

OUR VIEW

The Message

There's no such thing as an original thought. Or so the thinking goes. To listen to the hubbub over the Rev. Jeremiah Wright's comments, you'd think he was the first person to chastise America for its sins against minorities and to claim that the United States was complicit in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. But to truly evaluate the hysteria caused by Illinois Senator Barack Obama's former pastor is to admit that Wright hasn't said anything that others (i.e., Whites) haven't said before. This is simply a case of the messenger trumping the message. Also heightening tension is the fact that Wright's tour du media has come amid Obama's struggles to wrap up the Democratic presidential nomination.

Obama is doing the politically expedient thing in denouncing Wright's more outlandish statements. But that doesn't mean Wright is talking out of the side of his neck. In a November Scripps Howard/Ohio University poll, nearly two-thirds of Americans said they believe the federal government ignored warnings about the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Thirty-six percent believed the federal government "either assisted in the 9/11 attacks or failed to prevent them because it wanted to go to war with Iraq. It's a safe bet that at least a few of those respondents were White.

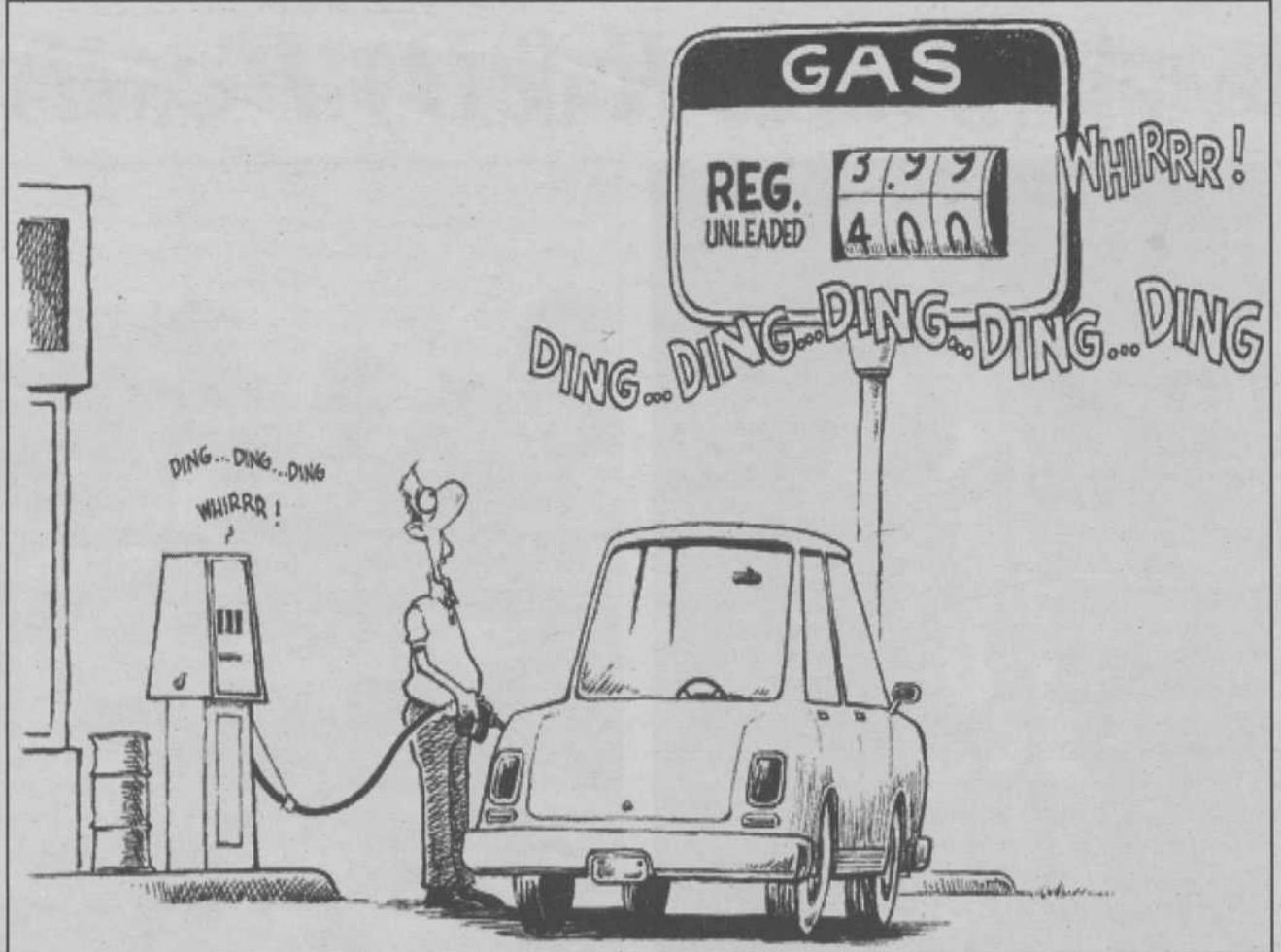
So why is Wright being vilified for expressing what many Americans apparently feel? Because he's Black and because a Black man has a legitimate shot at winning the White House. Pundits claim that Wright is anti-American. Not that serving six years in the U.S. Armed Forces makes you patriotic but, as he asked at the National Press Club, how many years did Vice President Dick Cheney serve? In fact, many of the neocons who pushed into war in Iraq and are itching to do the same with Iran never donned a military uniform. Calling Wright anti-American because he wants America to fulfill its promise of freedom, justice and equality for all is akin to Joseph McCarthy branding opponents Communists.

To those who wonder how Wright can justify calling the American government corrupt, just look at history. Japanese internment camps during World War II. Injecting Black sharecroppers in Alabama with syphilis to study the disease's effects. Whitewater. The Iran-Contra arms scandal. Abu Ghraib. Halliburton. Secret CIA prisons. The federal response to Hurricane Katrina. The evidence abounds. Wright is simply using history as a guide, history as tool to (re)inform the American people that our government serves itself, not us. But because he's Black and his former parishioner is within a cat's whisker of wrapping up the Democratic presidential nomination, mainstream America wants to crucify the messenger when the message is unassailable.

Help Black Press

As the *Las Vegas Sentinel-Voice* goes into its 29th year, the Black Press is facing its sternest test: the test of time. As daily newspaper operations in major cities begin to constrict—cities that had multiple dailies for decades are now making due with one periodical—and as newspaper readership declines in many markets, the Black Press has not been immune. Advertisers and readers have jumped to the Internet. The influx of journalism graduates eager to cut their teeth in Black publications has slowed to a trickle. With fewer resources, advertising dollars and new talent, Black newspapers have struggled to retain their once-vaunted status as repositories of news for us and by us. For the sake of Black newspapers throughout the country, this must change. Everyone needs must stake a claim to the continued survival of the Black Press.

That means faithfully picking up papers, which will prove to advertisers that Black newspapers are worth their investment. That means striking up relationships with young journalists, giving them an opportunity to hone their skills and to write stories about the Black experience in their respective cities. That means readers changing perceptions of Black newspapers as bastions of press releases. Black newspapers embody the resilience of our people and represent our attempt to chronicle our existence—telling stories from our perspective; giving voices to the unheard; printing news the mainstream media ignores.



Kudos on Carter's diplomacy

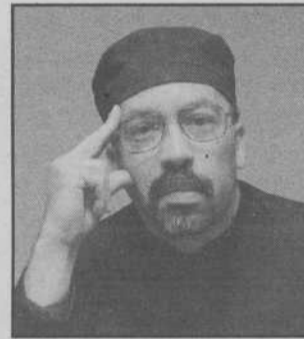
By Bill Fletcher Jr.
Special to Sentinel-Voice

One does not have to agree with former President Jimmy Carter on everything in order to appreciate the wisdom and courage of his stand on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. His most recent efforts to reach out to the Palestinian Islamist resistance movement Hamas are a case in point.

Contrary to the viewpoint of both the Bush administration and in the Israeli government, former President Carter has consistently recognized that in order for there to be lasting peace coupled with justice in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, all of the major parties must be at the table. If any significant party is excluded — for example U.S. and Israeli efforts to exclude Hamas — that will inevitably mean that efforts at a solution will be undermined over time. Flowing from such an analysis, Carter took steps to reach out to Hamas in order to advance a dialogue.

A dialogue does not mean that one necessarily agrees with the point of view of either side. Rather, it represents a recognition that there IS another side, and that this side must be heard in order for a problem to be resolved. For these reasons it is very important that we, in Black America, make our support for former President Carter known and heard.

From Carter's dialogue with Hamas came the Hamas



BILL FLETCHER JR.

declaration of a commitment to a 10 year truce with Israel should Israel return to the pre-June 1967 boundaries. In other words, what Hamas is asking is that Israel complies with United Nations resolutions that have been passed since the Occupation began. The reply from the Israeli government and the Bush administration has been to cast scorn on this announcement and claim that it is more of the same. Rather than building upon Carter's initiative, both the Israeli government and the Bush administration wish to see it shrivel into nothingness.

What lies behind the Israeli government/Bush administration response is an effort to crush Hamas and to ensure that there is a compliant Palestinian government in power to administer the few spaces of land that the Palestinians will be allowed to "control" should the Israeli government get its way.

They are hoping that the administration of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will be such a compliant puppet. There are many Palestinian organizations that dis-

agree with President Abbas, in addition to disagreeing with the Israelis and the Bush administration on how to proceed. Hamas is one of the more significant such organizations.

It is also the one that WON democratic elections held in 2006. It was this victory that the Bush administration, according to *Vanity Fair* magazine, attempted to overturn through a planned pro-Abbas coup. The coup did not happen, but Hamas ended up launching its own assault, allegedly as a pre-emptive strike and, thus, took over the Gaza territory.

The suggestion that Hamas should be ignored because it engages in alleged terrorist activity is as ridiculous as it is a historical. If one reviews the history of the founding of Israel, for instance, one immediately discovers that Zionist military operations against the British AND Arabs included guerrilla warfare AND terrorist

activity. Probably the most well-known of the Zionist terrorist operations was the bombing of the King David Hotel. In addition to these, there were ethnic cleansing operations against Arabs, with one of the most notorious being the massacre at Deir Yassin. How, then, can someone argue that those who are using military means, even if one deplors such means, should be ignored? If that is the argument, then the USA should have joined with the British in 1947 in militarily crushing the Zionist military units. That did not happen, and my guess is that no one in the Bush administration would argue that such a course of action would have been correct.

Former President Carter has taken an important step, recognizing that the situation in the Middle East generally, and between the Israelis and Palestinians in particular, is

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