

# Bush still lying about spy program

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

After *The New York Times* disclosed the existence of a domestic spy program in December, President Bush assured Americans that their privacy was not being violated and claimed the program concentrated on U.S. contacts with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda.

He said, "In other words, one end of the communication must be outside of the United States."

Thanks to an investigation by *USA Today*, we now know that President Bush was lying.

In a front-page story last Thursday, the newspaper wrote: "The National Security Agency has been secretly collecting the phone call records of tens of millions of Americans, using data provided by AT&T, Verizon and BellSouth, people with direct knowledge of the arrangement told *USA Today*."

Qwest was the only telephone company that refused to turn over its records voluntarily.

Believed to be the largest database ever assembled in the world, the telephone companies turned over records of millions of citizens — most of whom were not suspected of any illegal activity — to the super-secret National Security Agency or NSA, ostensibly to help fight terrorism.

The three largest telephone companies provide land and cellular service to more than 200 million customers in every state. Under the plan disclosed by *USA Today*, a record of every telephone call made to and from a U.S. residence or business was given to the NSA, allowing them to examine any calling patterns. The program was initiated shortly after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon and an attempted hijacking over Pennsylvania. President Bush authorized the program with an executive order.

No one objects to law enforcement officials tracking terrorists, but it is clear that this administration is using 9/11 and the subsequent passage of the Patriot Act as an excuse to violate our constitutionally-protected right to privacy and sidestep the checks-and-balances routinely provided by the judicial and legislative branches of government.

It is equally disturbing that the telephone companies would go along with this scheme. In the past, law enforcement officials were required to obtain a court warrant before obtaining such sensitive information.

But after 9/11, the telecommunication companies caved in and provided millions of records to NSA.



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In addition to offering "directory assistance," the Big Three are offering the government "direct assistance." Except in cases where warrants have been issued, the phone companies should hang-up on such request. Send the NSA a disconnect notice when it tries to pry into the personal lives of law-abiding citizens.

Because intelligence agencies have been asked to work more closely in the wake of 9/11, there is a good chance that some of the data collected by NSA will also end up in the hands of the FBI and CIA.

NSA specializes in intercepting and decoding international communications. It's such a top-secret agency that for years, many officials would not even acknowledge its existence. In intelligence circles, NSA was said to stand for No Such Agency.

In another false assurance, the agency points out that it collected calling information, but not collect identifying information of the callers. That's hardly reassuring. Anyone beyond the age of a child watching Saturday morning cartoons knows that NSA, credit bureaus and mass marketers can link the telephone numbers to other personal information, such as names, addresses and Social Security numbers. It's not enough to violate our privacy; they also take us for fools

and think that we don't know about what they call data mining.

The executive branch has the tools it needs to capture terrorists. To protect citizens from Fourth Amendment protection against "unreasonable searches and seizures," the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court or FISA was established in 1978. The court, a panel of federal judges, meets in secret and issues warrants in national security cases. The judges rarely turn down a request by the government, and federal officials even have the authority to conduct a search and apply for a warrant later. Still, the Bush administration complains that going through the FISA does not allow it to act quickly on national security matters — a charge disputed by those familiar with the workings of FISA.

As we have seen with the Patriot Act, standing up to those who would run roughshod over our Fourth Amendment rights is an issue that unites progressives, conservatives and libertarians. And this is the time for citizens to stand up to our government and the telephone companies that now sell us out — literally.

Instead of tracking the calls of innocent U.S. citizens and peeking at our e-mails, our tax dollars would be better used finding the terrorist President Bush proclaims he wants dead or alive — Osama Been Missing.

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# Black America dumbed down—by Blacks

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

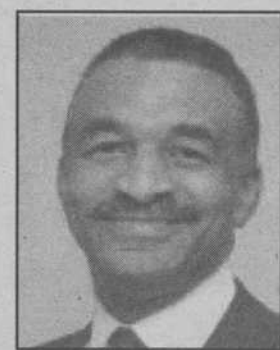
Much of what I hear, see and read in Black media these days is an insult to Black people. Entertaining to some, no doubt, but still insulting. Knowing that very few positive messages are coming from so-called "mainstream" media, you would think our Black media would take up the slack and do more to uplift, enlighten and educate our people rather than acquiesce to the desires of those who control the vast majority of the media outlets in this country.

You would think that, at the very minimum, Black-owned and operated media would make a firm commitment to smarten us up rather than dumb us down with silly, meaningless, empty messages and images that only capitulate to the status quo. You would think... But, as Brother Glen Ford of *Black Commentator* once chided me for wrongly assuming that Black-owned media

are really Black-conscious media, and for suggesting we secure more of the same, Black ain't necessarily Black, is it?

Like many of our Black politicians, much of our Black media are really doing a job on us by keeping a wide range of Black folks, especially our children and young adults, uniformed, misinformed and just plain dumb. Watch that (White-owned) outlet we call Black Entertainment Television; listen to some of the conversations on some of these so-called Black radio stations; read some of the absolute junk in some of our pseudo-Black newspapers, magazines, and websites. You will see that we are, as our elders used to say, "Going out of the world backwards."

Having been a guest on many radio shows



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and a several television shows, across the country, I can attest to the fact that there are media hosts who do not fall into the dumbing-down category. I desperately want to name them for you, but I know I will omit someone. If you really want to change the messages going into your brain, you can find them; it's not that difficult to do.

One of the first things you can do is use your critical thinking skills to determine the validity and usefulness of what you listen to on these shows. Don't just settle for the entertainment aspect. As a conscious person, ask yourself what the benefit is to listening or watching certain material. Remember: "Garbage in, garbage out." If we are getting a daily mega-dose of nonsense, of falsehoods, of non-educational clap-trap and slap-stick, it's

no wonder we are so far behind in serious aspects of economic empowerment. It's no wonder we seldom follow through with initiatives that will make us stronger, as individuals and as a collective.

In case you didn't know, as Booker T. Washington once said, "There are some Negroes who don't want the patient to get well." They want us to remain psychologically crippled to keep us dancing to their beat and buy what they are selling. They want us to keep on bobbing our heads and shuffling our feet and guffawing throughout the day, oblivious to our plight and totally without a clue as to how to fix it."

Thus, we get a barrage of jokes, self-deprecating comedy, and exploitation on television. We are on the receiving end of mindless "beats" that are pounded into our brains by 1,200-watt speakers in the backseats of our cars. We are fed some of the most use-

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result of a guest worker program that Bush has avowed will not be an amnesty program. What would you prefer to call it?

Once again, we need to contact our senators and let them know that if they advocate a guest worker program, it shows that they are willing to sacrifice sovereignty, language, culture and the future of America for votes and the almighty dollar.

Unless they can guarantee — which they can't — that these workers and their families are indeed temporary and will leave at the end of their work contract, a guest worker program would be disastrous to this nation. Very often, we see the horrific pictures of what the overpopulation of China and India has resulted in; America don't be next.

Now, let's talk about the President's Border Patrol plan. The President proposes to add 6,000 National Guard troops to help secure the U.S. Mexican border. During the 12 month period of 2005, on an Arizona stretch of border 261 miles long, 438,392 illegal aliens were arrested.

The *Time* magazine article stated that for every one arrested, three to four get by. So, using the smaller figure of three, at least 1,316,796 foreign trespassers successfully snuck in to the United States in one year. And the invasion continues daily, actually escalating now that there is talk of a guest worker program (amnesty).

If our Senators aren't bothered by this, then I don't know what would bother them. Do we want anyone forcing us to adopt 10 or

20 more children into our families? Can we afford them, even if we wanted to? What will we do once they are forced on us and we can't take care of them as well as some of our own? What will this additional 60 million people do to the quality of life and standard of living of Americans?

These are all questions we will have to be prepared to answer if this immigration plan is enacted.

If the war on drugs is any indication, any attempt to stop the illegal labor in this country is futile as long as there is a demand for it, and neither a wall standing nor the National Guard at the border can stop illegal immigration.

The one good thing the President proposed (we'll see if it is adopted and if there

is follow through) is a forgery-proof national ID card to hold accountable employers who hire illegal immigrants. If this approach is adopted, there will be no need to round up and deport millions of illegal immigrants. Those who have privacy issues with the national ID card need only weigh the option of not having anything to hold employers accountable.

President Bush tried reaching for the center, a position he has occupied on this issue all along. He tried a "one from column A, two from column B" approach that probably will leave all sides more or less dissatisfied. His declaration that catch-and-release would end was the most welcome news in the entire speech. He delivered that well, but he has a long way to go with this proposal.