistical adjustment — is either misguided or illegal.

With such influential opposition, one would think the issue of statistical adjustment would die. Not so. The Bureau now plans to take a full count of everyone for the purpose of assigning seats in the House of Representatives, and then statistically adjust those numbers for use in redistricting and distributing public funds.

Do I sound skeptical? I am. For starters, the idea of government using two sets of numbers undermines any notion of public trust.

While serving as mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio's Treasurer and now as Ohio's Secretary of State, I have never come across an accounting system that was better served by two sets of books.

More importantly, I know how the Bureau's statistical adjustment works and how it doesn't. As the co-chairman of the U.S. Census Monitoring Board, a bipartisan panel charged by Congress with overseeing the preparations for Census 2000, I've had the opportunity to read the fine print that most of America will never see.

Statistical adjustments are increasingly less accurate at smaller levels of geography. A survey can give you a pretty good idea of the total national population. The numbers are less certain, but still pretty good, at the state level. In big cities, it's a gamble. And in small cities it's even worse. By the time you get down to neighborhoods, the data is totally skewed. Looking for specific census

information about a block in Brooklyn? Forget about it.

However, it is at the block level — where statistical adjustment is least reliable — that the Bureau plans to make adjustments. The census must find people in the blocks and neighborhoods where they live. Neighborhood data needs to be accurate.

Why? Political representation and funds for vital public services are distributed to geographic or political areas, not demographic groups. If the census determines how many Hispanics are in California but fails to determine how many Hispanics live in a Los Angeles barrio, the people of that barrio still won't receive their fair share of representation or funding.

Statistics show that the 1990 census missed roughly one out of every 12 African-American men. This particular undercount could easily be corrected by going through the census and statistically adding an African-American male for every dozen African-American men actually counted.

Unfortunately, this "solution" would do nothing to improve the undercount, or the quality of life, in New York City's East Flatbush, where the undercount of African-American men was significantly higher than one in 12.

Instead of relying on uncertain statistical adjustments, the Bureau should use targeted solutions to find real people where they really live.

Here are three suggestions:

- Restore the Post-Census Local Review, which allows local governments a quality-check of census numbers before they are made final. In the past, the Census Bureau has given local governments this chance to review the numbers.

Mayors and local officials know their area (See Census, Page 15)