

FBI should be ashamed of King assault

By George Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Few people in history have been as dedicated to civil rights as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In an interview with *Playboy* magazine, he noted that he worked 20 hours a day, traveled 325,000 miles a year, giving 450 speeches. That grueling schedule alone was enough to take a toll on Dr. King and his family life. But more mentally and physically taxing was a vicious, unrelenting stealth campaign by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to harass Dr. King.

Hoover suspected that Stanley Levison, a King adviser, had Communist ties, and used that as a pretext to smearing Dr. King.

Writing in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "Bearing the Cross," David J. Garrow noted: "FBI officials focused upon Levison's ongoing involvement with King's and SCLC's affairs, and in early October renewed their entreaties to Robert Kennedy about the serious security threat represented by Levison's role and King's refusal to sever the relationship. Their warnings received a sympathetic hearing by the attorney general and Robert Kennedy felt compelled to take the step that the FBI had been recommending since midsummer: the wiretapping of King's home and office in Atlanta."

Garrow wrote, "Ever since the wiretaps on King's own home and office were added in November, the supervisors of the King-

Levison investigation had been turning their attention more and more to King's private life and away from their previous fixation on his supposed Communist ties.

"At a mid-December conference, bureau officials discussed in detail how they could gather further evidence of what they felt were King's serious personal and moral shortcomings, and had resolved that if they could, they would use such material to expose King 'as an immoral opportunist' and 'clerical fraud.'"

In "At Cannan's Edge," the last of his trilogy on the Civil Rights Movement, Taylor Branch recounts how the FBI used former Massachusetts Sen. Leverett Saltonstall to prevent King from receiving an honorary degree from Springfield College, derailed an effort by King to obtain a loan for SCLC from labor leader Jimmy Hoffa and, even more troubling, decided not to inform King of imminent threats on his life.

"Hoover revised internal communications about the latest threats to kill King if he marched on Tuesday in Selma — one via the Secret Service about two alleged gunmen out of Detroit, another about a killing squad from the Coughatta, Louisiana, Ku Klux Klan — and vetoed plans to give a routine warning to



GEORGE CURRY

King," wrote Branch, who won the Pulitzer Prize for "Parting the Waters," his first civil rights book.

The author continued, "'No,' Hoover scrawled on one memo, and on another ordered agents 'not to tell King anything.' He reminded top officials of a previous order to exclude King from the standard advisory to the targets of threats, and explicitly confined FBI notice to Sheriff Clark and other local authorities of dubious protective value."

Hoover detested King and resented King's suggestion that the FBI did not aggressively investigate the murderers of civil rights activists. Hoover would later describe King as the "the most notorious" liar in America.

Branch writes, "...Richard Harwood disclosed in the *Washington Post* that FBI officials had offered to reporters tape-recorded evidence of 'moral turpitude' on King's part. No other news outlet would touch the cryptic revelation, which Harwood buried among equally sensitive suggestions that Hoover had become a pampered tyrant with homosexual leanings."

Perhaps the most disgusting act in a series of disgusting acts, the FBI tried to get Dr. King to commit suicide.

An anonymous threatening letter and copy

of tape recordings were mailed to King at his SCLC office in Atlanta.

"There is but one way out for you," the letter said. "You better take it before your filthy, abnormal fraudulent self is bared to the nation."

David Garrow writes, "King and his aides had little doubt about the origin of the package: J. Edgar Hoover's FBI. The material on the tape — dirty jokes and bawdy remarks King had made a year earlier at Washington's Willard Hotel, plus the sounds of people engaging in sex — had obviously been acquired by bugging King's hotel rooms."

Garrow recalls a conversation between King, his wife, Coretta, and activist Dorothy Cotton.

"Quiet at first, Martin suddenly spoke up, his wife remembered. 'I've told you all that I don't expect to survive this revolution; this society is too sick.' And of course, Dorothy said, 'Oh, Martin, don't say that.' And he said, 'Well, I'm just being realistic.' Coretta recalled that she 'had heard him say it several times before... He had an awareness of what could happen to him, and he ... was not able to forget about it because he lived with this constantly.'"

Dr. King also lived with the constant harassment of his own government.

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U.S. Congress: No checking, no balancing

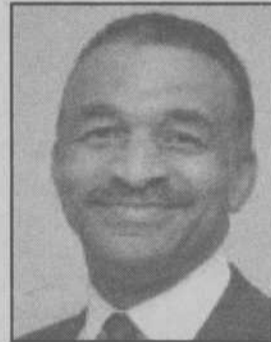
By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Why not? What good is it? What power does it have? For whom does it work? Considering the things that have taken place just over the past few months, it is obvious our Congress cannot do anything to stop the thievery, the cronyism, and the absolute power of King George and his band of miscreants, so we may as well call it day for Congress. We are just wasting our money paying their salaries; I'm sure Cheney and the gang can put it to better use. So let's try it, at least for a while, and maybe our Congress will finally realize they work for us — not George Bush and company.

Isn't Congress there for checking and balancing? Aren't they in Washington to legislate on behalf of "the people"? Didn't you

elect them to protect your interests? Aren't they getting paid six figures, with the best retirement plans on Earth to boot? Are they doing their jobs? The answers are obvious, so let's kick 'em out in November 2006.

Dubya recently called a meeting of political "OGs," which also included his two Black tokens, Condi and Colin; Bush did his fake mea culpa, we're all-in-this-together charade, and his photo op, to get us to believe he is sincerely interested in what we think. That was just after he went back into his bag of tricks and made another recess appointment of one of his gals, Julie Myers, a no-experience, neophyte who is now



JAMES CLINGMAN

responsible for a \$4 billion budget and 20,000 employees at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency no less. Bush is definitely a playa. I might start calling him, "Goldie! Goldie!"

Congress meets and speaks, and meets and speaks, ad nauseam, only to disappear when George starts to pimp "the people," which is virtually 24/7/365. You can't find them with a search warrant in the Capitol Building when you really need them to stand up for us. Are they afraid of the diabolical "Darth Vader Cheney" and the evil villain "Simon Legree Rumsfeld?"

Why do we need a Congress when we

have a King and his court? Or, should I say court jesters? It looks like most of them will be busy, for a while anyway, either in court or in prison, after taking bribes from Jack "Rip-'em-off" Abramoff. (Did Jack give any of his "jack" to CBC members? I didn't see any Black folks on his list.)

Congress doesn't have time to stop Bush's budget cuts in agencies that help poor people. They don't have time to look into what Bush knew prior to the mine tragedy in Tallmansville, W. Va, just as they didn't have time to hold him accountable for the information he had before the levees broke in New Orleans. Should I also mention the information Bush had prior to the World Trade Center disappearing act? David Copperfield couldn't top that illusion.

(See Clingman, Page 14)

LaGrande

(Continued from Page 12)

sion to learn that America is selling the idea of democracy to other countries around the world, as if she practices it herself with full commitment. (Nothing could be further from the truth.)

The TV drama, "Commander in Chief," which I watch faithfully every week, is about a woman who ascends to the Oval Office after the sitting president suddenly falls ill and dies. The main character, Mackenzie Allen (played by Academy Award-winner and newly awarded Golden Globe recipient Geena Davis), is a former university lecturer who served a term in Congress before being picked as a vice presidential running mate. She was only picked to appeal to the votes of the "soccer moms."

The sitting president suffers a stroke, and movers and shakers were immediately thrown into a tailspin; they feared the worst, not only was the president expected to die,

but a woman was about to become president of the United States.

Now, in a "democratic" country where women make up roughly 51 percent of the population and many are as educated as men, why should that be a problem? But that is the troubling plot upon which the show is based. The sick and dying president immediately summoned the vice president to his hospital bedroom and asked her to resign because he felt uncomfortable leaving her in charge of the affairs of the government. This is the person he handpicked as his running mate; this is the person who got elected on the same ticket that he did.

So, what is his excuse for asking her to resign? The storyline provides an implied rationale, but anyone who is familiar with the show and has a logical mind knows that the true reason was much more sinister. She was a woman.

She refused to resign before he died, and,

therefore, she assumed office.

This television show is priming the American public for the eventuality of a female president. It is being used to explore the hitherto taboo topic of a female presidency. The rationale being, if the American public absorbs this piece of fiction, they'll eventually be prepared to deal with a dose of reality when a real female presidential candidate is presented in the not-too-distant future.

This is where we can learn a lesson from Liberia. They have already gone way past America in this very important aspect of democracy.

They have already elected a real and viable female president, while America — the alleged champion and self-proclaimed exporter of democracy — is still experimenting with such a basic idea.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's presidency is sending a message all over the globe: In order to practice democracy to its fullest, to

reach its most fundamental core, we must equally involve everyone.

No segment of the population must be excluded, if we claim to practice true democracy. Strategic exclusion of over half the population from the top office is an absurdity that America, as a whole, must frown upon.

The essence of democracy is allowing not only the men, but the women, too, to live their lives according to their capabilities, not their gender.

President Harry Truman once said, "The responsibilities of great nations are to serve and not dominate the world."

Women can serve, too, and they can be genuine leaders. America, it's time to honor your women by giving them equal rights in every arena, presidential office included. This is the fundamental tenet of democracy.

Liberia has seized its golden opportunity. America, will you be next?