

OUR VIEW

Under the Bus

Political gamesmanship can be a zero-sum game. Take the furor over Democratic presidential frontrunner Barack Obama's relationship with Rev. Jeremiah Wright. Brief but incendiary statements by Wright forced Obama to directly confront the very issue he hoped wouldn't be one: race. Obama had hoped to avoid this moment in his candidacy, but he couldn't and, to his credit, he didn't run.

In a speech Tuesday that must rank as one of the most inspiring of the last 50 years, the Illinois Senator touched upon the complicated history of American race relations, succinctly explaining that tortured history contributed to his decision not to throw his pastor—the man who brought him to Christianity, who baptized his two daughters, who's been a mentor, a shoulder to lean on and ear to listen —under the proverbial bus. Obama did the tough but noble thing. He stood by his man. And as he said in his speech, for some, the condemnation of Wright's words didn't go far enough. Despite arguing to the contrary, that Wright's benevolence over their 20-year relationship outweighed the controversial statements he's made, critics chided Obama as morally suspect for maintaining his relationship with Wright, capitulating to him rather than confronting him. They claim his was a speech based on political expediency and nothing else.

But holding Obama to this unreal standard of infallibility is not only unfair, it gives the other presidential candidates a free ride. Where are the calls for GOP presidential nominee John McCain to disassociate himself from pastor John Hagee, who's disparaged Catholics, women, Blacks and lesbians, among others? This is a man who said Hurricane Katrina was punishment from God because "New Orleans had a level of sin that was offensive to God and they were recipients of the judgment of God for that" and that "all Muslims have a mandate to kill Christians and Jews." Hillary Clinton has yet to distance herself from the comments of a Texas supporter, Adelfa Callejo, who said Obama's problem "is he happens to be Black."

What's good for the goose is good for the gander. All three candidates are competing for the most powerful political position in the world. There shouldn't be a shifting curve of expectations. Call it what it is. Criticize Clinton and McCain for their controversial supporters, too.

Lost in all the postmortem analysis of Obama's speech is context. Of the voluminous stream of responses posted on newspaper websites, only a few posts actually crystallize the issue, such as this one from the *Washington Post*: "As I listen to the pundits response to Obama's speech today, there seems to be one train of thought that they overwhelmingly harp on. That is, how could Obama continue for 20 years to maintain and have respect for a man who espouses such things. Well, it seems Obama answered that question in his speech when he expressed that if that was all that he knew of the man then his reaction to him would be the same as the critics. If one thinks about this statement carefully, it's no different than the mindset of this nation toward its founding fathers.

These are men who were every bit as duplicitous in their nature as Jeremiah Wright. They are men who had great vision and foresight to construct the founding documents that would be the glue that formed and held together the greatest nation on earth. Yet, at the same time that they embodied such greatness, they engaged in the most egregious actions of all time. They declared equality and justice for all while brutally enslaving and murdering people. Jefferson partook in the writing of the Declaration of Independence, while at the same time enslaving, and committing adultery and pedophilia sleeping with a 13-year-old slave girl, fathering her child, and enslaving that child. The list could go on, but you get the point. So conflicted was his nature, that he himself declared "if there is a God, we're going to pay for this."

"Despite their most egregious actions, this nation still holds them in a place of honor. Why? Because this country knows more of the men than those most egregious acts. This country has decided to denounce their most egregious acts, while paying homage to their greater good. Because their greater contribution to this nation has not stopped producing and serving us well."



This initiative can kill your kids

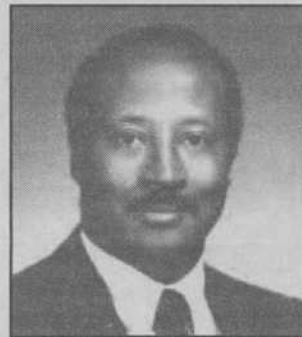
By Harry C. Alford
Special to Sentinel-Voice

When it comes to environmental matters, initiatives, such as bills, executive orders, regulations, policies etc., come down the "pike" by the dozens. Some seem quite reasonable, and some are rather flaky. Every now and then, we are confronted with something outlandish that may needlessly cause us great expense or hurt our chances for economic development. When that happens the National Black Chamber steps in to fight against it.

President Clinton, at the behest of Vice President Al Gore, signed the Kyoto Treaty which would evoke rigid and debilitating standards on U.S. businesses while allowing those in Brazil, China, India and other emerging countries to continue polluting the air with reckless abandon.

The result would have meant fewer jobs in the U.S. while the world would continue with its Global Warming affects. The Senate had to ratify this, and we quickly joined forces with others and educated the senators on this "Okie Doke." Once learning the facts, the Senate voted against it 99-1.

Lately, there is another crazy initiative bouncing around the nation at the state legislature level. This is an attempt to remove "fire retardants" from fabrics such as furniture, textiles, etc. There is no sound science that this initiative is based on and



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there is no consideration of a replacement for the fire retardants. Keep in mind that we are talking about the stuff that will prevent damage from raging fires.

We are talking about saving lives which is why the invention and use of fire retardants started in the first place. Why in the world would some ambitious politician want to remove something that has proven itself to be a life saver? It is rather insane — don't you think? But yet, attempts are now being made in California, Michigan, Connecticut and, most recently, Maryland. Maryland House Bill 1 (House Delegate James W. Hubbard, Democrat) will increase the deaths caused by house fires. How many children — perhaps yours if you live in Maryland — will this bring to an untimely death?

The economic damage is already starting to set in. Read the words of Mark R. Berman, owner of Rockland Industries, Inc. as stated to Maryland state senators and representatives: "...Our Company was founded in 1832 as a textile finishing

plant in Baltimore County. We remained in continuous operation at this site until 1982 when we moved into the 45th District in Baltimore City. As our company grew, we expanded to a second operation in Bamberg, South Carolina. Faced with ever increasing overseas competition, we were forced in 2007 to consolidate our two facilities into one central manufacturing plant and to make significant capital investments... As we worked through the analysis of which facility to close and which to invest in, one factor we had to take into account was the ability to continue to produce our flame retardant product line using Deca-BDE. In comparing Maryland to South Carolina, the continued, and in our opinion, the unjustified attempts by the Maryland Legislature to ban the use of Decabromodiphenyl Ether was a significant factor in our decision. In spite of what you may be

told, there is no other flame retardant of which we are aware that can be used in our product. Under these circumstances, we felt it unwise to make significant investments in a facility that in the very near future could be banned from using this material... It was not an easy decision to close and walk away from our company's birthplace. Our Baltimore facility represented 180 blue collar jobs in an inner-city neighborhood."

So there we go. Scaring more businesses away; losing jobs; increasing crime and building new ghettos. Weren't the '60's and '70's enough? 180 families, mostly Black, are now out of work and for what — a stupid, dangerous initiative known as House Bill 1 in the state of Maryland. It doesn't have to be this way.

Besides the loss in jobs, the most important factor is the increase in the possibility of deathly fires.

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