

# Mr. President, please bring troops home

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

It was like yesterday. We were attending a board of directors meeting at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

As planned, we walked across the street to the Old Executive Office Building of the White House for a presentation by the President, George W. Bush. It was there on that rainy November afternoon that he told the business CEO's of America that he was going to lead us into war with Iraq. He explained his logic and expressed utmost confidence in our military leaders' war plan. The thing that surprised me the most, in retrospect, was that not one person leaked this meeting to the press.

The world watched as the White House built its case against Iraq from that date to February of the following year. The deal was already done, but there was a need to prepare the public.

The actual war was brilliant and lasted shortly. What was deeply underestimated was the aftermath. That has become a total disaster. The Shiites, Kurds and Sunnis have been fighting for centuries, and the fall of Saddam Hussein did nothing to change that.

In fact, what has happened is a rallying call from all these entities and a newly established operating base for Al Qaeda and other

such thugs. What we have is a full-blown civil war sprinkled with a lot of terrorist activity. Iraq is a mess, and we don't have the answer.

Our mission was complete but we decided to change the scope and hang around. That hanging around is costing us precious lives and many billions in wasted dollars. The Military Industrial Complex, Halliburton, et al, have been making record profits, but we certainly can't call that progress.

Democracy doesn't always work. It didn't in Vietnam. And it certainly isn't going to work in Iraq anytime soon. Iraq, the land of Nebuchadnezzar, has been at war since biblical times and it will be for quite a while longer. We, in all our glory, will not be able to end it and should come to the reality that we should not be there. It is time to "pull the plug."

Our president has dug in his "heels" and refuses to consider even the thought of pulling out. Instead, he has ordered a surge. Surge? In the Vietnam days, we called that escalation. It is escalation, indeed, and history shows that such activity only increases your losses — military lives. Enough!



HARRY C. ALFORD

As a former officer in the U.S. Army, I am appalled at what is happening to our troops. Going into combat without the best equipment available is an American shame. We have troops in harm's way without a known mission and an inevitable exit strategy.

You can't put up a serious and successful fight without a mission. Some of our troops have had to do three to five tours in the same war. That is totally unheard of. How much wear and tear can the human body and mind take? The law of averages is going to catch up with individuals having to deal with that. Sooner or later, you are going to be crippled or dead via a war with no mission.

This is not fair to those who sacrifice so much, and it is not fair to bring grief to their loved ones.

It must really mess with the minds of young officers who lead their troops down urban streets waiting for some bad guys — not enemy soldiers — to strike them with grenades and sneaky bombs. That is not combat. It is police action and soldiers should not and cannot successfully do police action. Soldiers, especially American soldiers, should not practice and train for searching

citizens' homes and chasing down the streets people whose total activity is to ambush and run through a civilian infrastructure.

This is not military.

How can the "mightiest power on earth" come down to this level? Russia, China, India, and others must be thinking, "Their time is limited, and our time is coming."

There is a nouveau saying: "When you jump into a mud pit to wrestle with a hog, the hog is having big fun and you are making a mess of yourself."

Sadly, and in macabre terms, this is our state in Iraq. We can't win fighting in this mud pit that has lived with oppression, terror, revolution and civil war far longer than our nation has been in existence.

Mr. President, we are asking too much of our military. They are working out of their job classification; receiving little appreciation and deserving much more pay, care and love from a nation that depends on them dearly.

It is an abuse of our troops, economy and our future.

We made a big mistake. Mistakes will be made. How we handle the mistakes is what really matters. Bring our troops home now!

Harry Alford is the Co-founder and President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

## NAACP: Still trying to fight good fight

By Ron Walters  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

For all of the questions that I received from journalists before the conference about the viability of the NAACP following the loss of its CEO, Bruce Gordon, none have called back in the wake of a successful affair and its many accomplishments.

Chairman Julian Bond continued his blazing critique of the Bush administration, an interesting presidential debate, and the meeting closed with the announcement of an important housing lawsuit.

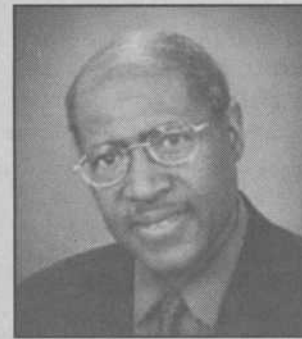
Another highlight reported is a survey that shows the organization operating at the highest level — 94 percent — among all civil rights organizations and doing well with its 30,000 youths that initiated "Stop," the campaign to bury the n-word and formed 24 more youth councils than last year.

Then, with its base of more than 2,300

chapters, the organization has initiated a campaign to raise \$100 million this year and find a new leader, one more aligned with its mission.

In any other context, one would think that since the Bush administration unleashed the IRS on the NAACP because of Bond's criticism of his policies, that Bond would cool it. Rather than doing that, he opened the conference with a speech noting that the administration had encouraged the Justice Department to lean on districts with lots of minority voters to find and prosecute incidences of voter fraud.

Moreover, he observed the pass given to officials who were involved in so-called vote caging, a practice of attempting to eliminate



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potential voters, such as those away in the military when they do not respond to registered letters they were sent by Republicans verifying their address.

Pressure was also put on the Justice Department to put the heat on minority elected officials, such that, no doubt, former Washington, D.C., mayor, Marion Barry; Louisiana Rep. William Jefferson;

former mayor of Newark, Sharpe James, and others came into the crosshairs of and under harassment by Attorney General Roberto Gonzalez.

Bond said pointedly, "Partisanship, not principle, guides the Bush-Gonzalez Department of Justice."

The presidential debate followed the line of the one recently held at Howard Univer-

sity in challenging the Democratic candidates to address issues directly relevant to Black voters. In this, even Barack Obama showed up and, by all evaluations, won the day with his observations that "...More poor Black men go to prison than to college."

And to roaring applause, he said, "We have more work to do when Scooter Libby gets no prison time."

He's getting it. Rather than preaching to Blacks about their lack of values, his ability to point out the racial double-standard goes farther with Blacks than they would with any other group of voters.

By the way, the only Republican who showed up at the debate was Rep. Tom Tancredo of Colorado, who stood alone among the seven, empty, Republican lecterns. But, I have been reliably informed that none of the Republicans at this juncture have agreed to speak at the upcoming annual conference of the National Urban League.

It appears, that after the losing effort of Republican Party Chair Ken Mehlman's "outreach campaign" to Blacks, none of the candidates feel they have anything to offer Black voters — in the wake of the disastrous Iraq war; their president's abominable handling of Katrina; his Justice Department's anti-voting rights campaign and oppression of Black officials; and the lack of any reasonable White House outreach to Blacks.

At the close of the convention, the organization announced the filing of a class action suit in Los Angeles Federal court against 14 of the nation's largest lenders for "systematic institutionalized racism in sub-prime home mortgage lending."

Data shows that Blacks are 30 percent more likely to receive such loans, which are issued at a higher loan rate than Caucasians with the same loan qualifications. This is very significant because of the national rash of

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frame of reference for the n-word as those who were late-Civil Rights Era baby boomers. They couldn't remember being a Black child getting kicked out of her nearly all-White school for upsetting the status quo by singing the R&B Top 10 chartbuster, "Say It Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud." (We danced, too!)

Elders, did we fail in these recent decades of newfound freedom to teach the upcoming youth? Were we not the griots of our Black history? Apparently, we were not diligent, or the n-word theme songs would never have made so many record makers, so rich, for so long. They would have found new words to crunk and hip-hop to, but we did not stop them from early on embracing nigger — which they use "affectionately."

The funny thing about words is not only

how they change over time, but how over time people change the meaning of the words. If you're a history buff or old enough to remember that having a "gay old time" meant everybody was having fun and smiling and had not a care in the world, like in the Gay 90s — 1890s. Now, "gay" means, well... you see how it goes. Ever since that word was adopted by the gay movement, the "Flintstones" theme song has never been the same.

And not every person who knows that the "C" in NAACP stands for colored has any recollection of hearing it used daily.

Colored is a term that has little to no meaning for young adults born after Ronald Reagan was president, unless they watched "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," and they will surely hear the n-word also spewed in that brilliant movie starring Cicely Tyson as the honorable, defiant, old, Negro

woman.

That n-word has its place — in history, that is, and in the telling of history.

That's why I don't want it buried. Because it's real, and it's American history. It just needed to be wrapped up, put away, archived, retired and, respectfully, left to die its natural death. It would go the way of its family members — Colored, Negro and many other names du jour for the darker brothers and sisters of the land.

What would Ms. Pittman say about the burial?

As African-Americans, we have had much to mourn, and we have had centuries of lamentation. No more.

Today, let's take our power, our energy, and our language forward. Step into our future in celebration of who we are, less focus on what we are not.