

Black campaign needed for U.S. elections

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

With a good many primary elections behind us, it is now time to turn our attention to the general elections taking place on November 7. In my most recent book, "Freedom Is Not Enough," I argued that we should construct a "Black campaign" for our community that would consist of three things: the Black agenda, money and mobilizing a large turnout.

First, the items on a Black Agenda begin with the catastrophe caused by Hurricane Katrina. It has been estimated that at least one in every four Blacks have some association with families in the Gulf region; Blacks should support government assistance for the right to return and rebuild.

Next, Blacks strongly oppose the war in Iraq more than any other group in America — for good reasons. Also, education is critical, given the problems caused by the testing system and the under funding in the No Child Left Behind program and the crushing debt burden that college bound youth are increasingly facing.

We should support economic issues, such as raising the minimum wage, achieving a livable wage, opposing the Bush tax cuts for the rich, eliminating exorbitant loan rates and gaining better access to capital. Next, we

should support an urban policy that creates affordable housing, attacks poverty and rebuilds urban communities by fighting blight, crime and rampant gentrification. Finally, we should secure our right to vote, fight the attempts to disenfranchise us, and make our vote count.

Mobilizing time is here, and churches, civic organizations, community leaders and all others should take stock of the unregistered and urge them to register and prepare to vote. It is the end of September, a little more than one month away from the election, and very little mobilizing has occurred in the Black community. In fact, there is some evidence that Black turnout is lagging. In Baltimore, for example, turnout four years ago was 31 percent, but was only 23 percent in the primary. Are Black voters turned off? It would be a shame to lose — now that the polls are showing that the political system could be changed for the better, and it is likely that some of the items on a Black Agenda might be enacted — because few showed up to vote.

It is also true that the financial support that usually comes from organized labor, the progressive funders and others for our mobiliz-



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ing organizations to get going has not come. What are they waiting for? If the Black mobilization effort is not funded, Democrats loose. And that is even more the case now that the post-Civil Rights Movement generation is less likely to be strong Democrats than their elders and, thus, need more motivation to vote for many Democratic candidates.

In the Maryland Senate race between Black Republican Michael Steele and White candidate Ben Cardin, I expect there will be an appreciable number of Blacks voting for Steele because they want to make history — even though it smacks of how Clarence Thomas was appointed to the Supreme Court. Blacks should begin now to plan for a large turnout, which means that they should take some responsibility in their own communities to see that the election system works right. In order to do so, you should ask the following questions: Is my name active on the voting rolls? Has my polling station moved? Are there enough machines being planned for my neighborhood? What laws have been passed (no early voting, new ID requirements, etc.) that might affect my ability to vote? How will provisional ballots be

made available and counted? Can I volunteer to work the polls? Will my criminal record prevent me from voting?

These and many other questions need to be asked of election officials by a telephone call from you and your neighbors. If you don't know the answers to these and other questions that affect your vote, even you may buy the lie that you have to pay all your bills to become eligible to vote, or that the election is on a day other than November 7. Be an informed voter!

Former Congressman Kweisi Mfume lost his bid for the Democratic nomination to represent the state of Maryland in the Senate by the narrow margin of 43-41 percent. If only Blacks in Baltimore city had turned out to vote, he could have made up the 18,000 vote difference between him and his opponent, Ben Cardin. So I hope that they "put him on the ballot" by making it known that he will have a high post in the new administration if Democrats win, or maybe he will become the next mayor of Baltimore.

Either way, his experience should show us that Black votes count when they are cast — and when they aren't.

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Iran: Iraq déjà vu occurring all over again

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Well, here we go again, folks. George and his boys — and his lady friend — are about to drop a few smart bombs on another nation that Bush declared to be a member of the "Axis of Evil." The funny part about this latest act of world policing is how stupid much of the U.S. electorate is for believing the same lies that were told during the run up to the Iraq invasion. Cheney and old Rummy must be cracking up in amazement at how easy it is to run their game on "the American people." And Yogi Berra must be saying, "I told you so."

Think about it. We have a dangerous "wounded duck" president and a do-nothing, virtually useless Republican-controlled Congress that votes on horsemeat and other silly issues. We have an ambassador to the U.N., John Bolton, who despises the U.N. and can't wait for the bombs to start falling over Iran. We have this shady character, John Negroponte, head of "Bush intelligence"

(Now there's an oxymoronic term), as if he didn't do enough damage in Central America under Ronald Reagan and Daddy Bush.

Afghanistan has a bumper crop of poppy plants now that we have "liberated" it from the Taliban, and the drugs are flowing faster than ever before, creating billions of dollars to fund the Taliban's resurgence. Iraq, the center stage of terrorism now that Bush "liberated" it from the Saddam Hussein regime, is literally imploding to the tune of 6,000 murders per month. It has become the hotbed of terror, according to Condi and George. But, who made it that way, guys? It wasn't that way before the invasion.

The dénouement of this comedy of errors was "vice" president Cheney saying, if he had it to do again, he would do everything exactly the same way. That's how sick these guys are. They rail against the sins of abor-



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tion and gay marriage, but they overlook their own sins of murder, torture, theft and lying. Once again, the funny part is that we accept this crap. What hypocrites! How professed Christians, or anyone who believes that sin is sin, could support the Bush cabal is beyond my comprehension.

Iran's president has dissed George W. but is probably wondering when he should sound the air-raid alarms. The Bushites are calling Mahmoud Ahmadinejad "Hitler" now; that's the death knell, the beginning of the end for him. I don't know how they are going to pull it off, but Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Rice are on the warpath, and things are about to get even hotter.

Who is he going to use to fight Iran, his own family and friends? Lord knows he has enough cronies, and they owe him for all those cushy jobs he has given them. Maybe they should form an army and fight Iran. An even better idea is for Bush and Cheney to fight two individuals from Iran, and whoever wins is the victor of the impending war in Iran. Sure would save a lot of young lives. Ridiculous, you say? Not really, especially when you look at how many have already died by the actions of Spanky and the Little Rascals, or is it the Three Stooges?

There is so much we could recount as we look back at 2000 — and even before that time — when it comes to the Bushes and their connections to evil, not the least of which was old Prescott Bush and his dealings with the Hitler regime (shhh, not so loud). But I have come to the conclusion that the electorate is simple and naïve, to put it mildly; we are afraid of the terrorists, and we are complacently willing to go through life just getting by and ignoring the geopolitical quagmire the

Bushites have caused.

Why do I say that? Just look at the polls. Bumps and bounces everywhere for George, which means more of us are willing to support his rule over us and will vote for his supporters in November. Here is a guy who says something stupid like, literacy programs would prevent folks from being suicide bombers. He spews his venom at timid reporters, points his finger at them and says his point is the most important point in the room. Heck, he might as well have said, "End the world!" Why would anyone support this madness?

Bush presides over his own lies and the lies of his administration, but he would mitigate those lies by saying they had to protect us; after all, we would not be able to take the truth; the American people are too fragile and weak to hear the truth. He's the "Decider" and he will decide not only what the truth is but who hears it. Who in his or her right mind would want to elect anyone connected to such corruption, arrogance, incompetence and hypocrisy?

Everything I have said, dating back to 2000, everything we have seen with our own eyes since then, and everything we know down deep in our souls points to the fact that we are on a path to destruction, maybe not physical destruction but destruction nonetheless. Now that gas prices have fallen, we are once again willing to accept Bush. How silly is that? Why do you think Cheney had those secret energy meetings? Talk about whimsical, we are the epitome of whimsical when it comes to politics.

So look out, Iran, Bush is coming to liberate you. Stay tuned Venezuela; you are next, because you have a fearless man of color, Hugo Chavez, in charge of all that oil.

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street demonstrations in Tuscaloosa, and we know the smell of tear gas. Another schoolmate, Jean Corder, and her entire family were active in the movement. We found a way in 1965, my senior year in high school, to participate in the last leg of the Selma-Montgomery March.

As teens, we took risks and in most instances, our parents would have preferred that we take the safe way out. Our parents didn't want us harmed. They didn't want us beaten. They didn't want us tear-gassed. They loved us as much as Condoleezza Rice's parents loved her. But our parents also knew that the system was wrong. And while they worried about our safety, they allowed us to fight for

our rights.

So, watching Condoleezza Rice on "60 Minutes" talk passionately about the Civil Rights Movement when her family sat on the sidelines, stirred a lot of emotions. She can talk passionately about the horrors of that era yet seemingly feel no shame that her parents chose to sit on the sidelines.

Perhaps that's why Rice feels so comfortable defending George W. Bush, arguably the worst president on civil rights in more than 50 years. Unlike her parents, she is not on the sidelines — she's on the wrong team. And in the wrong role — Super Fly.

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