

White House bullies U.S. news media

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When The *New York Times* disclosed a secret Bush administration program that monitored global money transfers by a banking consortium in Brussels, President Bush, leading Republicans in Congress and the right-wing talk shows unleashed a flurry of venom.

Bush said: "If you want to figure out what the terrorists are doing, you try to follow their money. And that's exactly what we're doing. And the fact that a newspaper disclosed it makes it harder to win this war on terror."

Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), chair of the House Homeland Security Committee, told Chris Wallace on Fox Network News: "... The *New York Times* is putting its own arrogant, elitist, left-wing agenda before the interests of the American people, and I'm calling on the Attorney General to begin a criminal investigation and prosecution of The *New York Times* — its reporters, the editors who worked on this and the publisher. We're in a time of war, Chris, and what they've done has violated the Espionage Act."

Conservative talk show host Melanie Morgan, referring to The *New York Times*' executive editor Bill Keller, said she "would have no problem with him being sent to the gas chamber."

There is a major problem with this professed rage, indignation and bile directed at The *New York Times* — the Bush administration has repeatedly and publicly boasted

about its efforts to track the finances of terrorists. And now it wants to punish the media for printing information that was already in the public domain?

Media Matters, a watchdog group that is generally critical of the press in an effort to make it better, recounts the administration's disclosures on the website,

www.mediamatters.org: "In a September 24, 2001, speech, Bush announced the establishment of a 'foreign terrorist asset tracking center at the Department of the Treasury to identify and investigate the financial infrastructure of the international terrorist networks.'"

The Bush quote continues, "It will bring together representatives of the intelligence, law enforcement, and financial regulatory agencies to accomplish two goals: to follow the money as a trail to the terrorists, to follow their money so we can find out where they are and to freeze the money to disrupt their actions."

In a September 24, 2001, letter to Congress, Bush stated: "Terrorists and terrorist networks operate across international borders and derive their financing from sources in many nations. Often, terrorist property and financial assets lie outside the jurisdiction of the United States."

A White House fact sheet published on



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September 24, 2001, noted the launch of the Treasury Department's Foreign Terrorist Asset Tracking Center: "The FTAT is a multi-agency task force that will identify the network of terrorist funding and freeze assets before new acts of terrorism take place."

Bush affirmed his commitment to working with international agencies such as the

FTAT "to build momentum and practical cooperation in the fight to stop the flow of resources to support terrorism." In a September 26, 2001, statement, Bush said, "We're fighting them on a financial front. We're choking off their money. We're seizing their assets. We will be relentless as we pursue their sources of financing. And I want to thank the Secretary of Treasury for leading that effort."

On October 1, 2001, Bush told FEMA employees, "As you may remember, I made it clear that part of winning the war against terror would be to cut off these evil people's money; it would be to trace their assets and freeze them, cut off their cash flows, hold people accountable who fund them, who allow the funds to go through their institutions; and not only do that at home, but to convince others around the world to join us in doing so."

On October 10, 2001, Bush stated that the "nations of NATO are sharing intelligence, coordinating law enforcement and cracking

down on the financing of terrorist organizations."

During remarks at FTAT, then-Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill said, "...We have begun to act — to block assets, to seize books, records and evidence, and to follow audit trails to track terrorist cells poised to do violence to our common interests."

O'Neill added, "We have built an international coalition to deny terrorists access to the world financial system."

A December 2001 report on the steps the administration had taken to combat terrorism noted that the FATF, "a 29-nation group promoting policies to combat money laundering, adopted strict new standards to deny terrorist access to the world financial system."

A September 10, 2004, Treasury Department statement read: "The targeting of terrorist financing continues to play an important role in the war on terror. Freezing assets, terminating cash flows, and following money trails to previously unknown terrorist cells are some of the many weapons used against terrorist networks."

This is not about The *New York Times*. It's another naked effort to squash dissent and intimidate the media.

Having already placed the media on the defensive by claiming it has a "liberal bias," conservatives are now trying to lay the groundwork for weakening the First Amendment's protection of the Free Press.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service.

Aren't you proud to be a Black American?

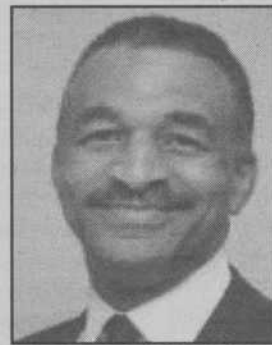
By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

You know, sometimes it pays to take a little time to reflect on just who we are. From time to time, we should think about our relatives, and our people in general and reflect on the contributions they have made to this world and, most especially, to this country. We should take time out to give ourselves credit for being what Ed Robinson, author of "Journey of the Songhai People," calls us: "The fittest of the fittest of the fittest" Black people on the face of the earth. Don't you think we deserve kudos for not only surviving but thriving in this land we call America? I do. So, let's begin.

If you had the privilege of knowing your grand and great grand parents, you were prob-

ably witness to some of their amazing talents and abilities. You also had access to their knowledge and wisdom, although many of us didn't learn from it. We saw our relatives build houses without architectural drawings, cure diseases without doctors and prescriptions, stop bleeding with cobwebs, raise enough food for their families and two or three others, cure meat in a smokehouse, dig wells, and draw poison out of cut with a piece of fatback.

Our relatives could make a meal out of what we thought was nothing; they could sew up the holes in our socks, patch our jeans,



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and put cardboard in our shoes to make them last just a little while longer. They could deliver babies, as my great-grandmother did for the birth of my brother and me. They helped one another with whatever they had, and it was dinnertime at all the neighbors' houses anytime we wanted to stop by.

Remember the hambone, checkers, homemade ice cream you had to churn, a pot of beans and some cornbread that lasted all week long, and that nasty, greasy, slimy, castor oil? How about having to take cod liver oil every morning, and cold oil and sugar, goose grease, rock candy and whis-

key, and that stinking little bag some of us had to wear around our necks when we were sick? Our relatives knew their stuff, didn't they?

The music they made was unbelievable. Their voices and their mastery of musical instruments, even without the benefit of formal training, was something to behold. Our folks were some piano-playin', guitar-pluckin', drum-beatin', horn-blowin', high-steppin', sangin' brothers and sisters — and they still are. Doesn't that make you proud?

And then there were the economic collectives they established to help take care of burials and other critical issues. Our people knew they had to pool their resources, and they knew they had to take care of them-

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As a matter of fact, if they ever want to become the majority party they have no choice but to embrace them and take them back.

When it comes to religion, Republicans have a media strategy, outreach and code words. But what they don't have is political substance that reflects their religious commitment. And that's where Democrats have an opportunity. The Democratic platform — issues Democrats already care about — reflects the values of many religious moderates and progressives. Yet, many of them have been voting with Republicans simply because they feel more welcome in that party. The dirty little Republican secret is that they rely on religious rhetoric and strategy because they have to. If they don't, Americans might notice that Republicans are not walking the walk when it comes to policy. They're not caring for the sick, the poor, the widowed

and the orphaned. They're not acting as stewards of God's green earth. They are suffering the little children, but not in the way that Jesus meant.

Republicans have also worked on developing close ties to religious leaders and communities. George W. Bush's positioning during his father's 1988 presidential campaign was to act as the liaison to the conservative Christian movement, which gave him the opportunity to cultivate relationships and build credibility within the community.

On the rare occasions that Democrats have assigned campaign staff to religious outreach, their mission has been to focus on Black churches, and those churches should be ashamed of themselves.

Why? Because they're talking God but they aren't walking God. Because if they were, there is no way they would let a Democratic candidate, who stands for issues that

they supposedly know are adverse to the teachings of the word of God, come to their congregations and talk to their people. They cannot defend their position on this in any way, shape, form or fashion. Because if they, of all people, aren't standing on the word of God and dividing the word of truth, why should their congregations?

Democrats view religion as merely a way of turning out the ethnic vote, which is insulting, as opposed to viewing it as an important influence in the lives of Americans of all colors. It's not only a condescending strategy, but a foolish one. Unfortunately, it reflects the mindset of Democratic campaign operatives, like the national field coordinator for one of the Democratic primary candidates who told his colleagues that reaching out to religious communities was a waste of time because "there will never be a welcome room for religious people at the Democratic

Convention."

Staying silent and hoping that religion doesn't come up is not an option for the Democrats if they are ever to gain control again. Unfortunately, figuring out how to talk about religion when it does arise and how to bring it up in a way that fits Democratic values and priorities is very important to the ongoing growth and development of the party and society. This process, however, is going to require a party-wide conversion — not of Democrats' core values or priorities, but of their attitudes. The big tent of the Democratic Party is going to need to become a little bit bigger to welcome people of faith. If it doesn't, Democrats will always be the second party and not the first.

Barack Obama, thank you for allowing your soul to be quickened, standing on the word of God and dividing the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.