

OUR VIEW

Say it Loud

So President Bush has tentatively decided the sixth time is the charm. For the past five years, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has asked Bush to present an address at its annual meeting. Each time, Bush declined. (He's the first president in 80 years to serve a full term without addressing the NAACP.)

Perhaps he felt he was going into hostile territory. Perhaps he viewed it as a nothing-ventured-nothing-gained proposition. Who knows?

It's not like Bush didn't start off well. As syndicated columnist Earl Ofari Hutchinson notes, Bush filed "three times more employment discrimination cases than the Clinton administration filed in its last year," collecting "more money in civil penalties and damages from employers guilty of discrimination than during Clinton's last three years." Bush also sent "twice the number of review letters to school districts demanding compliance with desegregation orders than were sent during Clinton's last two years," Hutchinson says, and the president reviewed "more state redistricting plans and cases involving possible voting abuses than during Clinton's last two years in office." Hutchinson also lauded Bush for prosecuting a handful of voting rights fraud cases.

These seem like positives, though judging Bush's first year against Clinton's last year isn't a perfect apples-to-apples comparison. In each case, Bush was enabled by a compliant Congress. So put an asterisk by those feats. As it is, his positives generally end there.

As Hutchinson notes, the Bushies came "dangerously close to legitimizing racial profiling against Muslim and Arab-Americans" and did not "aggressively fight to implement the Help America Vote Act of 2002, nor lobby Congress to speed up funding for the initiative."

"Republican voter groups have been caught re-handed in Oregon and Nevada dumping Democratic voter registrations," Hutchinson writes. "Republican registrars have limited the number of ballots, and have cut back the number of polling places in heavily Black neighborhoods, and have rejected thousands of applications on the most spurious technical grounds. The Justice Department has taken no action in these cases."

Other gripes: No Child Left Behind Act legislation is "inadequately funded and does not address the soaring number of poor, underfunded, racially segregated public schools nationally"; the administration "backed the White students in their effort to torpedo the University of Michigan's affirmative action program"; and Bush has implemented "race neutral alternatives that cripple the fight for workplace diversity."

The poorest Blacks haven't fared well under Bush. Census figures note that the number of Blacks living in poverty—\$14,680 a year for a family of three, or less than \$18,810 for a family of four—rose from 7.9 million in 2000 to 9.1 million in 2003. During the same period, Black unemployment increased from 10.3 percent to 10.9 percent. By comparison, overall unemployment dropped from 5.5 percent to 4.8 percent.

That Bush only agreed to address the NAACP after intense lobbying says something about where Blacks rate on his importance meter. With all that's transpired in the last 10 months, you'd think he'd be beating down the NAACP's door. There's not a strong enough word for how he mismanaged the federal response to Hurricane Katrina (bungled just doesn't do it). In October, according to an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, his job approval rating was 2 percent, the lowest ever for a president.

Then came his bungling (still not a harsh enough word) of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act. By letting GOP conservatives hijack the debate and cast the legislation's future in doubt—it was overwhelmingly approved—Bush showed that he's a political invertebrate.

Neither Bush nor the Republican Party care about Black America's agenda—so long as the GOP can hold six to eight percent of the Black vote, they'll continue pandering to other minority groups. If Bush does show up this week, it should be a two-way conversation. He needs to hear what we have to say.



Respect power to elect

By Dora LaGrande
Sentinel-Voice

Well it's that time of year again. The time of year where we go to the polls to exercise our power at the ballot box. For the past couple of months we have seen candidate signs all up and down the streets. We have received campaign mailers through the mail and attached to our doors almost every day. We are becoming inundated with the annoying commercials, and the candidate forums have started.

Yes, election season is in full bloom, and, once again, the question that comes to mind for me is: What role will Blacks play in this year's elections all across the country, if any?

Will we finally mobilize and come together and let our voices be heard, or will we sit on the sidelines as if voting is a spectator sport?

As most of us know, even if we've been paying only a little bit of attention, Black survival is at stake for many people individually and for us as a race collectively. The *Sentinel-Voice* has recently run news articles on studies, such as the Urban League's 2006 State of Black America report, showing the dismal state of African-Americans in almost every category — education, housing, Black male incarceration rate, economic empowerment and others. We all witnessed America's shame with the markers of a deep and static poverty exhibited during the Hurricane Katrina disaster.



ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

So, are these revelations enough to stimulate a wake-up call to Blacks, who have the lowest voting constituency there is? I would hope so.

In the past, those of us who do vote have allowed everyone else to determine who the best candidate to represent us is. We've let our so-called leaders tell us who the best person is. We let our family and friends tell us who the best person is. We let specific community organizations and factions tell us who the best person is. Is it too far-fetched to believe that we can individually do our homework and examine a candidate's record and stance on issues that truly affect our everyday lives to see where they stand, without being led to the slaughter by other folks?

In politics, business and almost every other arena, the majority rules. I would caution anyone on following the majority.

In the book of Numbers, 13th chapter, the Lord spoke unto Moses and instructed him to send 12 men to search the land of Canaan, which the Lord had already promised to the children of Israel. Joshua and Caleb came back with a good report, saying that the

land was flowing with milk and honey. The other 10 came back with an evil report saying that the people in the land were too strong to overtake — even though the Lord had already promised them the land.

As a result, Joshua and Caleb were given the land by the Lord, and everyone else of that generation died wandering in the wilderness for 40 years.

For those of you who don't believe in biblical principles, one of the foremost American philosophers of his day, Mark Twain, said: "If you begin to think like the majority, then you need to reassess your thinking."

With this in mind, a lot of us need to reassess our thinking, especially as it relates to

casting our votes.

If the existing politicians — Black or White — have done so much for us as a people, can someone please explain to me why in 2006 the State of Black America is worse, while every other ethnic group is making gains in every area?

Why is it that Black businesses, after all of these years, still can't get loans?

Why communities like Historic West Las Vegas remain stagnant while the rest of the valley grows by leaps and bounds?

Why is it that homeownership is and will always be only a dream for some folks of color because of discrimination in housing and predatory lending?

Why is it that Black young men are still being locked up for long periods of time, in record numbers, for petty crimes?

Why are the health disparities in 2006 no better than they were in 1990 and, in

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