

# Politics key to Black America's freedom

By Ron Walters

Special to Sentinel-Voice

In response to many requests, my remarks on "Political Participation" which I delivered October 15 at the Millions More Movement in Washington, D.C. are excerpted here:

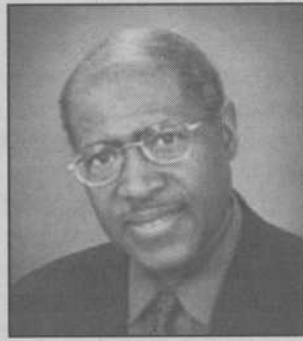
"Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks to us today, as he did in 1957, from those steps of the Lincoln Monument, when he said, repeatedly, 'give us the ballot' so that we could achieve not only our rightful status as citizens but the power to improve that status.

"Because so many struggled for the right to vote in that era, this is the 40th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act; and since then we have improved our voting power to the point that in 2000 and 2004, the gap between percentage of Blacks and Whites who vote has virtually been eliminated. This is partly a result of the first Million Man March in 1995 which urged Black men to vote, and in 1996, nearly 2 million more turned up at the polls. Therefore, I applaud the work of the National Coalition of Black Civic Participation and the Hip Hop Summit that helped to

achieve voter turnout of the Black youth in 2004—nearly 2 million over 2000.

"Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. In 2004, although Blacks contributed more than 9 million votes (11 percent of the electorate), 6 million were still not registered. And there is a bigger voting gap between educated Blacks and Whites than Blacks and Whites, so we must continue to register and vote in big numbers. But in 2000 and 2004, we discovered that disenfranchisement is alive and well. So, we must enter aggressively into the politics of election reform and push for the reauthorization and strengthening of the Voting Rights Act.

"In 'Freedom Is Not Enough' I argued that voting is not just a badge of citizenship, but a weapon of power if used correctly. Power comes not only from voting, it is the currency that political leaders take into the marketplace of policy; and if they have the skill and



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courage to leverage it, it will return the goods and services needed by our community.

"It is time for such courage. The Republican Party fosters a politics that delivers an oppressive and inhumane public policy. And inside the Democratic Party, the Democratic Leadership Council and a recent report by The Third Way recommend that Democrats either dismiss the Black and Hispanic votes in 2008, or take them for granted.

"So, today, I assert that the correct posture of a nation of 40 million people is to have their own political organization, and I call for the creation of the Fannie Lou Hammer Freedom Party, a political organization, funded and led by the Millions More Movement, and open to all those who share a true progressive vision. Those who created the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party believed in the integrity of Black interests and in a politics that does not elevate the interests of any

party above them. They also understood that independence is the basis of leverage, and that by being organized we are better able to leverage power with any group that respects our interests. But politics is not totally defined by elections. At this moment, much of Black power is neutralized by the conservative control of all of the major political institutions of government. And in times like these, Frederick Douglass reminds us that it is still necessary to 'Agitate, Agitate, Agitate.'

"We must pursue the civil tactics of joining progressive advocacy organizations. There is power in letter writing and telephoning officials and the media to express our view. And we must engage vigorously in community organizing, protest demonstration and nonviolent direct action for change. That alone is what will ensure that Black New Orleans will regain its power. These are the keys to power that must be utilized to achieve real freedom and those who believe in freedom will not rest until it comes..."

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

## America is getting leadership it deserves?

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Are we getting the leadership we deserve?

Look around at our situation in this country and think about the passage in the Bible in which Samuel warned the people about what would happen when they insisted on having a King. If you are not familiar with it, read Chapter 8 in I Samuel in the Bible and see how similar that situation was to ours today.

We have a leader who is doing the same things that Samuel told his people would happen if they rejected God's leadership for man's leadership. In other words, Samuel told the people they would get the leadership they deserved. Seems we are in that predicament today with George Bush and his buddies.

To begin with, when Bush was first discussed, at least in public, as a viable candidate for president, most of us thought, "What? Who?" Many of us wondered, "How in the world do the Republicans think this lightweight could be elected to the highest office in the land?" Talk about a long shot, at least that's what we thought. This guy was the most unlikely person to be nominated by the GOP. Boy, were we wrong!

Despite his shallow and shadowy reputation, his lack of management acumen, his inability to lead, and his outright demonstration of a lack of concern and "compassion" for the James Byrd family, he "won" his party's nomination, beating out John McCain no less. Then we saw his debating skills, his communication skills, and his obvious lack of knowledge of world affairs. But still he moved up in the polls.

And then the denouement — contrary to what we always believed to be the standard procedure of the President selecting Supreme Court Justices — we saw a complete reversal when the Supreme Court justices selected our president.

All of the indications leading up to Bush's "selection" point to the fact that we get the leadership we deserve. There is no way we should have the likes of George Bush as our president, but we do. To add insult to injury, we "elected" him again, for another four years, to continue his reign of economic terror on Black people, the elderly and poor



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people, Florida in 2000 and Ohio in 2004 notwithstanding.

To prove my point even further, we see an intelligent person like Condoleezza Rice supporting and defending George Bush. She has to know how ignorant he is and how limited he is. She has to see the corruption in his administration, yet she stands at his side like one of Hitler's storm troopers, knowing that what he is doing is wrong but willing, nonetheless, to follow orders. I wonder what she really thinks about her boss. Maybe she will write a tell-all book like George Stephanopoulos and Dick Morris did about Clinton.

There is more proof-positive that despite what we thought, what we did, or how much we protested, Bush would become president. Think about the mind-boggling support he had and has from some of our most prominent Black ministers. And it's not just because of his "faith-based initiative" but because they say Bush is a Christian; he has high moral values; he is against abortion and gay

marriage — two sins those ministers cannot tolerate in their president; but they can tolerate lying, murder, stealing and coveting another man's resources.

What we are seeing has to be prophecy; there is no rational way it could be happening otherwise. No way.

Now, at a time when Bush has the lowest ratings in history, having demonstrated a total disdain for some of the laws he swore to uphold, having shown the people of this country that he is obviously not equipped to be president, and having run the country from surpluses to deficits. Furthermore, increasing the debt exponentially and presiding over a stupid war that virtually everyone knows should not have been started — even after all of that and more — Bush has not been impeached nor has our vaunted Congressional Black Caucus drawn up papers calling for his impeachment. This simply has to be divine providence; we are truly getting the leadership we deserve.

I ran across a quote attributed to Thomas Sowell. I don't know if he said it, but it's very appropriate when you think about the leadership we have in George Bush: "It is hard to imagine a more stupid or more dangerous way of making decisions than by putting those decisions in the hands of people who pay no price for being wrong." That is exactly what we have done, and we are paying dearly for having done so. Bush says, "Bring 'em on!" and a thousand Americans die. Bush is now saying, "The only way the terrorists can win is if 'we' lose 'our' nerve and abandon the mission."

"We? Our nerve?" He struts his stuff while others take the fall.

Despite the majority of the people telling him he is wrong on the war, wrong on the economy and wrong on leadership; despite putting his cronies into positions they have absolutely no place being (Remember him saying, "You're doing a fine job, Brownie?"); despite his failure to come down hard on his family's buddies, the Saudis and Kuwaitis, after American lives were lost defending their oil; and despite his total incompetence, his constant deer-in-the-headlights stare and his,

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has been chosen, Ben Bernanke, was appointed chairman of the council of economic advisors of the Fed in June and is, therefore, the government's chief economic advisor. He spent most of his career as Princeton economics professor before becoming a member of the Fed's board of Governors in 2002.

Due to the fact the Federal Reserve is one of the most powerful organizations on Earth, Alan Greenspan has for quite some time been one of the most powerful men on Earth. He has seen the U.S. economy through some very tumultuous times. He has steadied the U.S. financial market during times of domestic crises and international ones from Mexico to Russia to Japan.

He has steered the U.S. economy through a market crash, national disasters, September 11, Enron and WorldCom scandals, as well as through periods of irrational national exuberance. He endorsed budget and tax reform initiatives, led the fight against inflation, and influenced recessions. Greenspan is currently expressing concerns about restraining the housing bubble because it can cause greater economic harm when it bursts than say the burst of the stock market bubbles.

Greenspan picked the worst time to retire. Current conditions for a handoff are hardly ideal, and financial markets are typically more volatile during the first year after the handover to a new chairman than during the rest of his tenure. In October 1987, barely two months after Greenspan took office, the stock market crashed.

Right now, America's economy has never looked so unbalanced, with a negative household savings rate, a housing market in flux, a hefty budget deficit, a record current-account deficit and rising inflation. Figures that came out October 14 show that the 12 month rate of inflation has risen above 4 percent — its highest since 1991.

Bernanke's views differ widely from Greenspan's, so now the question becomes how much of the Fed's credibility is about Greenspan personally versus the institution overall.

We all better hope that his successor will demonstrate that the good policy that we've had over the past 18 years is as much due to the evolution of the institution as it is to Greenspan, per se.