

## OUR VIEW We Can, Part 2

We've just finished with one "change" election. Might we need another? This could well be the case if Julian Bond, former chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, makes good on a promise to rescind his pledge to rescind his resignation and run for chairman in February.

Just last month, Bond announced that he was giving up the seat when his three-year term ended in February. The announcement comes nearly 20 months after former Verizon executive Bruce Gordon abruptly resigned as NAACP president due to tensions with the civil rights group's national board. Four years earlier, former Maryland Rep. Kweisi Mfume resigned as president over conflicts about the board's meddling and its size.

In each case, Bond defended the group: "Mr. Gordon and his predecessor, Kweisi Mfume, did not report to the full board of directors. Each of them reported to a 17-person executive committee; that does not at all seem onerous to me," Bond told *Black Enterprise* magazine last year. "There are larger boards. The American Civil Liberties Union board has almost 100, and it operates effectively."

While no one can assail Bond for his staunch defense of the nation's oldest civil rights organization, we can certainly judge his tenure. After having led the NAACP's national board for 10 years, it is now time, as he said in November, to pass on the mantle of leadership.

And if what Bond told the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper is to be believed—that being chairman was a great privilege, "however, it has been more demanding than anything I've ever done. I'm ready to let a new generation of leaders lead"—then it is time for a change.

It's simply not good enough that the NAACP has righted the ship after some tumultuous times in the last 15 years. The organization has largely been free of taint and scandal after both nearly submarined the group for good. Nor is it enough for the organization to be financially solvent. The NAACP needs to be so much more.

It needs to be on the front lines of political battles: fighting with others to ensure the \$700 billion bailout works for average Americans; intensely involved in efforts to reform public education; doggedly fighting to end discriminatory sentencing practices; staunchly defending the rights of workers to unionize. There are enough causes to ensure that it's never not busy. Recent history shows that Julian Bond isn't the person to lead the NAACP there.

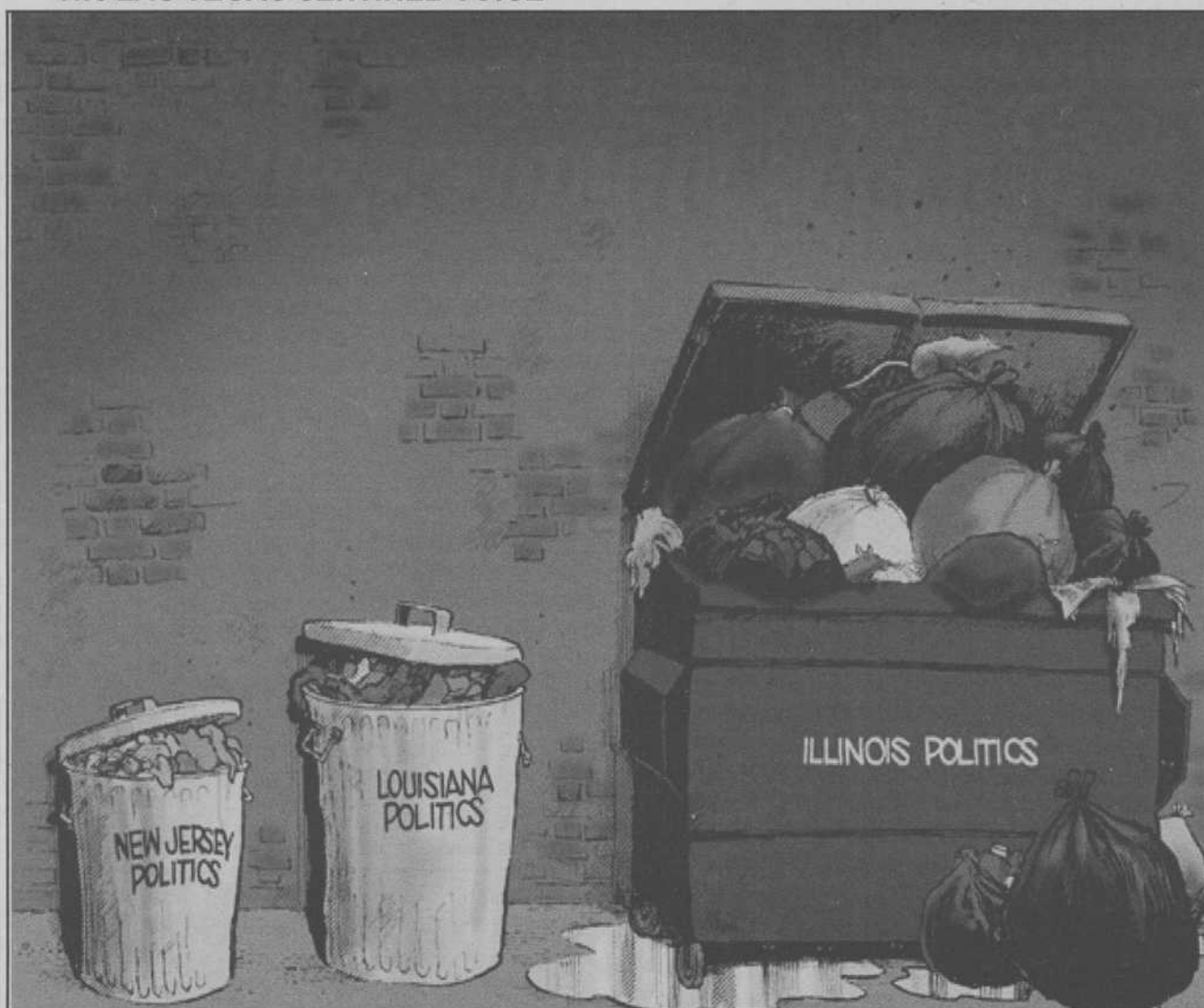
"This decision was made by the flood of written, telephoned, mailed and e-mailed appeals I received asking me to reconsider," Bond wrote in a letter rescinding his resignation.

Listen up, NAACP faithful; don't buy it. Bond has done much good during his time, but now his time is up. What the NAACP looks like in the future is up to you. To borrow a line from the recent presidential campaign, do you want change, or more of the same?

## Kwanzaa returns

It's here again, the only holiday by African-Americans for the world—Kwanzaa. The *Sentinel-Voice* asks you to work hard to embody each of Kwanzaa's seven principles this holiday season. You, and everyone else, will be better for it. The principles are:

**Umoja** (Unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race. **Kujichagulia** (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves. **Ujima** (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and make our brothers' and sisters' problems our problems and to solve them together. **Ujamaa** (Cooperative Economics): To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit from them together. **Nia** (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness. **Kuumba** (Creativity): To do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it. **Imani** (Faith): To believe with all our heart in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.



## Time to end public corruption

By Harry C. Alford  
Special to *Sentinel-Voice*

I guess we should call the antics of Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich (bla-go-yea-vich) the last straw for political corruption.

Here is a guy, already under FBI investigation, deciding to go out and sell the precious Senate seat vacated by the next President of the United States. The prize was too precious to assign it to someone based on their merit. He felt he could make some quick cash despite the fact that he was being watched. It is simply amazing. However, public corruption is as old as America itself.

I reflect back to my days as deputy commissioner for Minority Business at the State of Indiana. Corruption was popping up at an alarming rate. Money for contracts, favors for contracts and even sex for contracts became an all-too-common occurrence.

I would ignore it and it usually went away.

There was a member of my team that wouldn't ignore it and he spent a little time in jail (He was set up). The most disgusting thing is when a guy offers you his wife in exchange for a contract (one that you couldn't deliver anyway).

I would feel like saying, "I wouldn't do that with any-



**HARRY C. ALFORD** one and especially not with someone you sleep with." It would get pretty sleazy but be assured it happens all over America, not just Indiana.

The late Lannie H. Smith was a reputable entrepreneur and he would brag to me about the good old days, "Birch Bayh, Senator, D-Ind., would have me carry his bag to Lake County."

I would later learn about a "bag to Lake County." A good friend of mine was the son of a Democratic legend in Lake County, Ind. He would reminisce, "My parents would take the family over to the Mayor of East Chicago's home.

They and the other parents would have grocery bags that they would present upon entering his home. We kids would play in the back yard; while they would all sit in the living room, while the bags that were filled with cash money would be dumped on the dining room table.

They would tally and then distribute the money accord-

ingly. Then, we would all leave. It was a routine Saturday morning in Lake County, Indiana."

The City of Gary (Mayor Thomas Barnes administration) would put a shake down on our members of \$5,000 per contract. If our members would resist they would offer a change order to the contract of \$5,000 to cover the cost of the shakedown.

I advised one member to sue for the amount owed and divulge the shakedown in court proceedings. They were so bold that they wouldn't pay him until the court date. They gave him a check for the amount owed in front of the courthouse and said "There, no need to go into the courtroom now..

Corruption at the top levels can be very expensive for taxpayers and can cripple good policy. A lot of it can

be repetitious.

An example is the fact that the former Governor of Illinois, Otto Kerner, went to jail for receiving pay offs from two racetrack owners. The current Gov. Rod Blagojevich is now entertaining legislation that would, for some reason, take 3 percent of the sales of gaming casinos as a "tax" that would then be given to racetrack owners. It sounds pretty "fishy" doesn't it?

This is stated in the affidavit of the U.S. Attorney presiding over the current investigation. Given the exposure of the habits of the current governor, the Illinois legislature should abruptly halt such legislation and anything else that may be tainted until a thorough "enema" can be given to the Illinois state government and all of its op-

(See Alford, Page 9)

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