

# Politics of fear, loathing, pervade landscape

By James Clingman  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Have you noticed the intensity, the urgency, and yes, the expediency in the political arena these days? All of the swagger, chest-bumping, conniving, and hate-filled speech by the talking heads and pundits really let us know what this political game is all about. If you look beneath the sound bites and the flowery speeches you cannot help but notice the seedy side, the down and dirty side, the ire and animus, the angst, and the ultimate aphrodisiacs: money and power. Of course, we are on the sidelines cheering for our "team" while our purported "teammates" are busy playing the political game to its fullest. One team will win the prize. What will Black people win?

Of course, that last question was rhetorical, that is, unless someone has an answer for it other than the usual symbolic ones. Viewing the politicians from President George on down, along with their cronies and detractors, discloses a great deal about how ruthless some of these folks are. It shows how hypocritical some of them are and how they would stop at nothing to help their team win.

A close look will reveal the nature of some of these so-called political leaders as they lie, cheat, and steal better than most of those in jail for doing so. The raw hate and disdain they espouse on television shows is second to none.

The way some of them have even run across the field to the other team, and taken the playbook with them, is utterly disgust-

ing. They have no conscience; but that's politics, right?

Some of these characters display despicable behavior by saying terrible things about their opponents; they tell outright lies about one another; they continue the "dirty tricks" made famous by Nixon and his crew; and they exhibit such a high level of hypocrisy with their "do as I say, not as I do" paradigm, the latest case being that of the Governor of New York.

And these are the folks we elect to public office, the ones we put in charge of life in the U.S. and its locales. Who's crazy in this scenario? Do we really believe they will make things better for us?

Six years ago we were deluged with the notion that we were somehow vulnerable to an attack by Iraq's Sadaam Hussein; now we are told to fear a nuclear attack by Iran with a weapon they don't even have. We should also be afraid of terrorists coming to this country and blowing us up, you know, like the coincidental bombing of the recruiting station in New York City that occurred so close to Bush's endorsement of McCain. Their message is, "be afraid; be very afraid."

Continuation of the fear strategy is McCain's only hope to win the Presidency. With George's help, McCain plans to keep stoking the fire of fear and trepidation. He is positioning himself as the only one who can protect us from the fearsome Iranians and



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what they are now calling "Al-Qaeda in Iraq," the group that was not in Iraq prior to the big lie told by the neo-cons and then convincingly perpetrated by Colin Powell. What chutzpah these guys and gals have. Or, is it plain old deceitfulness, loathing for those on the opposite side, and an unquenchable thirst for power and money?

This idea that all they have to do is frighten the timid U.S. populace and they can have another four or eight years of rule says a great deal about the so-called "American people." Are we really that scared? Is our main political priority centered on being protected from rogue states that we could wipe off the face at the flick of a switch?

In answer to that question, I refer you to Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Model, which says our first and most basic priorities are physiological needs like air, that we "can't see," as Jill Scott put it in her timely and timeless song, "My Petition." Maslow said we also need water, a constant body temperature and, oh yes, that other essential known as food. We can update Maslow's words by calling these things groceries, rent or mortgage payments, and utilities.

Second to our basic needs are safety needs, which kick in only after our physiological needs are satisfied. In other words, fear is cast aside when it comes to feeding ourselves and our families. One writer says, "Adults have

little awareness of their security needs except in times of emergency or periods of disorganization in the social structure (such as widespread rioting [or explosions in buildings]). Children often display the signs of insecurity and the need to be safe." What a telling statement.

Are we really just a bunch of children, afraid of the big bad boogey man called terrorism? Are we depending upon Bush and McCain to "protect" us, to pat us on our heads and make it all better? What a sad state of affairs for supposedly intelligent adults who are willing to suppress their physiological needs for their safety needs.

Maslow was right in his needs assessment; he was also right when he said, "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail." That's Bush-McCain model. According to them, every problem we have is grounded in fear of those they call our enemies, thus, all they have to offer as a solution to the problem is war and more war, maybe for the next 50-100 years, as McCain intimated we would be in Iraq.

I guess so, now that we have spent \$785 million to build a new embassy compound in Iraq, the largest and most expensive U.S. Embassy in the world!

We will never reach our collective "purpose-fulfilling" stage, called self-actualization, if we stay on our present political road of fear and loathing.

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# Ferraro, Steinem rate sexism as worse than racism

By George E. Curry  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

As difficult as it was, I resisted the initial urge to answer a Gloria Steinem column that appeared in the *New York Times* earlier this year that basically argued that African-Americans have had it easier than White women and that sexism is not taken as seriously as racism. I didn't want to get into a protracted debate over which mistreated group had been mistreated the most. However, now that former vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro has asserted that if Barack Obama were not a Black man, he would not be where he is now, it's time to take off the gloves and go toe-to-toe.

For the record, neither racism nor sexism should be minimized. The first paragraph of the introduction to "The Affirmative Debate," an anthology I edited, began with a quote from a report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: "Historically, discrimination against minorities and women was not only accepted, but was also governmentally required."

"The doctrine of White supremacy, used to support the institution of slavery, was so

much part of American custom and policy that the Supreme Court of the United States in 1857 [in the Dred Scott decision] approvingly concluded that both the North and the South regarded slaves 'as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the White race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the White man was bound to respect.'"

I wrote in the next paragraph, "Women, like African-Americans and other racial minorities, were treated as less than full citizens throughout much of American history, though to a different degree. As Justice William J. Brennan observed, neither slaves nor women could hold office, serve on juries, or bring suit in their own names, and married women traditionally were denied the legal capacity to hold or convey property or to serve as legal guardians of their own children."

Clearly, both groups have been victimized



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by privileged White males. Therefore, it's surprising that Steinem and Ferraro are directing their anger at African-Americans rather than at White men. In her column, Steinem complained, "Black men were given the vote a half-century before women of any race were allowed to mark a ballot [translation: even before White women], and generally have ascended

to positions of power, from the military to the boardroom, before any women (with the possible exception of obedient family members in the latter)."

Even if Blacks rose to the top of the corporate ladder faster than women, they were quickly surpassed by White women. The number of Fortune 500 Black CEOs fell from seven in 2007 to five this year. Meanwhile, the number of women CEOs has increased over that same period from 10 to 12. Neither figure is sufficient. For example, if African-Americans were represented at the top of the corporate world in the same proportion they are in the population, there would be 63 Blacks CEOs of Fortune 500 companies, not five.

As a reporter who covered Ferraro's 1984 vice presidential campaign for the *Chicago Tribune* and witnessing how she was stereotyped, I was surprised by her insensitive remarks about Obama. In an interview with the *Daily Breeze*, a Torrance, Calif. newspaper, she said: "If Obama was a White man, he would not be in this position. And if he was a woman (of any color) he would not be in this position. He happens to be very lucky to be who he is. And the country is caught up in the concept."

Obama has two Ivy League degrees (from Columbia University and Harvard Law

School) and to say he is where he is simply because he was "lucky" enough to be born a Black man insults his accomplishments and shows a profound ignorance about what Black men are subjected to living in this country.

If anyone is lucky, it's Geraldine Ferraro and other professional women who have climbed the ladder of success by riding on the backs of African-Americans. Let me be more specific: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 has been hailed as a major landmark for Blacks. And there is no question that it removed many long-standing racial barriers. What is not widely known is that the law opened as many doors for White women as it did for Blacks.

In fact, including (White) women as a protected class was proposed by Howard W. Smith, a conservative Virginia Democrat who chaired the House Rules Committee, as a ploy to defeat a bill Smith opposed. The *Congressional Record* noted that when Smith proposed the amendment, it was greeted with laughter. Alabama Rep. Carl Elliott, another segregationist, explained, "Smith didn't give a damn about women's rights... he was trying to knock off votes either then or down the line because there was always a hard core of men who didn't favor women's rights."

Instead of rejecting Smith's proposal to add women as a covered class under Title VII of the bill, supporters of the proposed law, to Smith's surprise, accepted his amendment and that is how women became a protected class under the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Instead of complaining, as Steinem did, that "gender is probably the most restricting force in American life," she should acknowledge that women wouldn't have gotten this far without riding on the back of the Civil Rights Movement.

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## Alford

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As a victim of one of the most catastrophic fires in the United States, the MGM Grand Fire, I am very sensitive to the loss of life due to poor regulations and laws. That was the tragedy of the MGM. Toxic smoke from furniture and carpet that had little or no fire retardant and a sprinkler system that was not up to date killed many unnecessarily. A lot has happened since the MGM tragedy in terms of required fire retardants, standards in manufacturing and fire codes. However, this new initiative marks a return to the "bad old days."

If this trend continues, we are going to have a massive increase in fire deaths and injuries. We will lose more jobs in places that can ill afford the loss and insurance rates for each and every one of us is going to skyrocket as property damage potential escalates exponentially.

Let's sound the alarm in California, Michigan, Connecticut and Maryland and any other place where this ill-thought-out movement raises its ugly head. Crush it now!!!

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