

Joe Biden or Howard Dean: Which Democrat are you?

By Ron Walters
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I have to say this up front: I have had it with the likes of Joe Biden. The man whose confused politics as chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee led to the approval of Clarence Thomas is still confused.

On a recent edition of "Meet the Press," Democratic Party Chair Howard Dean challenged the Republicans, saying that they were members of a largely "White Christian party," as well as being people who "never worked an honest day in their lives" and that Tom Delay ought to go back to Texas where he could serve his jail sentence. In other words, Dean did something that few other Democrats have had the guts to do — stand up to the Republicans on their own terms.

But Joe Biden and other "moderate" Democrats have, once again, caved in to the presumed popularity of conservatives and chastised their own party chair in public. This is something Republicans would never do.

Where has Biden been for the last decade? Republicans have taken out after Democrats and "liberals" in the meanest, nastiest rhetoric possible on the floor of the House and Senate, in the media, and even in church. They have repeatedly berated Senator Ted Kennedy, virtually making him a symbol of a left-wing kook, often with few of his colleagues in the Senate fighting back for him.

Smith

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Forward Times; Secretary Mollie Belt of the Dallas Examiner, and at-large board members Carol Zippert of the Greene County (Ala.) Democrat and Akwasi Evans of the Nokoa Newspaper.

Smith was elected by acclamation. A fledgling challenge from Chicago Defender board chairman Tom Picou was short-lived after he discovered that only publishers could run for chair. Even if there had been other candidates, Smith was the clear front runner.

Smith's election came at the end of a week with much fanfare. Picou was among the celebrants at an honors program for NNPA founders, which kicked off the week at the Wabash Avenue YMCA, the site where Defender Publisher John Sengstacke held the first NNPA meeting in 1940. Then it was called the Negro Press Association.

Sengstacke had inherited the Defender from his uncle, Robert S. Abbott, who founded it in 1905 and died on the same day as the NNPA founding. A plaque will be placed on the building to commemorate the founding of NNPA.

Howard University Black Press historian and NNPA board member Clint Wilson called it a milestone for a group of Black newspapers to bond for so long.

Clingman

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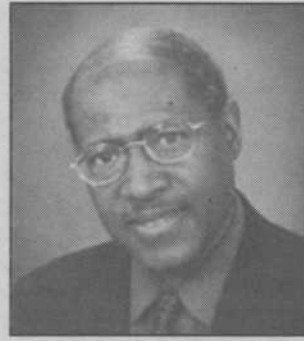
he made it as plain as could be. The CBG relationship with its covenant banks is one of reciprocal benefits. Wouldn't it be great if all of us could say that — and then back it up with our dollars?

I'm so tired of folks complaining about the way we are treated by banks and other institutions but refusing to do anything about it. I'm so proud of the CBG (which is why I write about it so much) and how it has refused to be mistreated and then took steps — practical steps, business steps, economic steps — to resolve the issue. No, the CBG is

Tom Delay said recently that religious people who followed Democratic Party views on the issue of life during the Terri Schiavo event would suffer retaliation. Not one of his own colleagues took to the floor to oppose him.

Most important, the voices of minority politicians were added to the public spanking of Dean. Senator Barack Obama said that Dean was "using religion to divide" when he referred to Republicans as being in a "White Christian party." Where has he been in the debates on the floor when elected officials and their political counterparts in the think tanks have tried to suggest that the founders of this country consciously created a Christian nation? This position was supposed to privilege the role of Christians in politics and public policy, especially the radical right-wing born-again that have taken over much of the Republican Party. Dean was not talking about all Christians. So, why were they not willing to give him the benefit of the doubt?

Gov. Bill Richardson put some distance between himself and Dean with his remarks, agreeing with others that he doesn't speak for the party, "its governors, its senators, its party leaders." Well, what is Dean if he is



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not a Party leader? In fact, part of the problem with many Democratic Party leaders is that they have confused their rank and file with a wishy-washy politics that has resulted in following George Bush, rather than being the loyal opposition.

The fact is, there has repeatedly been a one-way attempt at consensus politics by Democrats which has worked to their disadvantage. A Black senator and Hispanic governor should be the last people to shut up a straight-talking Democratic Party chair, when Republicans have fostered public policies that have pulverized their constituencies.

It is not only un-politic, but something lacking in logic when Democratic Party leaders join with Republicans to make Howard Dean an issue, when their political strategy should be to keep the heat on Bush and his policies.

While this was going on, the Senate approved the appointment of two of the most conservative judges in recent years, an ACLU report was issued charging that Guantanamo was the "American Gulag," the Downing Memorandum surfaced suggesting that Bush fixed intelligence to support his early intention to invade Iraq. Why divert the heat from

the administration to cuss out your own party chair, especially for saying things that are essentially true?

Well, here we go. Many of the Democratic elected officials Richardson talked about are cautious about roughing up Republicans because they are running for something and might make potential voters angry. These are the Democrats who have adopted a cautious "third-way" politics to appeal to conservatives, while retaining their base. They can't appeal to conservatives; however, if Dean makes them mad, they oppose him, in essence, for pulling the covers off of this politics of theirs. He is doing what should have been done a long time ago, by helping Democratic voters decide just who the progressives are: Who will oppose the unconscionable waste of resources being spent in an illegal war? Who will approve of radical Christians taking over American politics and policy? Who will oppose policies that hurt people rather than seek some less hurtful consensus? And just who will stand up and be a member of "the Democratic wing of the Democratic party?"

The public opposition of some Democratic officials to Dean is sickening. It must not continue if Democrats are to know who they are and where they are really going.

Ron Walters is the director of the African-American Leadership Institute.



Sentinel-Voice photo by Roy Lewis

New NNPA officers: Mollie Belt of the Dallas Examiner is secretary; Lenora "Doll" Carter of the Houston Forward Times is treasurer; John B. Smith of the Atlanta Inquirer is president; Chris Bennett of the Seattle Medium is second vice president; and Cloves Campbell of the Arizona Informant is first vice president.

"These 65 years are the longest that any group of publishers of the Black Press in the United States of America have been able to archive themselves to continue for the common good," he told the audience at the YMCA.

It has been the struggle for justice that caused the group to remain solid, said Chi-

ago Crusader Publisher Dorothy Leavell. Early publishers had to meet at the Y because Blacks weren't allowed at the downtown hotels, she recalled.

Black Press history must play a major role in its future, Smith says, recalling his early days at the Atlanta Inquirer.

"We would not accept any ads from any

store, no matter how much money they wanted to pay, if they discriminated," he said.

In its 65th year, Smith concedes NNPA must continue to update its image, which could result in increased circulation and advertising dollars. He says NNPA has begun a consulting relationship with Carol Williams & Associates to develop a new image.

Smith has also been long active in civil rights and the community. He is a member of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, the Atlanta Conference of the NAACP, the Atlanta chapter of the National Association of Market Developers and he serves as a deacon at Union Baptist Church in Atlanta.

Smith says he believes strongly in coalitions and will partner with NNPA Foundation Chairman Brian Townsend to accomplish his vision during the two-year period.

"I look forward to him being a strong member of the Foundation team. As chair of the NNPA, he's also a board member of the Foundation," which oversees the NNPA News Service, says Townsend. "I appreciate the fact that he's a team player, and I think that he has a lot of thoughts on behalf of the Foundation, how we can team up with NNPA and jointly sponsor programs on behalf of the membership. I think it's going to be a good two years."

not perfect; it's not a panacea for all of our ills, but it sure beats what many of us have in our communities when it comes to doing business with local banks.

I would be remiss if I did not mention Industrial Bank, a 70-year-old Black-owned bank. No intention of slighting any of the other banks in the CBG, but anyone who knows me understands why I am singling out this one.

Not only was it a pleasure to see a Black bank in the mix, it was a special treat to meet brother Jeffery Banks, vice president, Business Development Officer, who just happens

to be from my hometown, Cincinnati. Jeffery is involved in several development projects in the D.C. area, and I am proud of him as well.

In addition to facilitating two workshops, I was also a luncheon speaker along with Jesse Jackson. My role was to respond to Jackson's remarks, which was an easy task because of several points he made. He said we need to "have a sense of what is important" and that economics should be our top priority.

He also said something I have been saying for some time now: White folks have us

looking at crime, while they are doing development deals. I responded with my "Amen" so loudly it made Jackson turn to see where it came from.

I emphasized the importance of the CBG and the role it plays in the lives of its members, those who sit in the church pews every Sunday, because when banks compete, they win. As I spoke, I also thought about Nehemiah and the people: "Let us rise up and build."

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