

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

GOP media blackout: Business as usual

For all their hyperbolic rhetoric about being the first political party to whom Blacks were aligned and having the modern-day infrastructure that best suits Blacks, the Republican Party has yet to back its own words.

The Republican National Committee recently announced it will spend \$10 million with Hispanic media in an effort to court Hispanic voters for the 2000 presidential election.

"This is a phenomenal moment," said Leslie Sanchez, the RNC's deputy press secretary with Hispanic media told the National Newspaper Publishers Association. "There hasn't been a financial commitment of this type since the 1984 campaign. And this is just the beginning."

That's great for the Hispanic media. Surely, the Republicans are going to follow suit by offering similar sums to African-American, Asian-American and Native American media. Right? Wrong. According to the NNPA, the RNC has clipped its budget when it comes to other ethnic-oriented media.

Lecia Swain-Ross, publisher and editor of The Oklahoma Ebony Tribune, and a host of other black publishers decried the Republican slight. They encouraged black voters to ignore Republican grandstanding - whenever matters of race come to the fore, the GOP is quick to put on its blackface, namely by highlighting the fact that former Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powel and Oklahoma Congressman J.C. Watts, a former University of Oklahoma football star, are proud Republicans. She said the Republican Party could show their commitment to black voters - and by extension to black media - by funneling money to the black community.

"The Republican Party has not extended an invitation to the African-American community," Denise Rolark-Barnes, editor-publisher of The Washington Informer, told the NNPA. "That casts a shadow over those African-Americans who are there. It's an embarrassment."

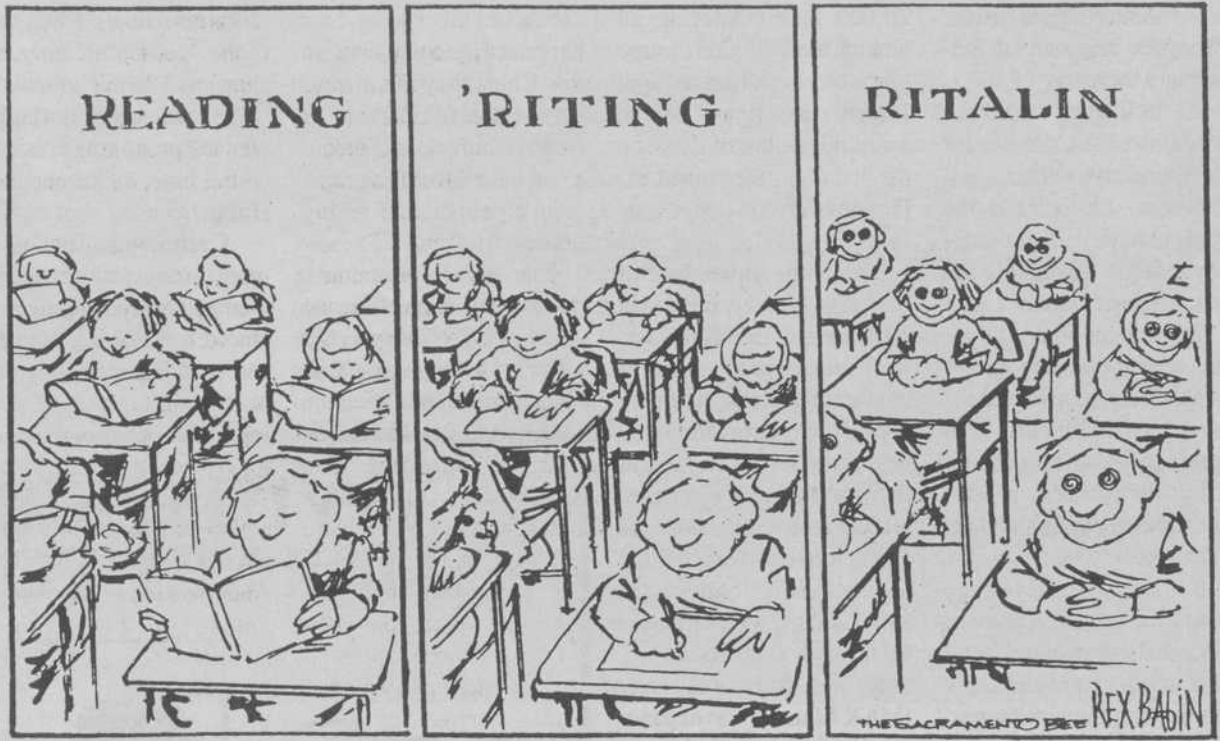
What's heartening is the effort by a scant number of Black Republicans to address the advertising blackout. Republican political consultant Raynard Jackson, in an April 6 letter to RNC chairman Jim Nicholson, called on Nicholson to explain the inequality in monetary support and the lack of efforts aimed at recruiting and grooming black voters.

On the local level, little to no effort has been made by Republican candidates to spread their message to black voters. It can't be there aren't any black Republicans in the state — the Black Republican Roundtable is quite active — and it can't be that there aren't black-operated media outlets — the Sentinel-Voice, KCEP Power 88.1 FM, in addition to magazines, newsletters and television shows. What's the problem? Is it that the black voting strength is seen as less sexy than Hispanic voting prowess? Is it an attempt to pit the two races against each other? If so, it won't work.

Black publishers vowed to not allow people of color to be divided by the Republican Party.

"Black and Latinos and minorities will always have a lot of issues in common," Swain-Ross said. "If they think a few dollars in the Latino community will separate the minority segment from their base issues, then they are wasting their time and their money."

THE 3R'S



Yes, race still matters in America

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Three stories prominent in the news this past week — involving the federal Secret Service, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, and the state flag of Mississippi — would seem at first glance to have little in common.

But, in fact, all three stories have a great deal in common.

The central issue in each story revolves around the issue of race and ethnicity: it's place in America's past and present, and the discussion about its place in America's future.

Each of these stories, and many more recent stories as well, underscore the continuing significance of race in American society and the folly of thinking that race won't matter if we all pretend that it doesn't.

The Census Bureau has taken a lot of heat this spring from some commentators for gathering information on the racial and ethnic breakdowns of the American population.


These people say that classifying people by race is wrongheaded, insulting, and only divides Americans from each other.

Well, even though I still wouldn't agree with their "color-blindness" point of view, I'd be inclined to think them sincere — if they spoke out with equal vigor, or spoke out at all, about other situations where race, color and ethnicity have come into play.

If they spoke out, for example, about the racial pro-

To Be Equal

By **Hugh B. Price**
President
National Urban League



filing African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Pacific Americans have been subjected to by police agencies for years.

This issue has moved to the forefront of public discussion in the last two years. A wide variety of private individuals and groups, law enforcement officers and politicians have debated the issue.

But from the advocates of color-blindness, there's only been a deafening silence. They have not declared that police racial profiling is wrongheaded, insulting, and only divides Americans from one another.

And where are those advocates now that at least ten current and former Secret Service agents who are African-American have filed a federal class action racial discrimination lawsuit?

The agents, whose duties require them to unhesitatingly put themselves in harm's way to protect any person they guard, have charged that the agency's top officials not only continually ignored their complaints of racial discrimination, but actively partici-

pated in the systematic denial of promotions and other opportunities to black agents.

One would think that advocates of color-blindness would rush to support secret service agents who wish to see the principles of equal opportunity applied equally.

One would be wrong; because the color-blind crowd is always silent when African-Americans and other people of color are themselves targets of discrimination.

They did not speak out on the need for color-blindness two years ago when James Byrd, Jr., a citizen of Jasper, Texas, who was African-

American, was brutally murdered by young white men; nor when black and white citizens of that community sought to find ways to reach across the boundaries of race and color.

They have not spoken out about the astonishing federal report that the U.S. Custom Department disproportionately singled out black women travelers returning from overseas for "intrusive searches" — strip searches, X-rays, body cavity searches, and monitored bowel movements — in its search for drugs and other contraband.

I could go on and on. At every point when they could show that they apply their color-blindness to both sides of the color line, they show just the opposite: That they are very conscious of color.

They just don't want us to be.

But we have to be conscious of color, and face what it has meant and means

(See Race, Page 14)

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