

# Civil rights commission hits low

By Harry C. Alford

Special to Sentinel-Voice

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was established as part of the Civil Rights Act of 1957. It was enhanced by the Commission on Civil Rights Act of 1983. It is to receive and analyze complaints and to provide studies and advice to the president of the United States. It cannot enforce anything, but the body can advise and provide input in regards to the civil rights of American citizens.

The finest days of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights were under the management and leadership of Chairman Arthur A. Fletcher, who served under former President George Bush. His best accomplishment was a detailed study on the implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 for each major federal agency. He also did much work in assuring that the U.S. military carried on with its tradition of exemplary affirmative action. Art, the "Father of Affirmative Action," was certainly on the case, and the nation was better for it.

Mary Frances Berry succeeded Art as chair under the Clinton administration. She turned it into a personal bunker for ultra-liberal agendas. Chaos and political bickering festered to a boil by the time she was replaced by the current administration. From there it was "rock bottom," as the opposite side — the anti-affirmative action right-wingers —

decided to put on the mother of all charades.

Today, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an anti-affirmative action clique with a mission to neutralize the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and destroy what it can of the Voting Rights Act. It is anti-civil rights. It seeks to hurt and provide hurdles to those trying to diversify the American economy. Let's look at their membership.

Chairman Gerald A. Reynolds comes from the Center for New Black Leadership. Don't let the name fool you. This is a White organized group of racial animus pointed against those of the traditional Civil Rights Movement. They couldn't lead 100 Black folks to a barbecue.

According to the STLtoday.com, Reynolds "doesn't just oppose affirmative action; he abhors it. Affirmative action is 'The Big Lie.' It is, he writes, a corrupt system of preferences, set-asides and quotas... a concept invented by regulators and reinvented by political interest groups seeking money and power.

Furthermore, many of the problems devastating low-income Black communities are the result of a spiritual decay. Reynolds would remedy that through school choice programs,



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faith-based institutions, replacing self-defeating values with middle-class values, urban economic development and opposing the use of racial preferences in education and the workplace."

Wow, what a slap in the face of Art Fletcher, MLK, Rosa Parks, Whitney Young and the entire Civil Rights Movement. I think we are talking "nut

case" here.

Along with Reynolds are three other Republican slots filled by equally venomous anti-affirmative action attitudes — a total of three Negroes and one Hispanic. Go to [www.usccr.gov](http://www.usccr.gov) and view their pictures.

An additional slot is reserved for an Independent. However, that independent is a Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, an ardent anti-affirmative action think tank. It's rather disingenuous to think that she is actually "independent."

Two of the three allotted Democratic seats are filled by a Hispanic and a Native American. They have proven to be staunch defenders of affirmative action, but by virtue of a 5-2 vote, their views become moot.

Affirmative action has been the key to the Black middle class of America. It has been the driver for improvement in education, job

opportunity and career enhancement. Thus, it brought economic power to a group of Americans who were living 75 percent under the poverty level at the time of enactment in 1968 (Art Fletcher under the Nixon Administration). Today, 75 percent of African-Americans are living a middle-class lifestyle. While there is still much room for improvement, we can all say that there has been much success.

Many have been confused about affirmative action. The NAACP opposed it and the steps Arthur Fletcher took until 1990 when it freed itself from the chains of construction union lobbyists. Many right-wing Republicans now detest it even though its roots and success came under Republican administrations.

And, now, here we are, when the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights prints publications denouncing affirmative action, disparity studies, federal minority procurement programs, strong enforcement of the Voting Rights Act and anything else that promotes a level playing field for all Americans. It embarrasses us all.

It behooves Congress and this administration to start upgrading the members of this organization and eliminate the buffoonery that now plagues it.

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## Are leaders serving or serving us up?

By James Clingman

Special to Sentinel-Voice

"Black America has an overclass that is charged with the responsibility of maintaining the racial status quo. This Black overclass is wedded to the White power structure and is opposed, therefore, to any independent thoughts or actions which might unite Black America. The overclass is commissioned by White organizations and governments to keep Black Americans powerless by allying externally with other groups rather than allying internally with members of their own race."—Claud Anderson, "More Dirty Little Secrets."

Black leaders, why have you forsaken us? We have always stood beside you, and often we stood in front of you, willing to die if necessary, to protect and defend you against our enemies. Despite all of the sacrifices we have made on your behalf and all of the support we have provided to your efforts, you have forsaken us.

You have abandoned us. You have relinquished your position as authentic leaders and opted for a watered-down, tepid, caricature of Black leadership that continuously succumbs to a White-dominant society. In-

stead of standing up and speaking "truth to power," you cower in the face of adversity. Instead of refusing to be bought, you eagerly cut selfish deals that only maintain status quo, which, for Black people, is a prescription for failure.

You have accepted subordination, a "less than" description of our people; you have abdicated your role as spokesperson and warrior for Black people by allowing others to define you; you have accepted the label of "minority," a term connoting deficiency; you even promote diversity and multiculturalism, but outside of rather than within our own race. You advise us that we must help everyone else, but you fail to lead us toward self-reliance.

What a tragedy to propose that Black people, whose collective power is virtually nil, should engage in the struggles of other people prior to winning our own battles. Even sadder is the fact that you, Black leadership, suggest we do not love others because we refuse your call to action. Some of you even



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use the oxymoronic term, "Black racism" and the canard of "reverse discrimination" to describe those of us who don't follow your illogical directives.

We are offended by Black politicians who rush to the podium to proclaim publicly, "I am not a Black politician; I am a politician who happens to be Black, and I will work for all of the people."

How strange it is that we never hear any other politicians make such a statement. We are insulted by Black leaders who turn their backs on the very ones that elevated them to their lofty perches. We are disgraced by Black political leaders who have sold out, settled in, and succumbed to corrupt politics. Why have you forsaken us, Black politicians? After being in office for decades and accumulating wealth for yourself and your families, why have you turned your backs on us?

Black intellectuals, why do you lecture us on the economic problems we face but seldom, if ever, build institutions or start initiatives that will solve the problems you decry? Surely you have the intellectual capacity to lead us to higher economic heights, with all of your degrees and oratory skills.

Marcus Garvey did it without degrees, but you hold yourselves up as our intellectual leaders, making high-priced speeches before throngs of Black people, and have yet to come even close to what Garvey, Booker T., and others did without the trappings of an ivy-league education or a professorship.

Black religious leaders, why have you gone the way of the moneychangers? Your influence is the strongest among Black people, but you misuse it for your own self-aggrandizement, building edifices that showcase your power to persuade Black people to put up and shut up when it comes to their

money. You live royally but keep telling us every Sunday, and two or three times during the week, that "somethin' is about to happen in this place," "God is gettin' ready to bless somebody here tonight," "It's your season; the anointing is coming."

Why have you forsaken us in exchange for filthy lucre and political favors? Have you ignored the greatest leader's words in Matthew 20:27 and 23:11? "...He that is greatest (or chief) among you shall be your servant"

After we have supported, promoted, and even forgiven Black leadership for your missteps and transgressions against us, you have ignored our needs; you have collaborated against our interests, and you have engaged in actions that keep "the patient" sick, as Booker T. Washington noted.

You continue to lead us in circles, rather than where we must go. And it seems you do not understand the negative effects your brand of leadership has on us. How is this possible from intelligent Black leadership? Why do you pursue an integration/assimilation strategy that pushes Black people toward the bottom rung of the economic ladder? What sense does it make for you to remain silent in the face of continued mistreatment of your people? Or, are we "your" people?

Why have you forsaken us, Black leaders? Why have you become hypocritical and disingenuous in your actions toward us? Why have you feathered your own nests at the cost of our blood, sweat, and tears?

Why have you not provided real solutions to our problems, not just in words, but also in deeds? Are you not capable? Are you unwilling to sacrifice for your people? Are you reluctant to do what W. E. B. Du Bois asked of you?

We don't know what your answers are, but we do know that we are tired, and we must have a new brand of Black leadership.

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## Curry

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language war, we are not effectively arguing our case. Admission to college has never been based strictly on test scores and grade point averages, yet the public is made to feel guilty because Jennifer Gratz, a White applicant, was not immediately accepted into the University of Michigan undergraduate school while supposedly "less qualified" African-Americans were.

In one of its briefs, the University of Michigan noted, "In 1995, when petitioner Gratz applied... more than 1,400 [W]hite and Asian-American students with lower ad-

justed high school GPS or test scores than hers were admitted, while more than 2,000 [W]hite and Asian-American students with higher adjusted GPAs and test scores were rejected [Brief for Respondents, No. 02-516, Gratz v. Bollinger]. So much for Jennifer Gratz being discriminated against because she's White.

This war on affirmative action is not over. But we shouldn't continue to show up for the battle unarmed.

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