

OUR VIEW

Par for Course?

Steven M. Ferguson, an African-American man living in the exclusive Southern Highlands neighborhood, has filed a federal discrimination lawsuit against the community's high-profile golf club. Ferguson claims he was referred to as "nigger" on multiple occasions, creating a racially hostile environment in his neighborhood. Mark Ferrario, lawyer for Southern Highlands Golf Club President Gary Goett, told reporters that Ferguson's case is without merit and frivolous.

Sadly, this story dredges up golf's checkered past with race. It wasn't until 1990 that Augusta National, home of the prestigious Master's golf tournament, allowed Black members. Prior to 1961, Blacks weren't allowed to compete on the PGA Tour. In 1975, ironically, the year Tiger Woods was born, Lee Elder became the first African-American to play in the Masters. So it's only natural that any allegation of racism in golf be taken seriously. But what makes Ferguson's case more disheartening is the apparent smear job being done on his reputation.

Published reports note that in April 2003 the California Department of Corporations issued "a cease and desist order" to Ferguson and an entity he was aligned with, Global Venture Group. The department was concerned with what it termed "investment contracts and interests... offered and sold by means of... untrue statements of material fact." Ferguson denies the charges.

By bringing up Ferguson's past, the golf club's defenders are clearly intimating that his alleged transgressions make him untrustworthy when, in fact, any issues he may have had in California are immaterial to the issue at hand. Which is that he was allegedly discriminated against. Which is that he's purportedly being subjected to living in a racially hostile environment. But it doesn't stop there. Ferrario, the golf club's lawyer, also cites in published reports a previous District Court lawsuit Ferguson filed in opposition of having his golf club membership terminated—a judge eventually denied Ferguson's claims—as if intimating that Ferguson is a race baiter. Ferguson's past should not be on trial here. What should be is whether Southern Highlands is exclusive in more ways than one.

Losing a Legend

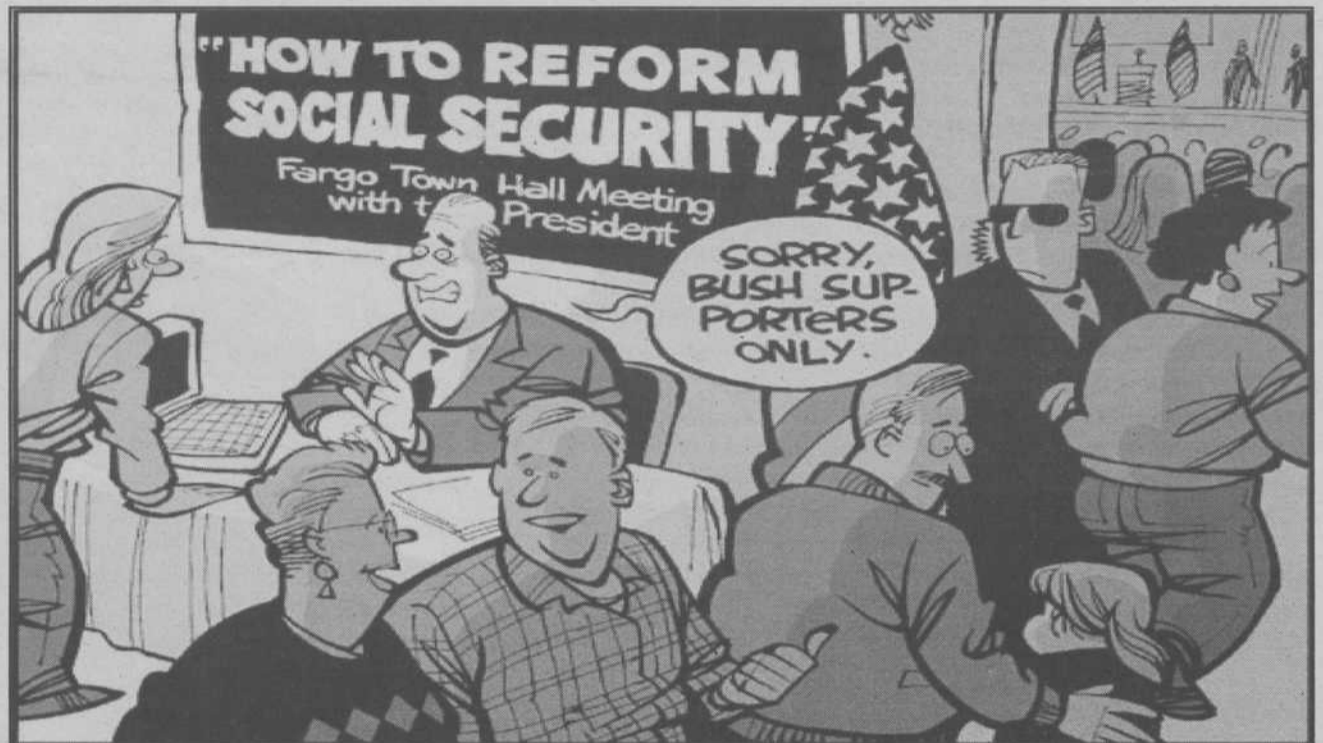
America, indeed, the world lost a hero with the passing of actor/activist Ossie Davis. To try and sum up his life, his myriad contributions, would be an exercise in futility. Something would inevitably be left out. Maybe the best way to remember Davis is to read the words he spoke at a church on March 27, 2003, a week before the United States invaded Iraq:

"I am indeed Ossie Davis. I say that so that those whose duty it is to report my behavior back to the proper authorities. I am not as smart as Miss Condoleezza Rice, though she is yet my sister, nor so faithful unto death as Gen. Colin Powell, though he is yet my brother. They have their sense of duty; I have mine. They are loyal to their commander in chief, and I am loyal to mine. My commander in chief is Martin Luther King, Jr., and more than 30 years ago, he stood in these sacred halls and gave me my marching orders..."

"I have never looked upon myself as a magician. I was not sent by the Almighty to solve all of the problems of the world at one fell swoop. I am not morally arrogant. I accept the fact that maybe this generation was not the one designed by fate to bring peace to the world. But I also believe that it is necessary to stay on the march, to be on the journey, to work for peace wherever we are at all times, because the liberty we cherish, which we would share with the world, demands eternal vigilance..."

"So, tonight, I'm happy to join once again with those of you who see the cause as I do. I say to my commanding officer, 'Martin, here we are. Ossie, Ruby, our children and grandchildren, all our house, all of us joined with millions from one end of creation to the other. Martin, we report for duty, sir.'"

P O I N T O F V I E W



PRIVATIZING GOVERNMENT

Separating church and state

*By Dora La Grande
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Anytime religion is mentioned in relationship to government people cry, "Separation of Church and State" Ninety percent of Americans don't know what this phrase even means. Many people think that this statement appears in the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution and, therefore, must be strictly enforced.

Actually, the words — separation of church and state — do not appear in the first amendment. The phrase doesn't appear in the Articles of Federation; not in the Articles of Association and not in the U.S. Constitution. The actual statement about "a wall of separation between church and state" was made in a letter written January 1, 1802, by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association of Connecticut.

There had been a widespread rumor that the Congregationalists, another denomination, were to become the national religion. This was very alarming to people who knew about religious persecution by the state established church in England. Jefferson made it clear in his letter that the separation was to be that government would not establish a national religion or dictate to men how to worship God.

Jefferson's letter, from which the phrase "separation of church and state" was taken, affirmed first amendment rights. The reason Jefferson chose the expression "a wall of separation of



ON THE RECORD

By Dora La Grande

church and state" was because he was addressing a Baptist congregation, a denomination of which he was not a member. The established church in England forbade worship in private homes and sponsorship of any church activities, and people were kept under strict dictates. They were forced to go to state established churches and to do things that were contrary to their individual conscience. The people did not want to be free from religion, but to the contrary, they wanted freedom of religion.

The only reason to separate the church from the state would be to instill a new morality and establish a new system of beliefs. The fact is, the founding fathers were God-fearing men who understood that for a country to stand, it must have a solid foundation. The Bible was the source of this foundation. They believed that God's ways were much higher than man's ways and held firmly that the Bible was the absolute standard of truth and used the Bible as a source to form our government. There's no such thing as a pluralistic society. There will always be one dominant view. Otherwise, it will always be in transition from one belief system to another. Therefore, to say Biblical principles should not

be allowed in government and school is to be either ignorant of the historic intent of the founding fathers or to be blatantly bigoted against Christianity.

The Constitution had 55 people work on it, of which 52 were evangelical Christians. Two professors, Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman reviewed 15,000 items with explicit content printed between 1760 and 1805 and identified 3,154 reference sources the founding fathers used.

The source most often quoted was the Bible accounting for 34 percent of all citations. Sixty percent of all quotes came from men who used the Bible to form their conclusions. Of all quotes by the founding fathers, 94 percent were based on the Bible.

An example of one idea taken from the Bible and then incorporated into our government is found in Isaiah 33:22, "For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king." They took this scripture and made three major branches of government: judicial, legislative and executive.

The founding fathers strongly believed that man was corrupt by nature and, therefore, it was necessary to separate the powers of government. The President has the power to execute laws, but not make them; and Congress has the power to make laws, but not to judge the people. The President is free to influence Congress, although he cannot exercise authority over it because they are separated.

Then, why shouldn't the church be allowed to influence the state? People have read too much into the phrase "separation of church and state," which is intended to be a separation of civil au-

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