

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

Best candidates:
respect, reason

The headline read "NAACP embroiled in another election-year controversy."

Editorializing, you say. Sorry, wrong assumption. The headline rings true. Like it or not.

While some may criticize the Sentinel-Voice for choosing to write about the latest election-related struggles of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or question why the headline writers choose that particular title, those same folks can't deny the fact that our beloved civil rights organization has a problem.

One election-year debacle (circa 1994's race) doesn't make a trend, nor does it signal anything too unusual. Two debacles (see 1996) and one begins to wonder about the situation. Three debacles (see 1998) and serious questions need to be asked.

But when three debacles are followed by a debacle-in-the-making (see 2000, better yet, read on) then there's something wrong, seriously wrong.

And when litigation becomes a part of the equation — NAACP member Willia Chaney filed suit in Clark County District Court Tuesday claiming that local NAACP president Gene Collins defamed her — this is no longer the stuff of interoffice or intercommunity babble, it's media worthy.

Here's the gristle: Chaney, who's running for office along with husband Lonie, a candidate for NAACP president, claim that Collins has engaged in election-rigging. A letter written by their lawyer to national NAACP officials alleges that Collins back-dated applications for nominees, used branch funds to buy memberships for people that would support his reelection and tainted the nomination process by not verifying eligible to vote.

Collins counters, claiming that the challengers to his seat are driven by a vendetta, angry that he discovered that funds generated by the branch's annual Freedom Fund Banquet were mismanaged or disappeared. Collins said his administration has operated above-board and restored pride to the branch.

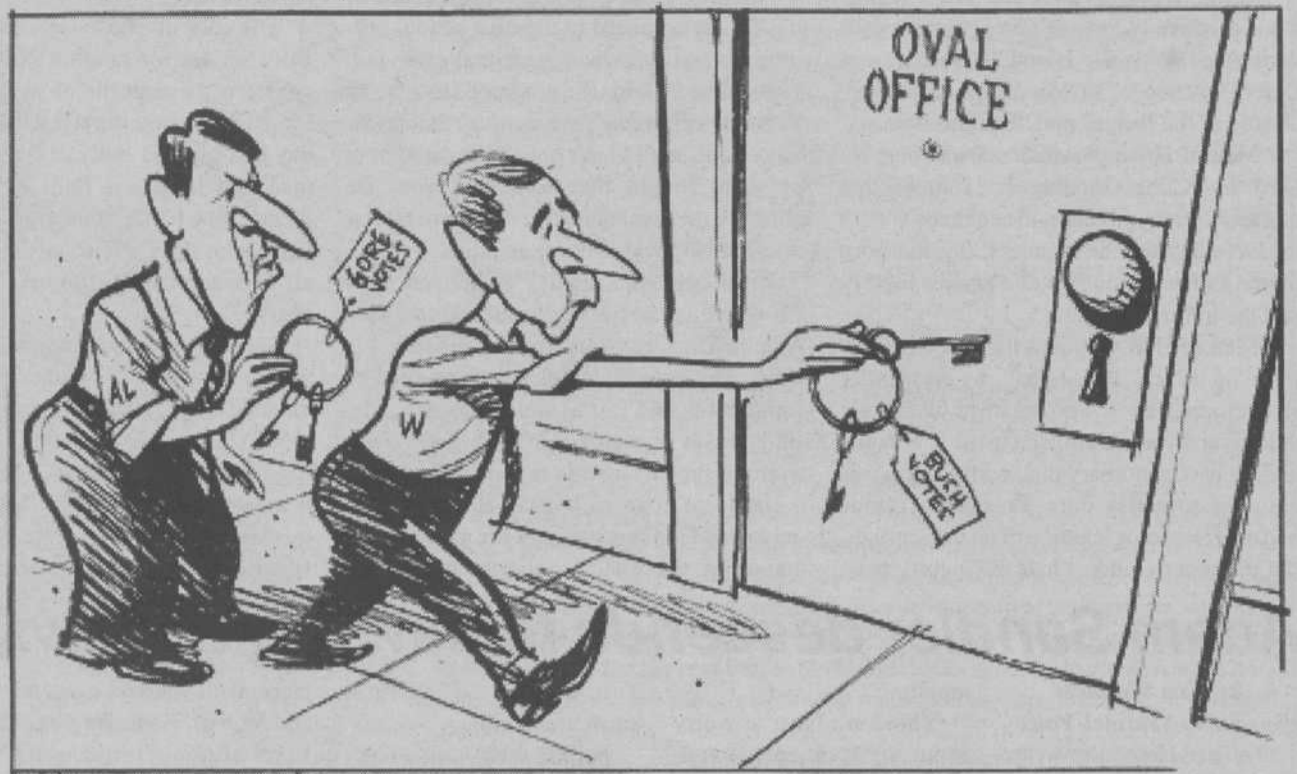
Which brings us to Saturday, the day NAACP elections are supposed to take place. Lonie Chaney's lawyer fired off a letter Oct. 1 to national NAACP board chairman Julian Bond asking that the election be postponed. Last Thursday, election supervisors for the local branch joined the postponement chorus, sending a letter to Collins recommending that Saturday's election be put on hold.

Chaney has asked that national NAACP officials come in and supervise the election.

Even if that's done, there will be hard feelings from someone. If Collins is vindicated, the Chaney ticket is left eating crow and looking like the villain. If national NAACP officials side with the Chaney party, Collins will have a hard time recovering from the damage to his reputation. Either way, there are no winners and the Las Vegas NAACP is the biggest losers. Hurt even worse are NAACP members themselves, who must read the headlines and endure the back-biting of community folks who think the group is a nonfactor when it comes to pertinent societal issues. Let's hope respect and reason rule in this election.

But judging by recent history, that's a major gamble. It's probably safer betting on 2002 election debacle. And that's ashame.

THE FLORIDA KEYS



Leaders have failed to implement black agenda

By Emory Curtis

Special to Sentinel-Voice

What's the matter with the NAACP and our political leaders?

During this past political campaign where, before a single vote was counted, both Republicans and Democrats acknowledged that our votes in a few states would be crucial in selecting the legislative and executive leadership team for this country, neither the NAACP nor our political leaders publicly placed performance demands on the political parties and candidates as to our minimum expectations in certain issue areas.

There are front burner issues that ought to be at the front of any political campaign that wants and needs our support. The issues are fundamental equality issues that separate our needs from the masses. They are what is happening in the education arena where the majority of our youngsters are academically performing below norm, and the justice arena where the extent of the problem is exhibited by the over representation of us in prisons and on death rows.

Of course there are many other issues of concern that have a disproportionate negative impact on us because of our race. The job picture and the lack of realistic affirmative action policies, the dearth of meaningful appointments, and the "Driving While Black" issue as well as penalties for hate crimes are all peculiar issues of concern to us.

However, those issues are all traceable back to the two main issues that ought to lead everyone's Black agenda—equality of the delivery of education to our youngsters and the equality in the delivery of justice.

Instead of placing demands in terms of issues on what should be the national Black Agenda, the NAACP and Black political, civic, and religious leadership went along with the political leash the Democratic Party and the Gore presidential team strapped around their necks. That leash was for them to tout the Clinton-Gore team non-performance in terms of Black agenda issues as positive and meaningful.

Black Democratic party politicians happily trotted behind that party's leash because they knew that route would maximize the delivery of Black votes which in terms would place them at the front of the line for the benefits that election winners can deliver for their kith, kin and political contributors who made it all happen in the first place.

I understand those actions, but I don't like them. They fall into the divisible benefits school of political actions. That's not my school.

My political actions, and the political actions of lots of other political outsiders, are focused on governmental actions in the mass benefits arena. In other words, our focus is on government policy that benefits masses of people, not just a few.

However, we all recog-

nize that divisible benefits are what makes the political system work. That's why a decent reform of the political contribution system is good political talk, but not good political action.

If there was no possibility of payback and even payoffs (more than just getting your money back) there would be no multi-million dollar political campaigns. And the NAACP wouldn't have had a chance for \$5 million to be funneled through the organization from a single source to buy ads supporting the Democratic campaign (or knocking the Republicans).

The direct benefits or payoffs from that pass-through ad campaign would do little for the Black masses in terms of the Black agenda but it certainly would pay off for NAACP insiders with some special legislative or administrative actions that were economically beneficial to their kith or kin. Some payoffs won't be that big.

Most will just be invitations to big time functions where their pictures are taken

hobnobbing with the top. Essentially, that is what the Clinton-Gore presidency delivered for the delivery of our votes for candidates and issues of their choosing.

The inequality in the delivery of justice is a perennial problem for us. That's why there are so many of our folk on death rows in states with the death penalty.

And now, the supposedly "War on Drugs" is the reason so many of our young men are in prison for being caught on the retail end of the illegal drug industry while the wholesale delivery of drugs continues unabated. As a result, from all reports, the only aspect of the drug problem that has decreased is the cost on the street for drugs with higher purity.

Something is askew in the crime versus penalty aspects of the "War on Drugs." By far, the greatest numbers of users of illegal drugs in this country are white, even for crack, crystallized cocaine, according to Department of Justice statistics. The federal (See Black Agenda, Pg 11)

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Contributing Writers:

Lee Brown
Tammy McMahan
John T. Stephens III
Fred T. Snyder
Michelle Wynder
Photographers:
John Broussard
Kimberly Edwards
Jonathan Olsen

Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief

Shiobhan Henderson, Copy Editor

Don Snook, Graphics

Ed & Betty Brown, Founders

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