

# King's legacy misused for right-wing lunacy

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

There is one thing more predictable than knowing the identity of the person appearing on the next cover of "O," Oprah Winfrey's magazine: Conservatives trying to neuter Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and claim him as one of their own.

Ward Connerly, the combustible affirmative action foe, launched his misnamed American Civil Rights Institute on Jan. 15, 1997, Dr. King's birthday.

When the King family denied that Connerly was acting in the spirit of the slain civil rights leader, the California conservative, fired off a two-page letter to Martin Luther King III.

"I understand that you objected to the timing of my announcement and, in fact, characterized me as a 'demagogue,'" Connerly wrote on Jan. 29, 1997. "...If you believe the nation would declare a holiday in honor of Dr. King if his views about race mirrored those of Revered Jesse Jackson, for example, then I believe that you greatly misunderstand the reason why this nation honors your father."

Wait, there's more.

"I truly hope that you do not blur the legacy of your father by becoming the spokesman for the 'preference cartel,' to such an extent that Americans begin to think of

Dr. King as a proponent of color-conscious policies instead of remembering him as a champion of a color-blind society."

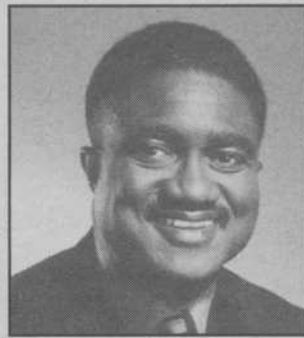
In addition to Connerly trying to lecture one of Dr. King's sons on the significance of his father's life, the California Republican Party used footage from Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech to support Proposition 209, the ballot initiative outlawing affirmative action in the state.

That was tragic enough.

Now we have another attempt to misrepresent Dr. King's work and legacy, this time coming from an organization that barely has more members than the number of letters in its name — Project 21.

One member, Mychal Massie, said in a press release last week, "John Roberts is the type of jurist who represents the beliefs of great Americans, such as James Madison and Martin Luther King, Jr. ..."

After being roundly criticized for linking Roberts to King, Massie sent out a second press release: "Dr. King's agenda was for Blacks to be able to sit at the lunch counter of their choice and for Black children to attend desegregated schools. He marched for the rights of Blacks to participate freely in



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elections and be able to purchase and live in homes they could afford. He was attacked and jailed in his quest to ensure that all Americans received equal treatment. I defy those feigning insult to cite one example of Judge Roberts not supporting those ideas." I didn't feign insult, but I'll accept the offer. In fact, I'll cite more than one example. Let's start with electoral politics inasmuch as Massie raised the issue. Commenting on a Supreme Court ruling (*City of Mobile v. Bolden*) that addressed at-large voting that effectively prevented Blacks from winning a seat on the city council, Roberts characterized district-wide voting as "essentially a quota system for electoral politics." He attributed that interpretation to Justice Stewart, who never used the term "quota" in his written decision. Dr. King opposed efforts to dilute the Black vote.

On the issue of affirmative action, Roberts argued that affirmative action relies on the "recruiting of inadequately prepared candidates." That, too, is at variance with Dr. King's definition and support of affirmative action.

In 1981, Roberts sent a memo to William Bradford Reynolds, assistant attorney gen-

eral for civil rights, in the Reagan administration, and his assistant, Charles Cooper, claiming that Justice Department lawyers were wrong to advise school systems to not only offer jobs and back pay to employees that had been discriminated against, but to those deterred from applying because of racial discrimination.

Even Reynolds, who sought to nullify voluntary affirmative action programs across the nation, did not agree with Roberts on that point.

That same year, Secretary of Labor Raymond Donovan stated that he planned to continue the Republican and Democratic tradition of enforcing an executive order requiring government contractors to maintain affirmative action programs.

Roberts called that "offensive preferences," even though the executive order specifically forbids quotas. Not surprisingly, Dr. King supported such programs.

I could cite even more examples. Suffice it to say that the record clearly shows that Judge Roberts does not come close to advocating what Dr. King lived and died for. Conservatives should claim their own heroes and stop pretending that Dr. King or any other sane person would endorse their lunacy.

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## High living costs, low pay portend financial crisis

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel Voice

In case you have not been watching the economic trends, you might want to know that things are about to get nasty. No need to cite the exorbitant price of gasoline; I am sure you feel the impact of what is swiftly becoming one of the biggest heists in human history. Is Enron's Ken Lay in jail yet? Did Halliburton ever get sanctioned for stealing all that money and cheating on the price it charged for gasoline? Did "vice" President Cheney ever reveal what really took place in his secret energy meetings? But I digress.

This country is going down the tubes fast, at least for those of us who cannot keep up with sinful prescription drugs costs, out of sight medical insurance payments, usury fuel costs for transportation and heating our homes, and decreasing real wages for ordinary workers. For all who care to look, the warning signs are there of the impending economic crisis within the so-called middle class and below.

Bankruptcy will no longer be as accessible an option after October 17 for consumers, but not so for the corporations and affluent. Additionally, since we will not be able to file bankruptcy without many restrictions, I am

sure the credit card companies will tinker with their "minimum payments" and come up with even more ways to steal from their customers. In case you didn't know, credit card companies were the biggest lobbyists for the new bankruptcy law, which, by the way, was supported by members of your Black Caucus and your beloved Democrats. We know where the Republicans stand on it.

With billions, maybe a trillion dollars in credit card debt among those who really cannot afford it, and in light of the restraints being placed on those who need to file bankruptcy, a reasonable person would ask, "Where is that compassionate conservative we elected? Where does he stand on this?" But we already know, don't we? Apparently, this guy is very conservative when it comes to demonstrating his compassion for those who need it most.

As we face this economic meltdown, Black people should act upon the principle of self-preservation. We are in a country ruled by folks who don't care one iota about us; we are at the bottom of every economic cat-



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egory; we own very little of this country's assets and control only a minuscule portion of its wealth; we are openly and blatantly mistreated, physically abused and assaulted by police officers, discriminated against by banks and real estate companies, and we are the fodder for a corrupt criminal justice system.

We live in major cities across this country but have no real economic enclaves to support and sustain our children; we purchase everything someone else makes including the biggest cars and trucks, and now have to fill them up with \$3 per gallon gasoline; we just love to be displayed on television by BET and VH1 acting the fool or just singing and dancing; our young men have fallen prey to the foolish thought that performing on the basketball court will keep them out of the criminal court, thus, much of what we see them doing is showing how high they can jump on their way to some overplayed slam-dunk.

All of these things and many more suggest quite vividly that Black folks are in deep trouble. Of course, the country is in trouble,

too, but we will be the first to feel the effects of its economic decline. We are the expendable ones, the obsolete workers, the unwanted residents of this country. I know this will alarm and embarrass some Black people reading this, but even you, at some point, will have to come to grips with the fact that you are not what you have been made to believe you are. You may be earning millions, but think a moment about how much money you are earning for your bosses.

So, it's time for dieting and plastic surgery. We must curtail insatiable appetite for trinkets, cut our credit cards in two, and refuse to use them again.

Credit cards are driving the ravenous, greedy, evil society of moneychangers, and we must no longer play into their hands by falling for their Faustian deals. Or, you may want to file bankruptcy prior to the new law coming into effect.

Another thing we must do is stop falling for the hype of the SUV. The latest news reports say buyers are still purchasing these monstrosities despite the hike in gas prices. They also say consumers are not cutting back on gas purchases despite the skyrocketing prices. Are we in a coma or what? Have we

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stitution and other initiatives to promote individual and community wealth building and economic development.

Sixth, develop and encourage strategies which increase awareness among Blacks of the range of Black business development services provided by organizations. Encourage Blacks, to do like other minorities (Hispanics and Asians) and recycle the dollar and do business with Black businesses first.

The above suggestions would require strong dedication and commitment from

some people who truly understand what Blacks have to lose on the financial front. During the Civil Rights Movement, thousands and thousands of people died for us to have equal standing in every arena, not just the social arena.

However, even some of the Blacks who have "made it" don't understand completely that the mission or the ultimate goal is to create Black wealth nationally. BET, Radio One and Essence Communications Inc. all sold their interest to White-owned firms. *Essence* sold its interests to Time Warner, but never

offered Earl G. Graves Sr., publisher of Black Enterprise a chance to even bid for *Essence*.

Unfortunately, for some of us, we just can't seem to help ourselves. The Whites get richer and we feel it's our job to help the master and ensure that the wealth gap between Blacks and Whites remain; so as house Negroes, we feel it's our duty to do whatever we can to help Whites continue to foster their superiority over Blacks.

In the book of Exodus the children of Israel, because of their stubbornness and their pigheadedness, wound up wandering in the

wilderness for years when it should have taken them a couple of weeks.

Are Blacks wandering aimlessly in that same wilderness because they are too afraid, too naïve or too ignorant to rise up and receive the favor that God has bestowed upon them to meet the challenges of the 21st century?

The challenge facing Blacks now is collective economic empowerment for our people. Other races have met the need and challenges of their people, when are we going to get a clue?