

COMMENTARY

California's democracy could hang by a chad

By Faye M. Anderson
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Well, they're back. Chad and his hanging-pregnant-dimpled posse are back to wreak havoc in the California recall election.

California election officials are apparently still crazy in love with unreliable punch-card voting machines, although they have been warned about the systems' chad problems since the 1970s. The warning was echoed in the 2001 report of the CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project.

In a landmark study, the researchers found that punch-card voting systems "lose at least 50 percent more votes than optically scanned paper ballots... The immediate implications of our analysis is that the U.S. can lower the number of lost votes in 2004 by replacing punch cards and lever machines with optical scanning."

The CalTech/MIT study found that four million to six million votes were discarded nationwide in 2000. About half of those votes were lost because of voting equipment failure, flawed voting procedures or inadequate election day preparation by overwhelmed election officials. These are the very factors that will be in play if the recall election takes place as scheduled on Oct. 7.

The American Civil Liberties Union, on behalf of the California NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and

the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, has filed a lawsuit in federal court to postpone the recall election until March 2004. A hearing is set for Aug. 18.

"If the October election goes forward, we can predict with absolute certainty that every Californian's vote will not count. Democracy in California should not hang by a chad," said Mark Rosenbaum, legal director of the ACLU of Southern California, in a statement.

California's crazy quilt mix of voting systems arguably violates the equal protection standard enunciated by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bush vs. Gore*. Indeed, the affected counties are already under federal court order to replace punch-card machines with voting systems that are more reliable by March.

Alice Huffman, president of the California NAACP, recently said on "Hannity & Colmes," "It's about voting rights. We want to make sure every voter can vote and that their vote will be counted.... There's something wrong when you have two classes of voters."

As in Florida, minority voters will disproportionately cast their vote on voting machines that have the highest error rate. For instance, voters in majority-minority Los Angeles County, which has more voters than any jurisdiction in the nation, will

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Black Americans need to set high economic goals

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In a conversation with Brother Ashiki Taylor (The MATAHMan, as he is called in Atlanta), as we discussed goals, a thought arose that prompted this article. That thought was centered on the establishment of an economic goal for Black people. We get hyped about attaining goals in sports, for instance, by reaching the goal line in football, by getting to the goal on the basketball court, by setting a goal for home runs, steals and such in baseball, and if you like soccer and have heard that guy yell GOOOOOAL!, you know exactly how exciting reaching the goal can be. These goals are all set in an effort to do what? To win the game! So, what should our goals be for winning the economic game?

Before we set a goal we must know where we are. So, I took a look at the U.S. Census report on businesses and, without getting too tech-

nical or statistical, decided to share a few items from that report. The 2002 statistics are not yet available, so we used the 1997 report for this article.

Blacks owned 823,000 businesses and generated \$71.2 in revenues. If we project those figures into 2003, we could justifiably estimate the number of Black-owned business to have increased by 200,000, but with revenues of only \$92 billion. I say this because, according to Black Enterprise Magazine, the 2002 revenues for the top 100 industrial/service firms and the leading 100 auto dealerships were \$20.9 billion. Also, because a 1992 report by the U.S. Department of Commerce noted that 56 percent of Black-owned companies had revenues under \$10,000 and only 3,000 Black businesses had more than \$1 million in annual sales.

A consistent and interesting side bar: As the number of Black-owned businesses in-

crease, their revenues do not follow suit. Between 1992 and 1997 Black business ownership rose 26 percent, compared to just 7 percent for all U.S. firms. However, revenues for those Black-owned businesses increased by 33 percent, below the 40 percent increase for all other firms. This begs two questions: What are African-Americans doing with our billions in annual income? Are other groups supporting our businesses the way we support theirs?

Facing numbers like those, coupled with our percentage of population, which happens to be around 13 percent, would it be great if we established and worked toward an economic goal that not only reflects our percentage of population but builds an economic foundation as well?

While we could compare Black business to Jewish, Hispanic and Asian business, we won't. It's been done

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President Bush's treatment of Liberia extremely shabby

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At first the question was whether or not the United States should send troops to help stabilize Liberia, and there was some division within the Black community about this. Bill Fletcher, head of TransAfrica, thought that the United States should not go in, but that this should be an African responsibility. But members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), headed by Rep. Donald Payne of New Jersey and a ranking member on the House International Affairs Committee, thought that U.S. troops should go in.

I must confess that I am of both opinions. I believed that the United States should go into Liberia, but that the most productive way that it could help that country—and the rest of Africa—was not to make this a one-shot deal.

That is to say, I agree with Fletcher, that in the best of all possible worlds, the project of peacemaking and peacekeeping is an African responsibility. But right now,

African countries south of the Sahara desert, with the exception of Nigeria and South Africa, do not have the military capability to do this job. The United States, the United Nations and European countries, should provide the African Union with the support to have an effective military intervention capability.

Moreover, I would not trust the Nigerians to go in alone without other coalitions partners tied to the United Nations because the last time they did so, they contributed to the chaos by raping, looting and destroying property. This time, the Nigerians have gone into Liberia with the authority and support of the United Nations and with other African troops.

As I write, troops from the United States, however, are sitting off shore of Liberia—a disgusting site—with Bush biding his time and hoping that Nigeria has the military situation in hand so he won't risk another venture where Americans wake up to the morning news that their troops are being killed in yet another

place in the world. This does not go over very well, especially in Africa, where White boys were being killed by Somalis early in the Clinton Administration and American rebelled at their presence there, causing Clinton to hustle them home.

George Bush also is politically vulnerable to a negative racial photo-op as a counter to those he attempted to create by going to Africa in the first place. In fact, this looks strange for Bush, having been to Africa amid signs from his subordinates that he was demonstrating his concern for Africans. But when it came to actually demonstrate his concern for Liberians who were being slaughtered in the streets of Monrovia, Bush held back. One gets the feeling that if they had been White he would not have held back, that American public opinion would have sanctioned him taking a risk at helping to resolve the conflict and bring peace to the country. The fact that he decided to sit it out,

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King's economic mission forgotten part of speech

By George E. Curry
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When the 40th anniversary of the March on Washington is observed this weekend, inevitably attention will be focused on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech. We've heard the speech so many times that we know the words:

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Undoubtedly, the media will focus on that passage while others, such as Jesse Jackson, will remind demonstrators that in that same speech, Dr. King told his audience that, "America has given the Negro people a bad check; a check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds.'"

While that was one of Dr. King's greatest speeches, a more didactic one was Dr. King's last one, the "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech, delivered on the eve of his assassination in Memphis.

"I can remember when Negroes were just going around as Ralph [Abernathy] has said, so often, scratching where they didn't itch, and laughing when they were not tickled. But that day is over. We mean business now, and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world. And that's what this whole thing is about."

He had a word for the Black church, one of our most powerful institutions.

"It's alright to talk about 'long white robes over yonder,' in all of its symbolism," Dr. King said.

"But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about 'streets flowing with milk and honey,' but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day God's preacher must talk about the new New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. That is what we have to do."

To create more respectful relationships, Dr. King reminded us: "Always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal."

He recognized our collective economic strength, which has increased dramatically over the past 40 years.

According to the most recent statistics compiled by the University of Georgia Selig Center for Economic Growth, Black buying power, which was \$318 billion in 1990, stood at \$688 billion in 2002 and is projected to grow to \$921 billion in 2008, an increase of 189 percent over 18 years.

The overall buying power of African-

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