

C O M M E N T A R Y

Letter to Bush: Quash investigation of NAACP

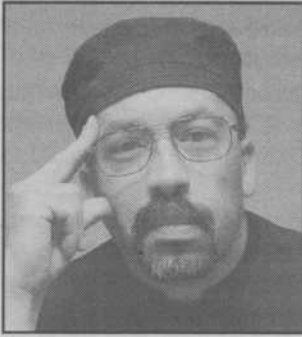
By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I think that it is fair to say that most of us were taken aback by the audacity of the action. A few short weeks prior to the November presidential election, it was announced that the Internal Revenue Service was investigating the NAACP to see whether they had violated their tax exempt/tax deductible status — their 501(c)(3) designation.

The reason? Allegations were raised that in his speech to the NAACP National Convention this past summer, Chairman Julian Bond had raised critical remarks regarding President Bush and his administration.

Did you get that? Raising critical remarks about President Bush!? If we are to understand this challenge, the IRS seems to be saying that during an election year, criticisms of a candidate (or, perhaps, just of the administration in power) violates the tax status of non-profit organizations.

I am trying to figure out whatever happened to freedom of speech. While it is true that there are restrictions on those non-profit organizations that have a 501(c)(3) tax status, those restrictions are to prevent them from engaging in partisan political activity. In other words, the NAACP cannot endorse a particular candidate, nor can it call upon its electorate to not vote for a particular candidate. It can, however, criticize policies of a candidate or an adminis-



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tration; at least, that is the way that it is supposed to work.

The NAACP, as you probably know, has made criticisms of parties in power and parties out of power. There was nothing new under the sun with Julian Bond launching a criticism of the Bush administration. He has been doing this on a regular

basis. So, as a matter of fact, have a lot of other people.

It takes no Einstein to understand what is unfolding. The Bush administration, through the IRS, was sending a very clear signal that dissent or criticism would not be tolerated, regardless of from what quarter it originates.

It matters not whether you are a member of the NAACP, or whether you disagree with the NAACP. It matters not whether you voted for President Bush or whether you voted for Senator Kerry. What matters at this critical moment is your attitude toward the Constitution and the question of democracy. If the IRS is allowed to persecute the NAACP, then there is no stopping this administration from squashing debate.

There is no way that a reasonable person could conclude that Julian Bond and the NAACP violated their tax status. Had he stood before the convention and endorsed Senator Kerry or told the listeners to avoid voting for President Bush, he

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A federal right to vote needed as safety valve

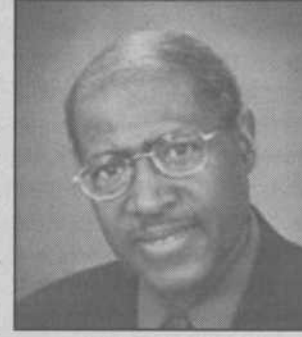
By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The election of 2004 tells us at least one thing: Our right to vote is not secure and so we need a federal right to vote with standards and the enforcement of those standards by the Attorney General of the United States, rather than the patchwork, chaotic and unequal administration by states that we now have.

The lack of the integrity of the American system of elections is as suspect as the recent Ukrainian election that brought out hundreds of thousands of people into the streets there. It also prompted President Bush to issue a statement characterizing the election as corrupt and poorly administered. He could have said the same thing about each of his own elections.

I applaud Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. for the vision to demand that there be an amendment to the Constitution that wipes away all ambiguity about the right to vote, even though there are legal scholars who assert that it exists, buried in the bowels of one arcane court decision or another.

I also know, however, that as of the last election, 31 of the governors in the 50 states are Republican, representing a party that has shown a peculiar fondness for states rights in this era of history. So, a Constitutional amendment that takes away the right of the political officials in their states to "administer" the elections would no doubt be opposed.



RON WALTERS

A case in point is the Secretary of State in Ohio, Kenneth Blackwell, a Black Republican. Blackwell who, it has been reported, desires to run for governor, did everything that he could in that state to influence the election for George Bush. Initially, he proclaimed that voter registration forms would not be considered

legal unless then were on 800-pound paper stock, a position that was reversed in the face of a public outcry. He also ruled that people could not fill out provisional ballots in any other precinct than that in which they resided. And his underlings routinely instructed ex-felons that they could not vote — until the courts ruled otherwise. So onerous were his actions that at one point, a demonstration against him was held by various progressive groups involved in voter registration.

And that is the point. For a movement to obtain the right to vote to be successful, as I have previously said, it will take a citizens' movement to overcome the entrenched political power in the states, not only in the governors' mansions, but in the statehouses and election boards. But such a movement to obtain a federal right to vote is warranted by the fact that we already have some federal laws that are being ignored.

A federal right to vote would bolster the enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. I

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Politically, Black America could use a good whuppin'

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

No doubt, you have memories of your parents giving you what we called a whuppin'. You probably thought they were mean and didn't love you, right? Your parents, on the other hand, probably felt terrible, too. Even though you deserved that whuppin', they didn't want to see you hurt, and they surely didn't want to be the ones to inflict the pain.

It's the same way today with us as adult Black people. Our elders, which I have officially joined, as of August, love us and do not want to see us hurt, but they need to give us a good whuppin' every now and then.

In my frustration, not only after the voting irregularities in the 2004 election, I pulled out a cassette tape I bought four years ago, right after that last "presidential selection." It was recorded by an elder who I love and highly respect. His name is Kwa David Whitaker, of Cleveland. The presentation on the tape is titled, "The Wake Up Call." I am telling you right now, you must get a copy of this brother's discourse.

Brother Whitaker recorded his insightful, enlightening, and prophetic words in November 2000. He expertly weaved the Gore/Bush election scenario into an easy-to-understand football analogy, explained what position Black folks are in vis-à-vis the U.S. political system, and told us how to win,

despite the system being stacked against us. When I first heard it, I called Kwa David and thanked him for turning out such a fantastic piece of communication to our people. I then bought several copies of the tape and gave them to others.

No one loves Black people more than Kwa David, but I know he'd rather whup us than to see someone else do it. So, how about another one, Bro? I don't believe there has ever been a time that Black people in this country have been so dysfunctional, so apathetic, so gullible, so afraid, so irresolute, so unconcerned, so lemming-like and so willing to capitulate to the whims and desires of every other group, while turning our backs on the interests and needs of our own people.

In Cincinnati, I see Black folks selling their souls to an inept, corrupt and biased political administration. I see them acquiesce to greedy power-hungry corporate executives, denying Black people even the slightest opportunity for collective economic advancement. I have seen it all in this city, and it is getting worse. We have ignorant, cowering, volunteer-slave Blacks who have been "chosen" to do the bidding of the Establishment, and they do it with the pride and aplomb of a Colin Powell, Armstrong Williams or



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Condoleezza Rice. No, let me make that Clarence Thomas.

Yes, we need a good whuppin' and I hope it starts right here in Cincinnati and moves out from here, because as Kweisi Mfume said, in reference to the boycott of this city, this is "ground zero." He also said, "If [racial discrimination and mistreatment] are not solved here, they won't be solved anywhere." Tell that to Dick Gre-

gory and Bev Smith, who are scheduled to break the boycott of Cincinnati, and all the other Black entertainers who have already broken it. Good luck, Mfume.

Kwa David's Wake Up call was apropos in 2000, and it is even more apropos in 2004, except, now, it must be accompanied by a good whuppin'. Remember how you wouldn't get out of bed when your parents called you in the morning? Remember what happened when they stopped calling? They started whuppin' you out of the bed. Well, that's what we need now Brother Whitaker.

Whup us until we stop relying on weak, ignorant, uninformed talking heads on radio and television for our directional information. They are flunkies and lackeys, and will say whatever they think will put them in good stead with someone else's checkbook. Give

me more of Tom Pope, Cliff Kelley, and other Black talk show hosts who are unafraid and will not compromise the economic future of their own people.

Whup us until we stop sitting back and taking the injustice of a racist police department, such as the one in Cincinnati. Whup us until we stop consenting to economic apartheid and exclusion, such as what we have in Cincinnati. Whup us until we no longer accept the corrupt voting systems, such as the ones we experienced in Cincinnati and around Ohio. Whup us until we stand up like Black men and women and do what we must for ourselves and for our children. Whup us until we wake up, get up, stand up and start fighting back.

Until then, keep whuppin' us because we need a good whuppin'.

Please get a copy of Kwa David Whitaker's "Wake Up Call," and listen to it with your children and everyone else in your circle. If you contact me I will tell you how to get it. Meanwhile, reflect on the quote by Whitaker of Martin Delany: "The liberty of no man is secure who controls not his own destiny; for people to be free, they must necessarily be their own rulers." Whup us, Brother Delany. Whup us, Kwa David.

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