

NAACP fumbles ball on McNabb skirmish

By George Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The national president of the NAACP is involved in a public brouhaha with the president of the Philadelphia chapter. Are they feuding over President Bush's authorization of secret spying on U.S. citizens? No. Is it over the tug-of-war between the House and Senate over the proposed extension of controversial sections of the USA Patriot Act? Nope. Are they fighting over cuts poor people are expected to shoulder in the next federal budget as the wealthy get to enjoy extended tax cuts? Hardly.

Of all the important public issues facing America, NAACP President Bruce S. Gordon and President Jerry Whyatt Mondesire of the Philadelphia chapter are at odds over whether Mondesire should have criticized Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb in a newspaper column. Mondesire, publisher of the *Philadelphia Sun*, a Black-owned newspaper, called McNabb overrated and took him to task for what Mondesire described as McNabb's lack of leadership both on and off field.

"...This week I felt compelled to offer some personal thoughts about your horrific on-field performances this season because at their core is a lie you have tried to use to hide the fact that, in reality, you actually are not that good. In essence, Donny, you are mediocre at best," Mondesire wrote.

Gordon, who grew up in Philadelphia, is-

sued a strongly-worded statement that upbraided Mondesire for upbraiding McNabb.

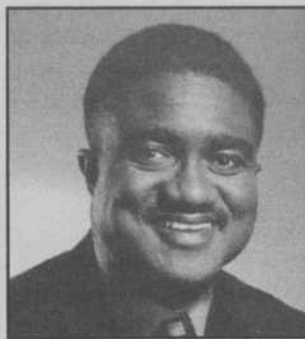
"I have followed the Eagles organization and its players for a long time," he said. "Donovan McNabb is one of the best that they have had. He is a great quarterback, an excellent role model and a class act. Whatever possessed

Mondesire to take such a negative position on a positive person like McNabb is beyond me. The NAACP has many civil rights issues that require our attention. Criticizing Donovan McNabb is not one of them. However, in light of Mondesire's criticism it has become a personal priority to offer my apology as well as my support."

Gordon added, "The NAACP is further investigating this matter to make sure these statements were properly vetted and our policies and procedures were not violated."

The last time I checked, NAACP chapter presidents were volunteers. That means they are not NAACP employees and even if they were, they would still be entitled to the First Amendment protection of free speech.

Writing as a columnist — where opinions are supposed to be expressed — and going to great lengths to say that he was offering some "personal thoughts," Mondesire didn't need his column "vetted" by Gordon or any-



GEORGE CURRY

one else.

I have known Jerry Mondesire, a former aide to Congressman Bill Gray, for many years. He is thoughtful, principled and, as is evident, unafraid to speak his mind. He is said to be considering a run for Congress. If that's true, I admire Jerry even more for speaking up. Surely, he knew that writing that column

would not win him any votes.

Many people have asked why Mondesire would offer such a harsh critique of McNabb. All one has to do is read his column and it's pretty clear what set him off.

(Copies of Mondesire's column and Gordon's statement are posted on my blog, www.curryingfavor.blogspot.com.)

He faults McNabb for running less this year and then accusing critics who point that out as engaging in a form of racism.

During the season, Terrell Owens, the recently exiled wide receiver for the Eagles, said that the Eagles would win a Super Bowl if Brett Farve, the Green Bay Packers quarterback, were the team's quarterback instead of McNabb.

"The brash and bombastic Terrell Owens may have committed the unpardonable sin of going public with his put down, but was he fundamentally wrong?" Mondesire asked. "The pressure, the hype, the clock — they

all just converged and your nerve collapsed under their combined weight," he wrote. "Mediocre isn't horrible in and of itself. Most of us don't live up to our dreams. It's when we fake it that most of the rest of us get irritated."

Clearly, Mondesire was irritated when he wrote the next paragraph.

"So, for you to continue to deny we fans (as well as yourself) one of the strongest elements of your game by claiming that 'everybody expects Black quarterbacks to scramble' not only amounts to a breach of faith but also belittled the real struggles of Black athletes who've had to overcome real racial stereotyping [sic] in addition to downright segregation."

As Mondesire noted, Doug Williams, the only Black quarterback to win a Super Bowl, was not a scrambler. Nor is the Tennessee Titans' Steve McNair, Minnesota QB Daunte Culpepper or Byron Leftwich of Jacksonville. And they are not criticized for not scrambling.

If McNabb, in fact, blamed his sub-par and injury-riddled season on others' purported perception of Black quarterbacks as scramblers, Mondesire is not only correct to call him out on that lame excuse, Bruce Gordon should present Mondesire with a NAACP Image Award. Then, perhaps, the NAACP can concentrate on our real priorities.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the *NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com*.

Prison industry highlights Black economic disparities

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

An article by Liz Chandler on Charlotte.com, partner website of The *Charlotte Observer*, titled "Black contractors used as fronts?" reminded me of an economic incongruity: Black people occupy most of the cells in the U.S. prison system but have very little participation in prison development, construction, and long-term contracts for vending, such as supplies, food, equipment, etc.

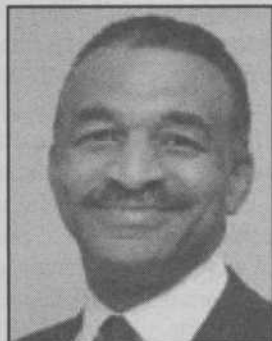
Another in a long line of exposé articles on minority programs, the latest uncovering of the prison-building money-pit discloses several issues relevant to the economic disempowerment of Black people. As usual, a history lesson is in order here.

In "Racism: The Hole in America's Heart," featured in the *City Sun*, July 18-24, 1990, author Clinton Cox wrote, "Within five

years after the end of the Civil War, the Black percentages of the prison population went from close to zero to 33 percent." He illustrated how then, as now, the Black prison population performed an economic and political function for the benefit of Whites.

Another tidbit of prison history is found in the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, that says, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States..."

We should pay special attention to the words, "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted." Need I say more?



JAMES CLINGMAN

It is obvious that Black people have been and continue to be the fodder: first, for the agricultural industry of the 19th century, and now for the prison industrial complex of the new millennium. As I read the article, I thought about our history, and I thought about how we continue to contribute to our own economic demise by serving the new master as front companies, especially in the prison-building industry.

What a shame that some of us would do that, as if Black people don't have the capability to stand on our own, collectively, and secure more than front money from prison-building, convention centers, waterfront developments, museums, and stadiums, where there is another economic "Blackout" brew-

ing in Dallas, with the construction of their new sports facility. I am pleased to report that the two Black-owned firms that were offered "deals" as front companies turned them down and then turned in the companies making the offers.

The author questions whether there are Black (or is it minority?) contractors who are being used as front companies, conduits through which miniscule amounts flow to the Black company for doing little or no work. These Faustian deals also carry the added benefit of the prime contractor's claim to "doing business" with a "minority" firm.

The first problem I saw was the ridiculous notion that women are "minorities." Oh yeah; since when? The U.S. Census says women are the majority population. Thus, when women are declared minorities by "minority programs" they must be referring to White women, right? That's part of the game. In the Charlotte case, "women-owned" businesses received more contracts than Black-owned businesses — Black men and Black women combined.

The article stated, "...nearly 21 percent of the prison work will go to minority firms, primarily those owned by women. African-American firms, one of the most underused groups in state construction, are to get 3 percent to 4 percent of the prison work, obtained only after complaining to the state." According to the 2000 census, Charlotte is 33 percent Black.

The other problem is something I harp on all the time: Black people referring to ourselves as "minorities" in the first place. I have said it as plainly as I can. It's a game, folks. It's a game that we can never win. No one should ever be confused about who we are. The organization fighting against the eco-

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(Continued from Page 10)

that He is the exalted, omnipotent (all powerful) Lord, the inescapable judge of all humanity who will strike the nations that are unrighteous and the people that are unsaved; He will rule them with a rod of iron and tread the winepresses of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

It goes on to say that He will gather all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven and invite them for the "supper of the great God, that they (the birds) may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people — free and slave, both poor and rich."

Along with these people will be false prophets (pastors who are not teaching and

preaching the Word of God) even though they can work miracles in the presence of the Lord. It concludes by saying that all the birds were full with the flesh of these people. In essence, the principle here simply means that any system which sets itself in opposition to Christ is doomed to defeat.

— A Special Note of Thanks —

Before the year ends and I write my last article for the year, I would be remiss if I did not take the time to say that I am humbled and honored by the overwhelming reader response I have received — whether you agree or disagree with my commentary. When I started writing my opinions for the paper at the beginning of the year, I initially thought that it would be something fun to do and that my main focus would be to provoke thought,

educate a little and speak what God loves: truth.

I believe that I have done that, and the responsibility has proven to be more than I ever anticipated. Why? Because during the course of the year, the issues that have come up have proven to be not only overwhelming but many of them have been heart wrenching. There has not been a week that has gone by when someone hasn't called, seen me on the street or at an event and said to me how they look forward to reading this column every week.

So, to that end, thank you all very much for receiving me and allowing me to play a very minute role in your lives.

God Bless You All, and Have a Very Merry Christmas!

(See Clingman, Page 12)