

C O M M E N T A R Y

'James Crow, Esquire,' new American villain

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It was one of the most eagerly awaited speeches of the summer. Former New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial had been elected president and CEO of the National Urban League and people wanted to know his vision for the organization.

In his first convention speech, Morial said that he wanted to lead an "empowerment movement" that would eliminate inequality in five key areas: education, the economy, health and quality of life, civic engagement and civil rights and racial justice.

So how did his hometown paper, the New Orleans "Times-Picayune," cover this momentous speech?

Rather than focus on how Morial plans to reinvigorate the civil rights group, the newspaper became obsessed with a brief section of the speech in which Morial said that his new empowerment drive "is a movement to defeat a new villain... James Crow, Esquire. As Dr. Robert Hill [author of a chapter in the league's annual "State of Black America" report] says, 'James Crow, Esquire' represents the new, sometimes not so obvious structural inequality that persists 40 years after the onset of the modern Civil Rights Movement."

In a 4,377-word speech, that is what they chose to focus on?

This is just one example of why so many people distrust the White-owned media. Some things, such as this coverage, can't be justified.

Not only did that story run under the headline, "Former mayor makes fiery national debut," a second story the following Sunday carried the headline, "Skeptics denounce 'blame-whitey' tact."

The newspaper tried to repackage Morial—the first Black mayor of New

Orleans to win a majority of the White vote—as some kind of flaming militant. And they did so by saying that Harry Edwards, the University of California sociologist who encouraged track stars Tommie Smith and John Carlos to give raised-fist "Black Power" salutes at the 1968 Olympics, coined the term "James Crow, Esquire" in 1982.

First, let's define the term. Hill, a well-respected scholar, noted in his report: "There has been a strong shift from Jim Crow—the overt manifestation of racial hatred by individuals in white society—to James Crow, Esquire—the maintenance of racial inequality through covert processes of structure and institutions."

Second, by giving credit to Harry Edwards for coining the term, the "Times-Picayune" demonstrates its own ignorance of the Civil Rights Movement, ignorance that can't be glossed over by using LexisNexis data base searches.

As a reporter, I heard former NAACP Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks use the term in the 1970s, long before Edwards supposedly created it. I heard Jesse Jackson use "James Crow, Esquire" in the 1980s. I heard Al Sharpton use it in the 1990s. And NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and others have used the term this decade.

Instead of "blaming whitey"—an anachronistic expression itself—the paper ignored Morial's comment that, "I commit that we will work harder than ever before to build multi-racial coalitions to solve the challenges of the 21st Century."

There are other digs in the story. "The League, being tax-exempt, is supposedly nonpartisan..." It is, in fact, nonpartisan.

And there's this: "Although the Urban League is a nonpartisan organization, it is a
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Gubernatorial recall as ultimate reality show

By Lloyd Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Forget Fear Factor, American Idol, Survivor, Big Brother, Dog Eat Dog, Temptation Island, Paradise Hotel, The Amazing Race, Meet My Folks, Who Wants to Marry My Mom, The Bachelor, Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire, Anything for Love, The Swap, Last Comic Standing, Fame, Joe Millionaire, Average Joe, Race to the Altar, Love Shack, For Love or Money, Cupid, Boy Meets Boy, The Restaurant, The Mole, Real World, The Osbournes, 30 Seconds to Fame, Are You Hot, Popstars, Anna Nicole, Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Road Rules, Cheaters and any of the rest of the scourge of 100+, so-called "reality shows" which have come to overrun network television in recent years.

The State of California is about to give us the best reality programming yet in a media circus called a gubernatorial recall election. For on October 7th, its citizenry will choose first, whether to oust reviled incumbent Gray Davis, and, if so, whom to replace him with. Right now, Arnold Schwarzenwhatever supposedly has the inside track on the job, at least according to a Gallup Poll of 801 registered voters in which he netted 42% of the tally.

But there remain over 10 million others still unpolled who Arnold must seek to convince before he can be crowned Governor. And because Los Angeles is a la-la land which attracts every weirdo with a dream and a pocketful of miracles, the ballot is going to be packed with the names of about 200 flaky, fringe candidates, most either washed-up or wannabe entertainers hanging around Hollywood for just this sort of one-in-a-zillion shot.

One of the first to declare was Gary Coleman, the only ex-child star from the cursed Different Strokes TV-series who

didn't either pose in Playboy, make porno films, die from an overdose, or get arrested for armed robbery, murder, forging prescriptions or drug possession. No, Gary, a confirmed virgin, only ended up suing his money-grubbing stage parents for squandering the millions he made turning, "Watch you talkin' 'bout, Willis?" into a pop culture catchphrase.

Admittedly, the moody midget's image was later marred when he was charged with assaulting a female fan who was hassling him for an autograph while he was trying to do his job as a shopping mall security guard. No wonder he's decided to throw his rent-a-cop hat into the ring.

Other candidates include Leo Gallagher, the chrome-domed comedian whose trademark is smashing watermelons with a sledgehammer, a fact which doesn't bode well for melon-chested Mary Carey, who is running on the porn star ticket, or for the equally endowed Angelyn, a billboard celeb previously famous only for being famous. Larry Flynt, the wheelchair-bound publisher of Hustler magazine, certainly has the money to mount a serious campaign, but it's hard to believe that a smut peddler is likely to find many legitimate endorsements.

It's also an uphill battle for trivia answer Don Novello, since the comedian has built his showbiz career around the character Father Guido Sarducci, the wisecracking clergyman he's played for years on Saturday Night Live and elsewhere. Name recognition won't be a problem for candidates Michael Jackson or Richard Simmons, though it might hurt these pretenders as the populace discovers that they're not really the Prince of Pop or the Duke of Dieting.

Although Arnold is enjoying an early lead, he can't afford to rest on his laurels. I
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Lieberman's conservatism shouldn't sit well with Blacks

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Joe Lieberman recently trashed the Left of the Democratic Party, arguing that the rise of the Left is a danger to winning future elections. He supports the Iraq war and rails against the position of candidates such as Howard Dean, Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton, who have opposed the war; and Bob Graham for saying that George Bush lied in order to get America into the war.

Lieberman also opposes anything close to universal health care and opposes raising taxes in an atmosphere in which Bush has bankrupted the federal treasury through a series of devastating tax cuts.

Lieberman is a throwback to an earlier time. I remember when the Democratic

Party was divided because it was encumbered by Southerners who did not really believe in civil rights, but benefited from the working-class policies of the party.

Southerners were alienated because Blacks took the Civil Rights Movement inside of the party and fought for party positions and public policies that represented their interests—and they were largely successful by the end of the 1970s.

But Southern Democrats felt disenfranchised and by this time had become comfortable enough with the Republican Party to consider becoming a part of its coalition. The 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan was that opportunity, and they took it. This helped to cloud the problem of who was a

Democrat.

More recently, another segment of Democrats, who were frustrated that the party lost the elections of 1984 and 1988, formed the Right-wing Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). It was predicated on the fact that the Democratic Party needed to move to the "center," that is, it needed to become more conservative and downplay social policies.

People like Bill Clinton and Joe Lieberman became leaders of the DLC, and when Clinton became president, he instituted a corporate-oriented, moderate on civil rights set of policies that also marginalized organized labor by passing the North American Free Trade Act. But people supported him because he was all they had.

People also supported Clinton because of the economic good times. However, few understood that part of the way this happened was through a traditional Democratic approach of raising taxes.

The DLC overlooked that fact because it has favored the Republican view that government has little business in funding and running social programs and where it has the responsibility, it should give public money to support private control of these funds.

Lieberman would support this DLC approach, as well as the Clinton strategy of making small policy changes. For example, he does not support universal health care, saying that it would bankrupt the country like the Bush tax cuts are doing.

Instead, he supports expanding the Child Health Insurance Protection Act to cover more children. John Kerry, Dick Gephardt and other candidates criticize the Lieberman approach and propose to expand health care much more by offering every American the opportunity to buy into the best health care plans. I believe that the Black community substantially defines its position on the Left of the Democratic Party and insofar as Lieberman opposes the Left, he should not get the Black vote.

This time around, there are many candidates running for office in the Democratic Party whose views are much closer to the needs and the view of Blacks and many of them have a credible chance to win the party's nomination for

president.

The Lieberman candidacy, which trades winning for traditional Democratic Party positions on issues, should be rejected. What does it matter if he is elected and gets in a position to institute Republican-styled policies. The support of Lieberman depends on your view of the urgency of the Black condition and the need for a change in politics.

I judge it as urgent and would challenge any party to stand for issues that merit the Black vote. I would rather win or lose this way.

Ron Walters is a Distinguished Leadership Scholar, director of the African American Leadership Institute and professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland-College Park.