

Bruce Gordon resets NAACP numbers

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Next month, Bruce Gordon will celebrate his first year as president and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In less than a year, Gordon has done something no other NAACP president or board chair has done in more than 50 years — he has told the truth about the organization's anemic membership numbers.

When I began covering the NAACP in the early 1970s for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Executive Director Roy Wilkins and his successor, Benjamin L. Hooks, would boast that with 500,000 members, the NAACP was the oldest, largest and most powerful civil rights group in the world. But Hooks, and the chief executives that followed him, continued to lie about the size of the volunteer organization.

Finally, Gordon has acknowledged that the venerable organization has a membership of less than 300,000. He won't say how many members shy of 300,000, but other NAACP sources say the figure has fluctuated between 150,000 and 250,000 over the past three decades.

The NAACP has had various membership drives over the years and for some reason, they expected the public to believe they had a half-million members. When they weren't having membership drives, they were claiming 500,000 members. At the end of each

drive, the figure reported to the public would still mysteriously remain at 500,000. The *Baltimore Sun* did some research and discovered that the NAACP has been claiming 500,000 members since 1946. For 60 years, it has been telling the same lie.

It wasn't like top officials didn't know the actual numbers. My friend DeWayne Wickham, who has been researching a book on the NAACP, came across a memo written by Benjamin Hooks stating that as of November 30, 1982, there were 178,000 members. Hooks made a report to the executive committee of the board on December 17, 1982 citing those figures.

Hooks and Board Chair Margaret Bush Wilson clashed over a number of items, including the low membership numbers and some questionable fiscal practices. While working in St. Louis, I broke the story in 1983 that she had suspended Hooks after a very heated board meeting at which Hooks had to be physically restrained.

The board overturned Wilson's action and later refused to re-elect her to the board. As leaders came and went, the membership lie remained a fixture.

Some fear that by disclosing that the NAACP does not have the numbers it has claimed, the organization's clout might be



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diminished. To the contrary, by having the courage to tell the truth, Gordon can build on his first year in office and embark on a membership drive that exceeds 500,000. In fact, by the time the NAACP celebrates its 100th birthday in 2009, Gordon hopes to have at least 1 million certified members on the rolls.

It is Black America, not the NAACP, that should be embarrassed that with a population of 38 million African-Americans, less than 300,000 are dues-paying members of the NAACP. Over the years, many African-Americans know that without the work of the NAACP, the official barriers of segregation and second-class citizenship would not have crumpled. And in local communities throughout the nation, when there is a police brutality case, often the victim's first action is to contact his or her local NAACP chapter.

Al Sharpton was correct when he said that despite all the criticism leveled at today's civil rights leaders, when there is a major issue in the Black community, those same civil rights organizations are our only source of dependable support. They, in turn, need and deserve our support.

Supporting the NAACP does not mean we can't remain active in other arenas. I think one of the greatest challenges facing the Civil

Rights Movement is finding a way to integrate other Black professional groups into the leadership structure and relying on their area of expertise. Civil rights groups should be working in concert with the National Bar Association, for example, to address criminal justice issues. The National Association of Black Journalists should be working with civil rights organizations to expose and challenge negative images of African-Americans on TV and boycotting sponsors of the lily-White Sunday morning talk shows. Financial literacy programs should be spearheaded and monitored by the Urban Financial Services Coalition, formerly known as the National Association of Urban Bankers. In other words, let the experts in a particular area lead the way.

To their credit, Jesse Jackson, Bruce Gordon, Al Sharpton and National Urban League President Marc H. Morial have been working closely on major projects, such as returning displaced residents to New Orleans and pressuring Congress to renew key sections of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. They should now take that next step and systematically bring more Black organizations into the fold. If that happens, we will become an even more formidable force. And we would have done that by standing on the shoulders of the NAACP.

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Condoleezza Rice Bush — What's up with this, sister?

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Did she really slip up in a speech and refer to George Bush as "my husband"? Say it ain't so, Condi. This sister seems to be on a personal mission to take us into war again, this time with Iran. With an arrogance only equaled by her "husband," the Babe of Birmingham struts her stuff around the world, wagging her finger at heads of state as if they are her children.

In her latest threat, (oops, I mean peace mission), she tells Iran that the U.S. will only sit down to talk if Iran stops all production of nuclear materials. That's real cute, Condi. Why should the Iranians do exactly what you told them to do in first place? And, if they submit to your demand, why should there be any talks at all?

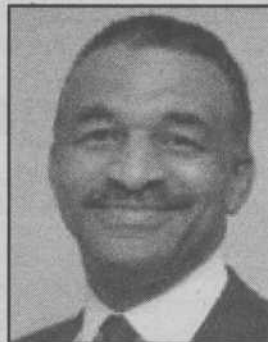
Then our Secretary of State said, in reference to the multilateral discussions on Iran, that Iran has weeks, not months, to decide that "we" will not allow Iran to stretch this issue out. If Iran does not answer — which really means submit to her demands — "we,"

will act. I am eager to hear what she will say now that North Korea has fired off a few big ones.

Let me get this straight: Iraq didn't have "nuclear" weapons, but we wipe them out; Iran does not have "nuclear" weapons, and we are threatening to wipe them out; North Korea does have "nuclear" weapons — and shows them to us by firing a few — and we are not even threatening to go over there and fight. C'mon, Condi. What's up with that?

I have said it before, and, just for good measure, I will say it again. For a person as intelligent as our Secretary of State to be infatuated with a dunce is one thing, but for her to defend "His Ridiculousness" is something else again. I don't know how any moral and righteous person could support this guy.

In an earlier interview regarding the whereabouts of Bin Laden, Bush tells Larry King and a nationwide audience that he thinks



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about our protection and winning the war on terror "every day." Bush said he doesn't spend much time thinking about where Osama is — the guy who committed the worst single act of terror on American soil. What a liar! Of course, Larry King did not challenge "The Decider" for his insincere statement.

We are in a quagmire in Iraq, and that's putting it mildly. We gave a July 12 deadline for Iran to capitulate to the terms set forth by Condi. Plus, we have a lunatic named Kim Jong Il firing off missiles from a country that can't even feed its people but is provoking its neighbors and causing warmongers like Rumsfeld, Bolton and Cheney to salivate. Seems to me, however, they don't want to mess with old Kim Jong and North Korea. I wonder why?

All of this craziness rests in the lap of our vaunted Secretary of State, the sister who received the NAACP President's "Medal of

Honor," so to speak, and the same sister who claims her Birmingham roots where four little girls were killed by a bomb during church service. One of those girls supposedly was Condi's friend.

Can Condi pull us out of this mess in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea, as Israel and the Hamas-led Palestinians renew their war against each other? Can she call upon her prowess and acumen to settle these issues? Can she use her power and influence to move us beyond the daily threat of "nuclear" war and bring us back to the halcyon days prior to her "husband's" arrival on the scene?

Will she go down in history as one of the most talented public officials who worked for and defended the worst president we have ever had? Will Condi, our sister, whether she realizes it or not, go down in flames with the Bushites — and with the rest of us — as this world moves closer to annihilation? Will she preside over our economic demise, as she smiles in admiration for her "husb...?"

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I hate him.

Are the people who try to infringe upon my right to choose what behavior is acceptable to me and what behavior is unacceptable to me racist, intolerant or hateful? No, the Bible tells me to hate and abhor sin and be ready to preach the gospel in season and out of season. That I am to convince, rebuke and exhort at any cost. It states that the time will come when men, according to their own desires, will turn away from the truth and turn to fables. Saying homosexuality and lesbianism is not a sin is turning away from the absolute truth of God to fulfill people's own

desires and there is no other way to put it.

Same sex marriage, therefore, is forbidden by God and does not strengthen the institution of marriage and family as its proponents allege. Same sex marriage has actually been proven to accelerate the decline of the family according to an experiment in the Netherlands where homosexual relationships gained recognition in 1998. Because of this legalization, Dutch social scientists say that their fellow citizens increasingly regard marriage as no longer being relevant because they have been persuaded that marriage is not connected to parenthood and that marriage and cohabitation are equally valid lifestyle

choices. So, as the United States Congress consider how to respond to the judicial dictates redefining marriage, policymakers need to be aware of data emerging from the European precedent, and they should choose the most beneficial course for the family in America by preserving the institution of marriage between one man and one woman.

Let us keep in sight, in the years ahead, that at its most faithful, the Christians and the church should not take its orders from the surrounding culture. If Christians came together on this issue, this debate could be put to rest for once and for all. But as we all know, the most critical problem facing the church

today is the leadership vacuum.

Parishioners are willing to follow God's vision, but too frequently, they have no exposure to either vision or true leadership. Many pastors just go along to get along. They focus on stupid things like how popular they are, how big their congregation is or who has the best choir — none of which is going to get their congregation into the kingdom of Heaven. They are called to rightly divide the word of truth according to the Bible, point blank. Anything less is unacceptable to God and means that when they have their appointment with Him, He will not be saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."