

Cynthia McKinney uses racism as crutch

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When I worked as a reporter in St. Louis for the *Post-Dispatch* in the 1970s, Macler Shepard, a race man and a community activist, often said that some Blacks use race as a crutch so often that they forget how to walk. I thought about Shepard's comment when a controversy developed recently over what happened after Rep. Cynthia McKinney tried to walk past Capitol Hill Police officers.

The Georgia Democrat acknowledges that she wasn't wearing the designated lapel pin that allows members of Congress to sidestep normal screening procedures. McKinney's version is that shortly before 9:00 a.m. on March 29, she was headed to a Budget Committee meeting in the Longworth House Building when she got into a scuffle with a Capitol Police officer.

"I was rushing to my meeting when a White officer yelled to me," she said in a written statement. "He approached me, body blocked me, physically touching me. I used my arm to get him off of me. I told him not to touch me several times. He asked for my ID and I showed it to him. He then let me go and I proceeded to my meeting, and I assume that the Police Officer resumed his duties."

The Capitol Police version is that an officer failed to recognize McKinney and ordered her to stop.

When McKinney refused, the officer tried to physically restrain her and she hit him in

the chest with a cell phone.

The United States Capitol Police has referred the case to the U.S. Attorney for possible prosecution.

McKinney recently changed her hairstyle. In an appearance on the CBS "Early Show," she said: "This has become much ado about a hairdo."

In subsequent days, McKinney has attempted to frame the issue in different terms.

"This whole incident was instigated by the inappropriate touching and stopping of me, a female Black congresswoman," she said at a news conference. Her attorney, James Myart, added, "Ms. McKinney is just a victim of being in Congress while Black...."

Let's not confuse the issue. McKinney was stopped from bypassing the metal detector because she was not wearing her congressional pin identifying her as a lawmaker.

Of course, regular Hill cops should be able to recognize members of Congress. But when they fail to do so, it is not a capital offense.

Cynthia McKinney learned a long time ago that many African-Americans will give you a pass if you merely scream racism, regardless of whether it's true. I am fed up with public officials yelling racism merely to deflect attention away from their own misbehavior.



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Discrimination is still rampant in this society. And if the specter of racism is raised when it does not apply, my fear is that when genuine cases arise, they will be discounted because of previous false claims.

If McKinney felt she was being racially profiled, she should have noted the officer's name and badge number and taken the matter up with his supervisor or in congressional hearings.

Did you notice that after Ms. Super Black charged racism at a news conference, she walked off hand-in-hand with her White lawyer? Washington, D.C., has no shortage of talented Black lawyers.

And if Cynthia McKinney wants us to think that she's so pro-Black, it seems only natural that Ms. Super Black would have hired a Black lawyer. Of course, she can hire whomever she likes, but she can't have it both ways.

Even one of McKinney's news releases was disingenuous. After stating, "...Honestly, this incident is not about wearing a congressional pin or changing my hairstyle," she proceeded to talk about — you guessed it — her congressional pin and her hairstyle.

"I have agreed to try to remember to wear my pin and notify Capitol Hill Police every time I change my hairstyle," she said in a

statement. "...It is, however, a shame that while I conduct the country's business, I have to stop and call the police to tell them that I've changed my hairstyle so that I'm not harassed at work."

Harassed? Asking someone entering a federal building for ID in this post-9/11 era does not constitute harassment.

Contrary to her assertion that this is "much ado about a hairdo," McKinney asked in a statement, "Do I have to contact the police every time I change my hairstyle? How do we account for the fact that when I wore my braids every day for 11 years, I still faced this problem, primarily from certain police officers?"

If that's true — and it's hard to know what's true in this case — then this "ado" is not about her hairdo.

McKinney's conflicting assertions do not mean there aren't deep-seated racial problems within the U.S. Capitol Police. Others have complained of ill treatment, and Blacks on the force have filed racial discrimination lawsuits against the agency, some of them still pending. If the agency is found guilty, it should be assessed the stiffest possible punishment.

In the meantime, if we confuse racial discrimination with bad judgment, we may forget how to walk.

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Who, what defines, controls, speaks for Blacks?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Who speaks for Black people?

I posed this question to my Black entrepreneurship class at the University of Cincinnati, and much to my chagrin, after a long period of silence, only one young lady had an answer. Even sadder is the fact that I did not posit the question in the context of entrepreneurship. Rather, it was just a general question. While I am not surprised at their lack of response, in the larger context of Black leadership, that response spoke volumes — their silence was deafening.

So I ask you. Who does speak for Black people? Who stands up for Black people?

The one student who did have an answer,

not surprisingly, named a national personality, which is where we usually gravitate when it comes to determining who our leaders are. But don't you think there should be folks who speak up and stand up for Black people on the local level? I am not talking about brothers and sisters who refer to themselves — and us — as "people of color" or "minorities" or any of those other namby-pamby words used to define who we are and, ultimately, what we deserve. I am referring to local leaders who are unwavering in their commitment to Black people and those who



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are not confused about their — and our — identity.

So maybe a better question is: "Who defines Black people?"

I recently attended a workshop conducted by one of this nation's outstanding ministers — scholars, Tony Roach, of Abilene, Texas. The five-day event titled, "You are God's Love Bank," was sponsored

by our congregation, the Gray Road Church of Christ, here in Cincinnati. During that workshop, my eyes were opened to many things, but among all the outstanding strategies for living a spiritual life, presented by

Roach, one thing he noted reminded me of our plight in this country. Roach kept emphasizing: "He who defines you, controls you."

I probably could stop right here, couldn't I?

There is also a point to be made about "what" defines you as well. Roach's "New Self Love versus Old Self Love" segment helps us understand how incidents that took place in our lives long ago shape our personalities and determine to a large extent how we act and react as adults.

He points to four conditions that have affected each of us in some way or another: Abandonment; Worthlessness; Abuse and (See Clingman, Page 12)

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similar position, and no one talked about closing them down. The organizations put their heads together, put a plan together, executed the plan and restored order. It is our hope that EOB, with the help of many experienced community members, can do the same.

The main point emphasized by former and existing board members — Reverend Marion Bennett, Councilman Lawrence Weekly, Linda Harrison and Reverend Chester Richardson — is that there was not, I emphasize, "was not" any criminal activity associated with the current status of the agency. There were no monies stolen, and there was no fraud. However, there were several very bad management decisions made with regards to restricted federal funds after the previous Financial Officer Keith Latham was very strongly encouraged to retire by then-Executive Director Marsha Rose Walker.

When Latham retired, Debra Santos was brought in; she was a Certified Public Ac-

countant, but not used to dealing with fund accounting, which is the accounting method used for non-profit organizations. She saw \$2.5 million sitting in the General Fund account and reported to the board that they had a \$2.5 million reserve, not realizing that what she thought was a reserve was actually restricted federal and state funds.

The spending frenzy began. The Executive Director moved the agency's headquarters from a \$4,000 per month facility to a \$30,000 per month facility, well away from their client base; rented \$300,000 to \$500,000 worth of furniture; hosted community parties with a cost of \$50,000 to \$60,000; served more participants in various programs than they were allocated to serve, which resulted in a loss to the agency; and they never drew down the grant funds from that specific program to replenish the spent funds.

In addition to the above mismanagement errors, the agency had 264 cell phones and 46 credit cards issued to various individuals

within the organization. When the overspending was finally discovered, the then-executive director began drawing on the \$2 million bank line of credit, obviously not understanding that it, too, had to be paid back, which ultimately resulted in a "robbing Peter to pay Paul" money management practice.

To pay the bank back, the organization sold its transportation building on West Bonanza and H Street and paid the bank half of the \$2 million owed. All of these transactions were made with board approval.

EOB's biggest indiscretion has been — like with so many non-profit organizations — not operating like a business and not having qualified business people to oversee the financial management of the agency.

EOB needs to have structured payback plans that will allow them to pay off their debt, a board consisting of people with business skills and management that is not going to pass the problems off to someone else or

jump ship. The organization is not without resources and should focus on generating their own revenue through various partnerships and business deals.

To put it in the words of Reverend Chester Richardson, former board member, "It is time for the organization to stop playing the victim and take a proactive approach to restoring confidence in the organization."

KCEP 88.1-FM, which is at the heart of what the community wants to see saved from a sale, is the oldest and only Black-oriented community broadcast medium in Las Vegas.

EOB is more than KCEP. It is an organization that provides services to 50,000 poor people per month, and it's in trouble. It needs approximately \$5 million. So, for those of us who care about poor people, we need to lend our time, our expertise and give our money.

For those who wish to help through donations, a checking account at Wells Fargo Bank has been established under the name "EOB/KCEP Relief Fund," account #2272151271.