

# Is America ready to trade liberty for safety?

By James Clingman  
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Someone said, "Any group of people that would give up its liberty for safety, deserves neither." Is this what the upcoming election is really all about?

Have we opted for "safety," as provided by John Ashcroft, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, and George W. Bush, and given away our liberties? Have we become so afraid since Sept. 11, 2001, that we are willing to allow our citizens to be hauled off and placed in prisons, not to be heard from in months and denied legal representation? Have we become a nation of lemmings, traipsing behind a leader who is oblivious to the cliffs and clueless on how to get us out of our perilous position?

Do we just want to "feel" safe? Or, do we really care as much as we say we do about our vaunted "liberty" and, I might add, "justice for all?" What I am about to say is not partisan. In case you have not read my latest book, *Black-O-Knowledge*, Stuff we need to know, I call the two parties "Demopublicans" and "Republicrats."

Thus, my slant is only in the direction that operates in the best interests of Black people, my "home team." I would support the donkeys, the elephants, or the independents; I'd support the Greens, the Libertarians, or any political group that puts forth initiatives that specifically targets Black economic empowerment. But, I have enough sense to know that's not going to happen, in this diversity-

multicultural-minority group du jour society in which we now live.

The current dirty laundry list of domestic issues, most of which have a greater impact on African-Americans, includes record-breaking deficits, more than 2 million jobs lost, bombs that are smarter than our children, corporate scandals, tax-breaks for millionaires, Halliburton and Cheney, nearly 1,000 young Americans killed to get even with one Iraqi dictator, fear of what Bin Laden will do next, and cities on lock-down.

All of this is obviously supported by a horde of flag waving jingoistic partisans screaming "four more years!" Did I mention Halliburton and Cheney?

Liberty for safety? The only discussion we hear among the Republicans is centered on war. The Democrats are busy trying to defend the war record of their guy, despite it being more than thirty years old. George makes us "feel" safer, they chant.

He takes away our liberties but we feel safer. John assures us of his heroism and dedication to duty in a war fought — and lost — during the 1960s and early 1970s. He tries to get past that war thing, but for some reason it just ain't happenin', folks. By the way, they both roll up their sleeves when they talk. I'm sure that really seals the deal for some of us.

You know, they're just regular guys, like



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you and me; aristocratic upbringing, yes, but they are just regular guys.

Is this presidential election all about who is the nicer candidate? Is it about what these guys did during the Viet Nam era? Could it be about how Bush struts like a cowboy about to draw down on the bad guy? Or, how Kerry lacks charisma? Is it a contest about which one we know the best, when we don't

really know either one? Is this election turning on lies about "swift boats," perpetrated by a bunch of vindictive, My Lai (ironically pronounced "me lie") forgettin' malcontents? Seems that way, doesn't it?

They chant, "George Bush is 'consistent.'" Do they mean consistently wrong? They say John Kerry wavers and would not be good in the so-called war on terror. Do they mean he might change his mind about some things?

Is this election about Bush's absolutely embarrassing grasp of his native language, his malapropisms, and his stupid answers to questions such as, "What do you think tribal sovereignty means in the 21st century, and how do we resolve conflicts between tribes and the federal and state government?" Is this why we like him so much? Because he's just one of the guys? And to think they called Bill Clinton, "Bubba."

By the way, Bush's answer to the question on sovereignty was: "Tribal sovereignty

means that, it's sovereign. You're a, you're a, you've been given sovereignty and you're viewed as a sovereign entity. And therefore the relationship between the federal government and tribes is one between sovereign entities."

Wow! Is this guy likable or what?

The whole thing is silly, isn't it? George Bush can no more keep us "safe" from a terrorist who is bent on killing himself, along with a few of us too, than John Kerry can. Terrorists don't care how Bush walks or how bad he talks from his comfortable perch on an aircraft carrier or in the White House.

He said "Mission Accomplished" and more of our soldiers died; he said "Bring 'em on!" and that's exactly what happened.

Because we are scared, we are willing to give up our liberty and replace it with a false sense of security — and we are willing to forego health care, employment, education, and other necessities of life in the process. How sad.

The election of the president of the United States should be about something that makes some sense, but on the surface it drastically misses that mark.

Beneath the silly hats and buttons, however, it is a very serious contest for who will control the money. It's not about war; it's not about peace. It's about money. Did I mention Halliburton and Cheney?

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## Debate

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ments by the court on three separate occasions.

Still others look away from individual cases and toward the bigger picture of the effect naming could possibly have on society's overall view of rape victims.

Like Overholser, they suggest that the shielding of accusers implies a need for keeping them hidden, as though they are somehow damaged, which in turn opens the door for detractors to label their reluctance to step forward an indication that the charge is false.

From a purely journalistic standpoint, some question whether journalists can do their job in a fair and consistent manner if accusers' names are withheld.

Many contend that it creates imbalance within the media to hold the accused accountable, but not the accuser.

"You're guilty once you're (publicly) ac-

cused of rape," said Stephen Isaacs, a professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism who teaches a course on journalistic ethics. He said in a phone interview that the gravity of the accusation is such that even those who aren't convicted are forever branded.

In an e-mail, Overholser added that the media cannot have the wisdom "to decide whom to protect when there has been no determination of guilt of innocence."

Isaacs, who largely credits Overholser for "educating" him on the multiple sides of the naming issue, said that many journalists and news organizations fail to question the standard practice of withholding names in rape cases, thus straying from their central obligation: "to report."

Every year he presents his students with writings from those who have challenged that practice, believing himself, he said, that the

current standard within the mainstream media is "paternalistic, sexist and journalistically wrong."

The debate is one that is not likely to be resolved soon and, though the numbers of reported sexual assault cases has declined over the past decade, the incidence in the U.S. is still alarmingly high. In 2001, there were 248,000 reported sexual assaults, and 66 percent of those were committed by a person known to the victim, according to the National Crime Victimization

Overholser hopes that eventually naming names will become standard practice, one that will diminish the stigma and shame that continues to loom over victims' heads as they weigh the decision to come forward.

"On all the tough problems, from AIDS to teen suicide to drug addiction to priests who abuse children," she wrote in her 2003 column, "society has made progress when the truth is told. When real people talk about real experiences. When names are named."

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## Fletcher

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economically advanced world in providing foreign assistance as a percentage of its Gross Domestic Product (under 1 percent).

The record of this administration on international affairs has been so bad, and so blatantly contrary to international law, protocol and precedent, that it should surprise no one that the world's leaders listened patiently and politely, but with little enthusiasm as Bush offered what was, in effect, a campaign speech.

And this, indeed, is the punch line. President Bush's remarks were not particularly geared toward the world's leaders. The disrespect and arrogance that this administration has displayed toward the international

community have become legendary. Rather, this speech was targeted toward internal consumption as the REAL election debates on REAL issues intensify.

As an example of propaganda, Bush's speech was outstanding: ignoring reality and reiterating his own themes while hoping, hoping and hoping that the people of the USA, not to mention the world, will discount the facts in the name of embracing what can only be described as a myth. Hopefully the people of the U.S.A. will do a little fact checking.

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## Curry

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Give the Republicans credit: they've done a complete public makeover, projecting a softer public image, while, in fact, being more Reagan-like than Ronald Reagan.

The makeover requires the so-called Christian Right to go underground while George W. Bush pretends to be something that he's not. And the zealots on the right are willing to play along because they know that once the election is over, they will again be in the driver's seat.

The Democrats are, well, Democrats. They invent new ways to create strife. Take the case of the 527 organizations, most of whom lean Democratic. Created to counter GOP fat cats, the largely-White groups are so arrogant that they think they can bypass Black grassroots groups and decide how best to turn out the Black vote. And they say it with a straight face.

Although he has earned straights As on the NAACP's annual report cards — compared to straight Fs earned by Vice President Dick Cheney when he served in the

House — Kerry has not connected with Black audiences. In his acceptance speech in Boston, for example, he did not once mention Blacks or African-Americans. And when he mentioned civil rights, it was in the context of women.

We need to keep reminding ourselves that this election isn't about John Kerry. It's about evicting George W. Bush from the White House. We must keep our eyes on the prize. As filmmaker Michael Moore says, "If I hear one more person tell me how lousy a candidate Kerry is and how he can't win... of COURSE he's a lousy candidate — he's a Democrat, for heavens sake! That party is so pathetic they even lose the elections they win!"

Pathetic or not, there is no doubt that a John Kerry administration would be far more sensitive to the needs of Blacks than George W. Bush.

Republicans say Democrats take Blacks for granted. But it's better to be taken for granted than to be taken for a ride.

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