

C O M M E N T A R Y

# Crack think tank victim of absent-minded results

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When I read about a Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies poll conducted for the 2000 presidential election that purported to show Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore getting only 74 percent of the Black vote, I knew something was wrong.



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Gore ended up with 90 percent of the Black vote, according to exit polls. The Joint Center was correct in predicting that Bush would receive about 9 percent of the Black vote in his first outing.

Then, it overdosed on something. Last month, the "Joint" Center claimed that 18 percent of African-Americans were supporting George W. Bush this year, double his support from four years ago. As we now know, that figure was only 10 percent. Now I know why they call it the "Joint" Center—they must be smoking something illegal over there in order to believe that Bush could double his support among African-Americans. In fact, I think I'll start calling it the "Crack" Center for Political and Economic Studies. Someone must be on something heavier than weed.

Prior to the election, I criticized the Crack Center's figures during an appearance on NPR's "Talk of the Nation." A publicist at the center sent me an e-mail saying, "...The New York Times released its own poll of such voters on the same day

that we released our 2004 poll with similar results. However, most experts, including those at the Joint Center, agree that President Bush is unlikely to get that many Black votes on Nov. 2."

First, I don't look to the New York Times to be the authority on Black politics. Until now, I had expected the Crack Center to fill that

role. Furthermore, it's no compliment to say you got it wrong and so did the New York Times. Whether someone else got it wrong is irrelevant.

Second, why keep releasing polls that are so widely off the mark? What's the point? Are your polls being funded by the Republican National Committee? Are you trying to give aid and comfort to the GOP?

GOP operatives, citing Crack Center figures, boasted of making inroads into the Black community and tried to mislead other African-Americans into jumping on the Republican bandwagon en route to nowhere. But it didn't work.

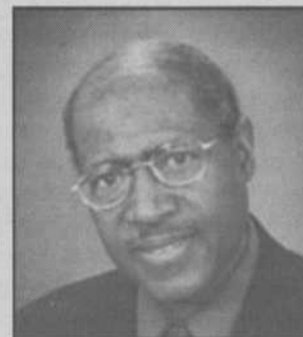
The reason Republicans make such lousy showings in our community is because they have lousy records on civil rights. The most recent NAACP Civil Rights Report Card shows that every Republican in the House and Senate except one earned an F. The lone exception — James Leach of Iowa — earned a D.

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# Bush's unlikely triumph ends topsy turvy election

By Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

At this moment, the result of the 2004 presidential contest is decided, but perhaps indecisive for the future of the country and of the fortunes of the Black community. As someone who called the race for Kerry, there is so much about this election that is counter-intuitive. For example, in the



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polling, most Americans think that the country is on the "wrong track," an indicator that is usually a dead-ringer for the fact that a Kennedy School at Harvard University study found Kerry leading and most of those sampled were "definitely" going to vote. This prospect continued with the surprising number of new voters were registered by the 527s and other organizations which created the feeling of a massive movement building to reject Bush's policies in Iraq and in domestic economic affairs.

What is now telling about the race is that more people did come out, but most of them were for George Bush, by 3.5 million votes more than Kerry. That is an astounding figure over the 2000 election, since it will give Bush a mandate to go in the same direction, except at warp speed.

The vaunted turnout of young people 18-29 did not change their total share of the vote over 2000, but they did swing from 48 percent for Gore in 2000 to 56 percent for

Kerry this time. Bush also made inroads into the Hispanic vote, as they decreased their support of Democrat Kerry, giving him 56 percent this time, but Gore 67 percent in 2000. Hispanics also gave Ralph Nader 3 percent of their vote, a critical margin because they improved their vote to 9 percent of the total this time.

As to the issues, George Bush was able to motivate his base better than Kerry and his base voted for his approach to moral issues, fighting terrorism, and taxes, while Kerry's constituency voted for a better economy and jobs, health care, against the war in Iraq and for a better education. I think, however, that a key constituency missed by Kerry was the 29-34 crowd that split in 2000 and this year. If Kerry had posed a real difference on the war — get out of Iraq, for example — he might have been able to energize many more people in all of the group than he did.

The Black vote was larger this time than in 2000, but only marginally so, moving from 10 percent of the total vote in 2000 to 11 percent this year. But there was no indication that the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies poll projecting that Blacks increased their support for Bush from 9 percent in 2000 to 18 percent this year. In fact, whereas Black

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# It's four more years, so dry your tears, get over it

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

This may be difficult for some of you to take, but it needs to be said and, more importantly, it needs to be heard and acted upon. I cannot count all of the articles I written over the past 10 years that deal with Black folks' emotional investment in politics. Just as I thought, on Wednesday after the "most crucial election of our lifetime" Black folks were, once again, shocked and amazed at what took place. They were calling talk shows, whining about the outcome and asking "What are we going to do now?" Well, we should have had a plan for that long before now.

Black participation in this game called politics always results in one of two things: Lamenting the fact that our guy lost, or celebrating the fact that our guy won. Beyond the crying, complaining, whining, lamenting and, in some cases tears, our "loss" means absolutely nothing.

Beyond the celebrations, glad-handing, atabays, euphoria, and happy-days-are-here-again rejoicing, our "winning" means nothing. Both scenarios result in either a depressing, almost fatalistic, blue funk kind of despair, or in a temporary state of exhilaration, excitement, and victory — at last!

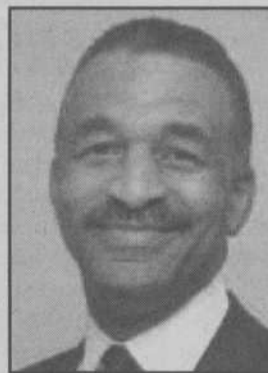
Neither outcome really benefits Black people; we have experienced both and have remained in the same relative position for the past 50 years. When will we learn to apply what our elders taught us? When will we

move away from thinking that politics will solve our problems? When will we invest in something that will give us a reasonable return on that investment?

Yes, Black people have been "played" yet again. Now many of us will crawl back into our cocoons and hibernate until the next "most crucial election of our time" comes along. We won't do anything; we won't change; we won't even attempt to participate in an economic strategy for empowerment; we will simply say, "Wake me when I can vote again."

The campaign for the Hip-Hop generation was "Vote or Die!" Sounded real good. Got some folks fired up. It even made some young folks go to the polls and vote. Maybe some of them are now thinking, "Man! I voted, and I am still dying." Maybe P-Diddy, et al, should start a new campaign now. How about "Start your own business (like he did) or die!" Maybe it could be, "Pool your money or die!" Or, maybe even, "Economic empowerment or die!"

I wonder what message the hand-wringing, alarmist Black politicians will give us now. Will they finally capitulate to the message of gaining economic empowerment first, and then move on to political empowerment? Will Jesse Jackson and the rest of those who cried so loudly for us to vote and put Bush out



JAMES CLINGMAN

of the White House be coming up with a campaign to vote with our dollars?

Will Bob Johnson now write another letter to the Black folks in Bush's cabinet asking them to ask Massa Bush if he would talk to us now on BET? Is he even willing to preempt Comic View to bring George W. on in prime time? We gotta get our party on, you know.

Let me be as plain as I can be.

We ain't got no juice in this political game! And we will never have juice until we get our economic act together and until we start leveraging our vote against the benefits we want to receive from either, that's right, I said "either" party that is willing to reciprocate. Of course, we could also form our own independent party to demonstrate how serious we are. But didn't they try that in 1972 in Gary, Indiana. Again, we did not listen.

Many of the folks we depend upon for information, preachers, radio talk show hosts, and politicians and their operatives, are ignorant and willingly complicit when it comes to misleading Black people on politics. They make the weak and ignorant among us actually believe that the single act of voting will take us to new heights of freedom. Newsflash! It will not!

For most of us it will be back to the drawing board, back to the political strategy

sessions, and back to whining about what Bush and his cronies are not doing for us. Many of us will return to our pattern of begging our politicians to do the right thing by us. All of this is futile without leverage, without the ability, and the willingness, to reward our friends and punish our enemies. The leverage we must have to accomplish that is found in economic empowerment.

My advice is what it has always been: Stop putting all of your hope in politicians and the political process. It's a huge gamble, and Black folks have no chips in the game. Let's work together to build up our chips and then get into the game.

I direct you to Claud Anderson's quote in the Harvest Institute Newsletter (Fall 2004). Anderson notes that Black folks are outnumbered 8 to 1 by non-Blacks in this country and writes, "When one rabbit is fenced-in with eight hungry hound dogs, how important is the rabbit's vote on what the hound dogs want for dinner? In a racial context, the only way Blacks can expect to receive benefits from their vote is to first build and control their own economic structure. Then they can use their economic power to back, rent, or buy politicians who will support the interest of Black Americans." I say, since we are going against hound dogs, we had better at least have enough money to buy them dinner.

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