

COMMENTARY

Politicizing census could prove harmful ploy

Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It seems that the conservative Republicans will do almost anything to prevent the Census from achieving an accurate count with the information that is necessary.

To date, most people have focused on the Census count and how it would be achieved, whether through 'enumeration' or sampling.

The Republican leadership went as far as going to court to prevent the Democratic controlled Commerce Department which administers the Census, from using sampling techniques to achieve a nearly 100 percent count of the American people.

Unfortunately, the Supreme Court said that the count would have to be taken according to the specification in the Constitution that required an 'actual enumeration' which meant that in so far as possible, every person had to be counted, especially for the purpose of apportioning the seats in the Congress.

So, the Census Bureau countered and said that it would use enumeration for one count and the enumeration, plus sampling, in order to get a complete count that would be used as a guide to distribute resources to citizens who were associated with various programs.

Now we find out that conservatives not only object to achieving an accurate count,

but to the contents of the Census itself and that key Republican elected officials are siding with those who have objected to some of the questions as 'too intrusive.'

The long form has been sent to one in every six of 155 million families in the country and the 53 questions on this long form are not as many as the 57 questions on previous versions.

What is astounding — perhaps not so much in this conservative climate — is that the highest elected official in the United States Senate, Trent Lott, has given people the authority to ignore Census questions. Lott and other conservatives have claimed that people are calling their office complaining that the questions are too 'intrusive' and that they invade their privacy.

While George Bush, Jr. express his sympathy with those who are objecting to the long form, Lott, in return, counseled them to complete the basic information, but if they felt that the questions were too intrusive that they "can choose not to answer those questions." This is tantamount to advising people to adopt a posture of non-cooperation with the government.

So, how can he then encourage strict adherence for people to fill out their tax forms, but to ignore the Census, or any one of many forms that the government requires to

service people accurately? And when this is all over, how can he complain as a chief policy maker, when the data upon which policy is made is incomplete and inaccurate?

The census forms include questions on such information as income, employment status, home value, basic housing facilities and other information used to both administer federal programs as well as to guide the policy process.

How is it possible to get information on these issue and others, if people are encouraged not to provide it? It isn't possible and perhaps that is the point.

A significant sector of the white community is engulfed in a conservative stance toward government, where the level of distrust is heavy and where for many, government can do nothing right. But there should be something sacrosanct about the responsibility of elected officials which suggests that even if people are distrustful, the basic functions of government must be attended to and supported, or else, the alternative is chaos.

This is even stranger because the Republicans were in charge of the bi-partisan Census commission that approved the questions on the Census forms that would be asked of citizens. Now, they want to appear to be responsive to those who are using the

Census process as a target for their anti-government behavior.

For instance, some Republicans want to reduce the fine for failing to fill out the form correctly from the current level of \$100 to only \$10, going down the road toward ripping up the structural framework of public policy.

The desire to destroy functions of government may be based on issues such as racial alienation, but it has gone far afield now and threatens generalized destruction to the capability of government to carry out its function for everyone.

The political affect of authority figures giving people a license to ignore the Census is that it also strikes at the message of full participation. Thus, those who have been fearful that the Census would accurately count peoples of color, now have subtly given the message that people may ignore the Census and in so doing, frustrate its ability to be used as a tool to assist them.

The only pitfall to the conservative position is that it may alienate whites and they may fail to fill out the Census forms, while the message to participate catches hold in the black and brown communities, boosting their count totals in the final results.

Actually, it may not be necessary for everyone to fill out the substantive information
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Carl Rowan's Commentary

People won't like an indictment of Clinton

Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON — Men lie a lot about sex. Men lie an extra lot to keep their wives from knowing about their extramarital sex.

Those statements are cited by millions of Americans to explain why they are not roaring mad at President Clinton because he lied to a



CARL ROWAN

federal grand jury in the sordid Monica Lewinsky case and deceived the American people in many other ways about his sordid affair.

But are the people demanding that Independent Counsel Robert Ray secure an indictment of Clinton once he leaves office so as to prove that "no American is above the law": I think few Americans other than that small band of almost-psychotic Clinton-haters are clamoring for that.

Most Americans seem happy to have the Lewinsky episode out of the headlines, out of their consciousness and out of their futures. It galls people to be told that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr spent some \$55 million on a probe of this sexual affair and other alleged Clinton offenses; it surprises them to read that Ray is still spending millions, and would waste many millions in any attempt to send Clinton to prison.

Moreover, most Americans are more pleased with what Clinton has done to give them jobs and prosperity than they are outraged over his personal indiscretions.

Even after the House impeached Clinton, the Senate refused to throw him out of office primarily because senators saw that

the great majority of Americans clearly wanted him to stay in office until the end of his elected term.

This makes it doubtful that Ray will find a jury that would convict Clinton of any serious crime, so an indictment probably would be just a venal political statement.

When I look at this long, multifaceted investigation of the Clintons, I wind up thinking not of this "first couple" from Arkansas, but of the many "little people" along the way who have gotten their reputations sullied, their lives wrecked, their life savings wiped out because the prosecutors were on a ruthless and almost-mindless mission to force them to say something truly incriminating about the Clintons.

When Starr left, most Americans assumed that Ray would draw the tentacles of this inquisition monster and close down the investigation.

But while this special-prosecutor act is dead, the hatred of the Clintons will never die in some quarters. Whether Ray is a charter member of that club is not clear. But he surely knows that the days of impeachment were some of the most bitter and divisive in this nation's history, and that he is sure to regenerate the worst animosities Americans know if he maneuvers an indictment of Clinton.

But this might not matter to him, because it will be easy for this last of the independent counsels to convince himself that he has a solemn duty to drag this already-shamed former president down to where he will feel the worst lashes of the law.

Silence the drums: Chief Wahoo must go

Special to Sentinel-Voice

It is so important that as we live into this new millennium that we do not take our old baggage with us. There are some good and wonderful foundation stones which are important to carry forward and there are some other parts of our human society and condition and history that, for the sake of our children and our future, are better left behind.

Racism is certainly one that we have an opportunity to end right now. What better way to begin a new millennium than with a new understanding and respect for all of God's children, what better way than to end racism.

Here in Cleveland, where I live, one way to begin that new millennium with a clean slate would be for the new owner of the Cleveland Indians to get rid of that racist Chief Wahoo logo and to change the name of the Cleveland baseball team. Each year for the past six or seven years I have joined our native American brothers and sisters and others from the Cleveland area in protesting the use of the racist symbol of Chief Wahoo. Each year we stand outside the stadium, and hear people yell at us to "go back home." The irony of telling a native American to

Civil Rights Journal

By Bernice Powell Jackson



go back home is never understood by them it seems.

Nor do most Americans seem to understand the religious significance of the drum and eagle feather to native Americans, who believe that the eagle carries messages to the Creator and the drum is used in their religious ceremonies. To use them in a baseball or a football game is sacrilegious in the same way that we who are Christians would feel about using the cross to cheer on a ball team.

Chief Wahoo is a racist stereotype and logo. The bug-eyed, buck-toothed, grinning red figure honors no one. It destroys the self-esteem of native American children and it mis-educates other children. It teaches them that indigenous people are sports team mascots, not human beings created in the image of God.

The definition of racism most often used is prejudice plus power. All of us have

learned prejudices about other groups of people, but when we have the power to live out those prejudices, then it is racism. Chief Wahoo is a racist symbol because those in power in this case, the sports industry and the mainstream media refuse to hear the voice of the oppressed. In the words of a young Euro-American Pennsylvania high school student who is fighting to change the logo of his high school team, when people use negative stereotypes without knowing how native Americans feel is ignorance. But when they continue to use them knowing the feelings of indigenous people, it is no longer ignorance, it is racism.

In the nearly ten years since we've been a part of the movement against Chief Wahoo there has been progress in helping people to see how this buck-toothed, hook-nosed grinning red face

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