

C O M M E N T A R Y

# Candidates' civil rights records reveal differences

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that the presidential debates are over and campaign surrogates have tried to interpret or misinterpret what we saw for ourselves, there is no better time to ignore the rhetoric and check out the candidates' records.



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Because John Kerry and his Democratic vice presidential running mate, John Edwards, served in the Senate, their votes can be reviewed. And the same can be said for Vice President Dick Cheney, who served in the House. Like many groups, each year the NAACP issues a Civil Rights Report Card, grading members of Congress on issues important to African-Americans. Every year they were in office, both Kerry and Edwards received "A"s. When Cheney served in Congress from 1977 to 1988, he received an "F" every session.

Of course, President Bush has never served in the House or Senate, making it more difficult to assign him a grade. But the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights has examined Bush's White House years and last week issued a draft staff report titled, "Redefining Rights in America: The Civil Rights Record of the George W. Bush Administration, 2001-2004." The report is available online at [www.usccr.gov/pubs/bush/bush04.pdf](http://www.usccr.gov/pubs/bush/bush04.pdf).

The 166-page study by the independent, bi-partisan agency concludes: "President Bush has neither exhibited leadership on pressing civil rights issues, nor taken actions that matched his words." It explains, "Public statements are a means by which Presidents draw the country's attention to important matters. However, President Bush seldom speaks about civil rights, and when he does, it is to carry out official duties, not to promote initiatives or plans for improving opportunity. Even when he publicly discusses existing barriers to equality and efforts to overcome them, the administration's words and deeds often conflict."

Although it is impossible to review all of the findings in this limited space, let's

look at a few key areas:

**NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND** – Described as the most sweeping public education change in decades, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into law on Jan. 8, 2002. It requires states to test students on a regular basis, issue state-wide progress reports and have all students academically proficient by the year 2014. "The Bush Administration has not pushed for funding to support the requirements," the Commission study says. "...The actual funding has fallen short of levels authorized in the legislation. In 2003, funding fell \$8 billion short, and in 2004 the President's request was \$11 billion below target."

**AFFIRMATIVE ACTION** – When the Supreme Court decided to rule on two affirmative action cases involving the University of Michigan, one to admit undergraduates and another for entry into law school, the Bush Administration opposed both programs. The court struck down the undergraduate plan but upheld the law school program. After the rulings, Bush praised the court for "recognizing the value of diversity" and announced that his administration favors race-neutral approaches. The study notes, "The President's comments mischaracterized the Court's holding, using the decision as a platform to promote race-neutral alternatives and to defend the administration's briefs, neither of which matches his verbal support for diversity."

**FAIR HOUSING** – "The President shifted resources away from rent assistance for the poor and toward home purchasing programs for minorities," the report says. "Although a worthwhile effort, the President's 'A Home of Your Own Program' is hampered by insufficient funding to relieve the chronic affordable housing crisis."

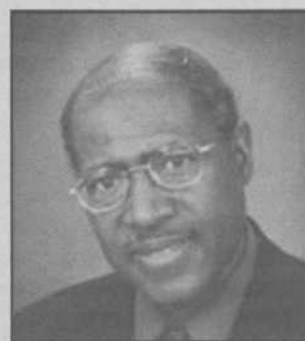
**JUDICIAL NOMINATIONS** – The study notes that Bush's critics accuse him of packing the federal courts with Right-

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# Republicans conducting all-out war against Blacks

By Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Recently, the NAACP and People for the American Way jointly released a study, titled "The Long Shadow of Jim Crow," showing the tactics of voter suppression are still alive and well and being practiced by Republicans trying to reduce the Black vote.



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For example, a Michigan legislator, John Papageorge, admitted, "If we do not suppress the Detroit vote, we're going to have a tough time in this election."

Blacks in Michigan are not the only targets. Black voters in Louisiana and Maryland were given flyers that they were not eligible to vote if they owed back taxes or auto fines. And some were urged to show up to vote on the wrong day. Republicans in Pine Bluff, Arkansas and Louisville are planning to continue their program challenging the voters' identifications in predominantly Black precincts.

But Attorney General John Ashcroft has raised these projects to the national level, all in the name of preventing "voter fraud." A so-called "voter integrity" program was enacted by Ashcroft in 2002 that has done little more than federalize the state-based ballot integrity programs traditionally run by Republicans in many sections of the country.

The imbalance in these programs is that they focus on intimidating minority voters especially, by inspecting and challenging their registrations and general voter status. But they don't seem to be interested in inspecting voting procedures to ensure that disfranchisement does not occur.

In some places in Ohio, given the competition for votes in this state, federal and state authorities have placed emphasis on the felony status of potential voters. This backfired when an organization found that Ohio election officials had routinely informed former felons that they could not vote in violation of state law. They sued the Black Republican Secretary of State Ken Blackwell and forced the state to notify 34,000 former felons that they had the right

to vote.

Ashcroft is also busy planning to deploy election examiners in some places to further intensify the scrutiny of voter eligibility. That would surely act as intimidation of some voters in plain violation of the Voting Rights Act. Where were those federal voting examiners in 2000, when the rights of Blacks, including Haitians and others, were being stolen?

Republicans are trying to suppress the Black vote because they are running scared for several reasons. First, let's go back to Ohio where 34,000 ex-felons are being notified that they can vote. This will potentially add an important number of voters to the Democratic column if they are contacted and eventually turn out to vote.

Then, consider that in previous elections, the ballots of Black voters were disproportionately thrown out, discarded for one reason or another. In fact, a study by CalTech and MIT universities revealed that 4 to 6 million votes were thrown out in 2000 and that nearly half of them were from minority communities. Ballots from such communities are thrown out at a rate of 20 times that of White affluent voting districts, especially where antiquated "butterfly" punch-card ballots, or optical scan machines are used.

In Ohio, for example, nearly 100,000 ballots were "spoiled" and thrown out in 2000. But in that state, as in others, new touch-screen electronic machines have been installed in some precincts, which means that the Black vote is probably going to increase somewhat because of it.

So, here is the picture. If the Black turnout stays the same as 2000, it's impact will increase because the new machines may do a better job of counting votes and some states allowing ex-felons to vote. Then, throw in the considerable efforts of voter registration groups around the country to increase the number eligible to vote by bumping up the number of those registered and in places like Ohio, Michigan,

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# Hip-hop generation must redirect pain, focus on oppressors

By Lloyd Williams  
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"I'm White inside, but that don't help my case 'cause I can't hide, what is on my face."  
— Song lyrics from "What Did I Do, to Be So Black and Blue?" by Fats Waller

After I flunked out of high school in the ninth grade, many moons ago, my concerned parents agreed to send me to a shrink in midtown Manhattan named Steve Bernbach who specialized in working with kids in crisis. Sitting in a movie theater, I recently spotted Steve for the first time since I was 18 and was grateful for the opportunity to catch-up with him and to thank him.

Those three years of free sessions had helped me immeasurably in dealing with my

deep-seated rage arising out of a birth-based sense of inferiority.

Subconsciously, I had been rebelling against a social order whose legitimacy derived merely from Whites being in the majority. I deeply resented being second-class and, undoubtedly, still bear the scars of segregation and discrimination — to this day.

But Steve, at least, created a safe space for me to get in touch with my rage and confirmed that it was okay to have such strong feelings about racism. So, instead of degenerating further or acting out inappropriately, I developed a strong enough sense of self-worth which enabled me to channel my energies positively.

I bring all this up because I wonder what

type of counseling might be available to the impassioned, inner-city youngsters of the Hip-Hop Generation. For, in accommodating themselves to life in contemporary America, they have been bombarded with a message which suggests that they, too, should never attack the source of their pain, but rather, take their anger out elsewhere.

Sadly, this results in an internalized self-hatred evidenced by: the playa/predator/gangsta' mentality; Black-on-Black crime; suicidal tendencies such as drug abuse; misogyny; resort to the "N" word, the popularity of products like "Pimp Juice;" prostitution; conspicuous consumption; and academic underachievement. Rather than reaching out to treat these troubled souls, this culture tends

to dismiss them unsympathetically as if, somehow, deserving of their predicament.

Rather than blaming the victims, we should start by declaring every ghetto in the country a disaster area, and by recognizing that much of the anti-social behavior exhibited by youth there is the perverse, but perhaps sane, reaction to being raised in an insane situation. America is sitting on a demographic time bomb which will never be defused by the denial involved in the continued warehousing of millions and millions of the descendants of slaves in the country's most deplorable living conditions.

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