

# It's the jihad, stupid! U.S. dumb to fight Islam with war

By Lloyd Williams  
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"You don't catch hell because you're a Methodist or a Baptist... And you sure don't catch hell 'cause you're an American... 'cause if you was an American you wouldn't catch no hell. You catch hell 'cause you're a Black man... Second class citizens. Ex-slaves. You are nothing but an ex-slave. You don't like to be told that, but what else are you?" — Malcolm X, November 10, 1963

Even though I already had another religion, when I was a kid, I used to read a newspaper published by the Nation of Islam named "Muhammad Speaks" fairly regularly.

Armed only with bean pies and a periodical spouting the then incendiary ideas of Malcolm X, well-dressed Black Muslim brothers in bow-ties would try to recruit me right off the street, despite the freckles and a Catholic school uniform.

## Obama

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like myself have the opportunities that I do."

Obama's quick rise outside his home state has caused political observers to scrutinize him closely.

"The rap in Chicago was that he was not Black enough. And so, that's still going to be a lingering question," says University of Maryland political scientist Ronald Walters. "But his legislative record tells you that he has been good on progressive legislation. He seems to be a liberal. He seems to have really taken some time to deal with urban issues."

Walters did not always hold this opinion. He admits he was among the first to question Obama's racial allegiance because of the belief that Obama had been a member of the Democratic Leadership Committee, a centrist group that works to move the party to the right.

"It was said that he was sort of a paper member of it, but that was to give himself some entrée," Walters says. "My interpretation was that he was covering all bases with the Democratic Party."

Obama declares that no such relationship with the DLC ever existed.

"The 'Black Commentator,' the Web site,

As fervently as I believed that Jesus had walked on water, back then they believed that all White people were devils and a creation of the diabolical Yakub, a mad Black scientist. I learned at an early age that as odd as someone else's dogma might strike me, freedom of religion means that everyone is entitled to their faith.

I declined to replace my slave name with an X, though their publication's political perspective, if not their theology, piqued my interest. I enjoyed the fact that their periodical addressed serious concerns we never covered in Catechism.

The Black Muslims did find plenty of converts in the prisons, because their ideas resonated with so many men long-discarded as pariahs by a society with no further use for them.

Fast-forward about 40 years, and Islam is no longer considered a fringe sect in America,

but it's the fastest growing mainstream religion — 9/11, ethnic profiling and Middle East tensions notwithstanding.

Though its tenets might be tweaked to suit the cultural demands of different countries, such as China where they have female mullahs and all-girl mosques, this is a religion to be reckoned with.

We can't afford to stereotype or snap-diagnose the assorted simmering sentiments of over a billion people, especially when the rationalizations of radical elements in their midst are routinely resulting in death and destruction all over the planet.

I wonder whether human nature itself might have changed when global jihadism has become such an attractive career path. And, when the Scott Peterson case generates more daily interest and media attention than details about: the death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan; the ethnic cleansing in Sudan and Bosnia; the

suicide bombings in Indonesia, Israel and elsewhere; the Russian planes falling out of the sky; and the slaughter of hundreds of innocent children kidnapped on the first day of school. Anybody dare connect the dots? Or do we just continue to be blasé and ignore the anti-Western backlash — a frightening consequence of imperial overstretch?

The dangerous assumption we make, and at considerable risk, is that the answer is to entertain ourselves with trivial pursuits like Kobe and "Wacko Jacko," while praying that it won't happen here, again.

This ostrich approach amounts to an abdication of our responsibility and presumes that only a military solution is possible, when there must be an alternative means of making the world safe for diversity other than killing for peace.

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saw my name as one of the 100 up-and-coming that the DLC had listed and assumed that somehow that made me a DLC member. They were mistaken," he says.

Obama explains, "I try not to label myself as any particular kind of legislator. I like to have flexibility to make judgment calls about what I think is best for my voters."

Moving through thick crowds at the Democratic convention and at last week's CBC Weekend, Obama always seemed to stand out, attracting crowds everywhere he went. If elected to the Senate, he says he will not blend in there either, but will speak up on issues that affect African-Americans and others.

"Some issues cut across all racial lines, like jobs, education, and health care," he says. "But they especially benefit African-Americans, who are disproportionately unemployed, disproportionately lack health care coverage and disproportionately go to sub-standard schools. There are also those specific issues surrounding civil rights, voting rights, and health disparities in areas like AIDS, in which I look forward to being an advocate, not only because I'm African-American but also because it's the right thing to do."

Obama says he objects to President Bush packing the federal courts with far-right extremists.

"I hope John Kerry is the next president," he says. "I have confidence that his judicial appointments will be sympathetic to civil rights and voting rights and civil liberties. If President Bush got another four years, I think we'd have to be fearful."

Obama is being challenged by Alan Keyes, a two-time long-shot presidential candidate and former under secretary of state in the Reagan administration. Keyes, a resident of Maryland, announced his Illinois senatorial candidacy last month. Obama, who holds the lead in the polls, tactfully avoids discussing his opponent. If elected, as expected, Obama will be the third African-American to serve in the U. S. Senate since Reconstruction. The

others are Edward W. Brooke (1966-1978) and Carol Moseley Braun (1992-1998).

Observers see him as a potential new voice on the Hill. But they see him as serving dual roles. The son of a White American mother and Kenyan father, some see Obama as helping bridge the racial gap.

"I've always identified as an African-American. People look at me and say, 'There's an African-American brother,'" he explains.

Yet he is not limited by that.

"I think I can speak to many cultures, but I don't think that's unique to me," Obama says. "I think it's just a matter of experience and exposure as opposed to where your bloodline is. That's why I've never been someone who believes there should only be one African-American leader. Everybody's got a voice that they contribute."

## Fletcher

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circumstances that they would never have anticipated.

The destruction that was wrought by the U.S. on Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia has been repeatedly documented. Why, therefore, should we in 2004 pretend that the experience was clean?

While the objective of the anti-Kerry attack ads is clearly a cynical means to derail discussions about current issues, at the same time it reminds one that patriotism

is not the unqualified support of one's government irrespective of whether the activities of one's government are legal, legitimate or moral. Rather, patriotism is about love of one's country and a willingness to defend it, even if defending it means confronting thorny questions and holding ourselves accountable for horrendous actions.

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## Campaign

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Day if he is to defeat Bush.

On Saturday, Kerry suggested that Republicans may try to keep Black voters from casting their non-Republican ballots to help Bush win in November. Speaking to the Congressional Black Caucus, he said: "We are not going to stand by and allow acts of voter suppression, and we're hearing those things again in this election."

Making the same argument, a new Media

Fund radio ad claims: "The Republicans want you to sit out this election and simply stay home. Who are they fooling?"

Founded by former Clinton administration aide Harold Ickes and funded in part by billionaire philanthropist George Soros, the Media Fund is making its first major pitch to minorities. The Democratic National Committee also is courting Black voters through ads and over the summer Kerry did some advertising targeted to Blacks.

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with the effects of past discrimination and to encourage business development among women and minorities?"

Kerry talked about his support of affirmative action and small businesses, but did not provide a direct answer. Bush's campaign material did not address the issue.

Kerry expressed opposition to vouchers, saying "drawing money out of the public school system and sending it to private schools hurts our children." Bush favors vouchers because they "provide parents, particularly low-income parents, of students who attend low-performing schools with opportunities to transfer their children to higher-performing public, charter or private schools."

The Democratic nominee supports extension of certain sections of the Voting Rights Act that are scheduled to expire in 2007. Bush has not taken a public stand on the issue.

As for restoring the voting rights of ex-felons, Kerry stated, "I believe that restoration of voting rights is the first step... We need to go further... with more supervision and support. And we must ensure that former felons have access to education, job training and opportunities." Bush has made no mention of restoring such voting rights but favors job training, placement services and transitional housing for ex-offenders.

On the minimum wage, Kerry proposes

increasing it from \$5.15 to \$7 by 2007. President Bush, on the other hand, said he will work with Congress to "study" various proposals.

President Bush supports the USA Patriot Act and feels all sections should be extended. Kerry supports the act but supports "a bipartisan proposal... that would ensure that this ['sneak and peek' search] authority is used only in the right circumstances and for fighting terrorism. We will also work to stop unwarranted seizure of library or business records... and... will require the FBI to meet a higher standard before obtaining library records."

In addition to the Joint Center questionnaire, Kerry has pledged to appoint more mainstream Supreme Court Justices. On the other hand, Bush says he will appoint judges similar to Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia, the two most conservative members of the Supreme Court. The next president is expected to appoint two or three justices. With recent civil rights victories being won by the slimmest of margins, these appointments are likely to alter the court for decades.

As you see, there are major differences between the two candidates. If anyone tells you otherwise, they don't know what they're talking about.

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