

## C O M M E N T A R Y

# Schiavo case exposes right-wing hypocrisy

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Conservatives and libertarians are noted for championing states' rights. However, the Terri Schiavo case in Florida has exposed deep-seated hypocrisy on the political right and illustrated how right-wingers from President Bush to his brother, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, will do almost anything for political gain.

Republican Congressman Christopher Shays of Connecticut puts it best: "My party is demonstrating that they are for states' rights, unless they don't like what states are doing." Conservatives have long complained of unwanted federal intervention and the purported abuse of individual rights. Now, the outsiders have become insiders, with Republicans controlling every branch of the government — executive, legislative and judicial. Instead of letting Florida handle what is essentially a state matter, President Bush and Congress interrupted their Easter recess to grandstand about "the right to life." At 1:11 a.m. on March 21, Bush signed special legislation into law transferring the Schiavo case from state to federal jurisdiction.

This is a bunch that can't pass a budget on time, yet they acted with extraordinary speed on an issue that more than 20 judges had reviewed and found that Schiavo's husband,

Michael, had acted legally when he decided that after 15 years, the feeding tube that preserved his wife in a vegetative state should now be removed. Only three Senators, acting for the entire body, authorized the federal courts to take over the Schiavo case. Invoking unanimous consent rules, they were able to quickly pass legislation without debate that would allow Schiavo's parents, who opposed removing the feeding tube, to again present their case in federal court. The House passed the measure 203-58.

When the parents returned to federal court, they were again rebuffed. The parents appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the case.

The case of Terri Schiavo was tragic enough without the demagoguery of President Bush and the Congress. She suffered severe brain damage as a result of a heart attack 15 years ago and her husband, Michael, said his wife did not want to be kept alive by artificial means.

Though initially united in their effort to seek medical help for Terri, the parents and the husband have since gone separate ways, with the parents lobbying to keep their daugh-



GEORGE CURRY

ter on the feeding tube and her husband opposed, saying she has become a vegetable, with no prospect of a reversal. Into that fray, stepped Gov. Jeb Bush, who had pushed a bill through the Florida legislature in 2003 that gave him the right to order reinsertion of the feeding tube. However, the Florida Supreme Court overruled the governor.

This is not the first time "states' rights" proponents have forsaken their core beliefs for political expediency. In 2002, Republican officials successfully urged the U.S. Supreme Court to overturn a Florida court ruling that ordered a recount in the presidential election between George Bush and Al Gore.

The National Association of State Public Interest Research Groups issued a report last summer titled, "Tying the Hands of the States: The Impact of Federal Preemption on State Problem-Solvers." It concluded, "Over the last three decades, states have become increasingly active in passing strong state laws to protect the health, safety and well-being of their residents." The report, however, continued, "The federal government has increasingly responded to state-level problem solving with its own powerful

political tool — preempting the right of state governments to legislate on a given issue and establishing federal law as the ceiling."

The Schiavo case is yet another example of federal officials trying to preempt local judges. They showboat about preserving life yet have recommended cuts in Medicaid, the very program that has sustained Schiavo this long.

The activity around Schiavo also exposed the inconsistency of those who oppose a woman's choice to have an abortion. George Bush is Exhibit A. He now claims to be concerned about human life.

Yet, as governor of Texas, he approved more executions than any other governor in the country. Bush and his fellow conservatives can't have it both ways — they can't be for life when it involves abortion or a high-profile medical case while simultaneously supporting the death penalty. Comedian Dave Chappelle said it is tantamount to saying, "Let them live so that we can kill them." And Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) says this crew believes life begins at conception and ends with birth.

What should end is politicians exploiting the grief and pain of families to further their political agendas.

George E. Curry is editor the of NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com.

## When Blacks get into big game, rules often change

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

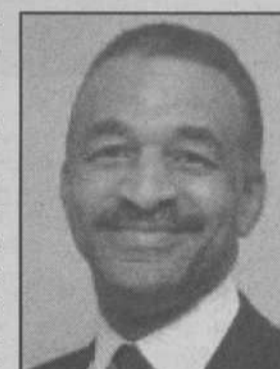
Did you hear about the plan being touted by Detroit officials to hire Michael Porter, a professor at Harvard University, in an effort to revive Detroit's urban economy? According to an editorial in the Detroit Free Press, written by Tom Walsh, "Porter's nonprofit Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC) will dispatch a consulting team to Detroit this summer, launching the 18-24-month effort." The consulting team will come to Detroit, "assuming that Detroit rounds up \$500,000 in the next few weeks from local foundations and businesses to fund the project," Walsh wrote.

Don't get me wrong, Michael Porter is no slouch; he knows his stuff, but what is striking about this situation is the attitude of Detroit's vaunted Black mayor on this particular proposal versus the one that dealt specifically with Black economic develop-

ment. "Brotha" Kwame Kilpatrick, the mayor, is quoted in the article calling it, "a historic partnership among Detroit, Harvard, Porter and the ICIC." The proposal to build an African-American economic enclave in Detroit caused quite a stir in Detroit a few months ago. Remember Africa Town? It may be just a small "c" coincidence, or it could be a big "C" conspiracy, as Gil Scott Heron

once said, but it is, nevertheless, quite interesting to see this proposal come forth at this time, a few months after Black folks in Detroit showed interest and put forth an effort to do some economic development on their own. Mayor Kwame and others didn't show as much enthusiasm for that plan. They called it divisive and scary.

It would be comical if it were not so tragic



JAMES CLINGMAN

that whenever Black folks start to do what is often advised by those in charge — "get in the big game" and "play by the rules" — the game gets even bigger, and the rules change. Something similar happened in Cincinnati when a Black group of experienced developers came together to bid on the \$800 million riverfront project called The Banks. They got into the big game, brought private money,

played by the rules, and now the rules have changed. The team, although highly qualified, was not even allowed to submit a bid on the project — and wouldn't you know, some of our (B)lack gatekeepers gave the public rationales against Black participation in the development phase of the project. Well, it's time to see what will happen in Detroit, Chocolate City, 85 percent Black. Surely the

city's foundations and private businesses will raise the half-million necessary to pay the ICIC for the initial phase of the daunting task of revitalizing Detroit's urban economy. Urban? Hmmm. Isn't that a code word that really means "where Black folks live"? We shall see.

Michael Porter says, "I have spent 2 1/2 years in a major research effort concerning the economic viability of the inner city. The problems in the inner city are not there because of lack of effort. They are there because we are using the wrong model... the only way to solve the problems of the inner city is by building an economic strategy... we need to create the conditions to develop profitable businesses there."

I wholeheartedly agree with that, and I would remind us once again that "inner city" is another term for "where Black folks live," thus, Black folks should have a major role in the development of their neighborhoods into viable and sustainable communities. And I did say Black folks, not just the usual suspects who are "chosen" and always paraded out front for us to see.

In that same vein, I have another important statement about inner city neighborhoods made by Michael Shuman, author of the book "Going Local." He says: "Anacostia is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., yet the total income of all its households is \$370 million per year. Most of this money quickly departs in the hands of landlords, business owners, and bankers who live in more upscale parts of town.... The principal affliction of poor communities in the United States is not the absence of money, but its systematic exit."

It seems everyone knows "there's gold in them thar hills" except the folks who live there. Black people had better wake up to the games being played on us by those who are

(See Clingman, Page 10)

## La Grande

(Continued from Page 8)

ing the economic theory that runs this country: capitalism.

Capitalism is defined as "an economic system in which investment in and ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange of wealth is made and maintained chiefly by private individuals and corporations." Add to the definition: "an economic system where all means of production and distribution of goods are owned by private individuals or corporations for profit."

This is very significant because profit motive is ingrained in this economic theory. In layman's terms, one must create profit-oriented businesses in order to participate and enjoy the prosperity, which is a deriva-

tive of the system; therefore, property ownership and business creation are the first keys to establishing power in a capitalistic society. So, farms, factories, retail stores, restaurants, contractors, wholesalers and financial institutions make up the capitalistic economy.

To that end, we must fully understand the ramifications of chasing after public sector dollars. Government spending represents only 2 percent to 4 percent of the Gross National Product (the total dollar value of all final goods and services a nation produces annually for consumption, adjusted for imports-exports).

Yet, we spend an inordinate amount of time trying to get government contracts. By contrast, we should spend our efforts focusing on the \$20 trillion in GNP produced by

private sector. This is not to say that we shouldn't get our fair share of government spending, but we shouldn't be relying upon government spending as a basis for creating economic power in our communities.

When we get serious about creating "True Black Power" we will mobilize and make use of the above referenced strategies, strategies that the majority population has been using for years.

**A Special Note:** All of us in the Las Vegas community join the biological family and the KLAS-TV Channel 8 family in mourning the untimely death of Polly Gonzalez. We may not understand the reason or the test, but what we do know, is that God knows best. She will be sadly missed.