

EDITORIALS • COMMENTS • OPINIONS

A Checklist For Political Candidates

By Ron Walters

Sometimes I think that we forget that the game of presidential politics is about using Black political influence to connect the line between what people in our community say they want and need, to empower that someone who will govern with our public policy interests at heart. So, let me answer a question I am often asked about the issues I would propose to the presidential candidates. We need someone who:

1. Opposes the war, and would stop the economic hemorrhage paying for it that amounts to \$1 billion per week?
2. Favors public schools and would not sacrifice funding in the Jesse James raid of charter or voucher schools.
3. Would fully fund "Leave No Child Behind."
4. Would roll back the tax cuts for the rich and stop the huge federal budget deficits, the state deficits and the wild increases in college tuition rates.
5. Has a plan to cut the Black unemployment rate of 13 percent with programs targeted to the Black, Hispanic or other poor communities.
6. Would replenish the job training funds in the Workforce Investment Act program that Bush cut by more than \$500 million in a recession.
7. Would fund both regular and Summer Youth job training programs, the lack of which has contributed to youthful crime rates.
8. Opposes the expansion of the 40-hour work requirement for welfare recipients squeezed between children and no child care.
9. Supports programs to cut recidivism rates related to drug

abuse that accounts for 80 percent of Black incarceration rates and the revival of voting rights for ex-felons.

10. Opposes the death penalty and supports a moratorium on executions.

11. Would fight to repeal "three strikes and you're out" laws and mandatory minimum sentences.

12. Would increase the opportunity for minority businesses to obtain contracts at the federal level.

13. Would champion significant direct investment funding in inner city areas rather than questionable tax incentive approaches.

14. Would implement laws such as the Community Reinvestment Act, to substantially increase the supply of affordable housing and home ownership.

15. Will work to close the health gaps between Blacks and the rest of society.

16. Would increase the Development Fund for Africa by \$300 million to build the infrastructure to fight HIV/AIDS and make trade and investment work.

17. Will work for true debt relief for Africa and trade opportunities for the Caribbean.

This is my short-hand list. Where is yours?

Ron Walters is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, director of the African American Leadership Institute in the Academy of Leadership and professor of government and politics at the University of Maryland-College Park. His latest book is "White Nationalism, Black Interests" (Wayne State University Press).

The Truth About The War In Iraq

By George E. Curry

President Bush and his primary surrogates—Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Colin Powell, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney—constantly complain about unfavorable news coverage of administration efforts in Iraq. Bush told one reporter recently, "There's a sense that people in America are not getting the truth."

If that's true, it's certainly not because the White House has been short on spin doctors or gullible journalists. A study by Fairness and Accuracy in the Media (FAIR) covering the first three weeks of the war showed that official government voices, past and present, accounted for 63 percent of all sources used by major news shows on ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, FOX and PBS.

"Nearly two thirds of all sources, 64 percent, were pro-war, while 71 percent of U.S. guests favored the war," FAIR discovered. "Anti-war voices were 10 percent of all sources, but just 6 percent of non-Iraqi sources and 3 percent of U.S. sources. Thus viewers were more than six times as likely to see a pro-war source as one who was anti-war, with U.S. guests alone, the ratio increases 25 to 1."

So, it's not so much that Bush can't get his version of the "truth" out. Rather, it's the quagmire itself that has caused support for the war to tumble.

On one of his carping sprees, Colin Powell told Wolf Blitzer on CNN that there was "no doubt whatsoever" that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction prior to the U.S. invasion in March. Yet, no weapons have been discovered and Powell still refuses to retract his charge.

On ABC's "This Week" two months ago, Secretary Powell asserted that the Clinton administration "conducted a four-day bombing campaign in late 1998 based on the intelligence that he had. That resulted in the weapons inspectors being thrown out." In its coverage of the Powell interview, "The New York Times" allowed that false assertion to go unchallenged.

Three years earlier, it had corrected a similar lapse. On Feb. 2, 2000, it acknowledged, "A front-page article yesterday...on Iraq misstated the circumstances under which international weapons inspectors left that country before American and British air strikes in December 1998. While Iraq had ceased cooperating with the inspectors, it did not expel them. The United Nations withdrew them before their air strikes began." The strikes began that night.

There were other pretexts for invading Iraq—such as the administration's bogus assertion that Iraq had purchased uranium from Niger—that were not a result of the Bush administration's failure to get its message out. They got that message out, but like so many other assertions, we've since discovered, it was untrue.

The truth is that this was an ill-conceived, ill-timed war that has produced disastrous consequences for Americans without any clear assurance that it will better protect us from terrorists. According to a recent analysis of military fatalities by Reuters News Service, the American death toll after eight months in Iraq has exceeded the number of U.S. soldiers killed during the first three years of the Vietnam War. With the soldiers in Saturday's midair helicopter crash in the northern city of Mosul, the Iraq death toll climbed to 417.

During the Vietnam War, which officially commenced on Dec. 11, 1961, there were 392 U.S. deaths in those first three months. The peak year was 1968, when 1,926 Americans died in Vietnam.

Rather than dealing forthrightly with this unacceptably high American death rate in Iraq, Bush prefers to concentrate on imagery that he hopes will make his administration look better. Thus, his decision not to attend any of the funerals for soldiers killed abroad as many of his predecessors have done. He also broke custom by enforcing a prohibition on journalists photographing or filming soldiers' caskets as they leave from or return to U.S. military bases.

With no thanks to Bush, Americans are learning the truth. For example, they are learning that this administration is no friend of veterans. Bush's most recent budget would increase prescription drugs costs for vets earning more than \$24,000 a year. Bush has done nothing to eliminate the backlog to see a doctor at VA hospitals, which can range from six months to two years. The Bush budget would reduce money that helps military children receive a quality education. Over the objection of veterans groups, the administration has announced a decision to close seven VA hospitals.

The problem for Bush is not that "people in America are not getting the truth." Rather, it's the truth itself.

George E. Curry is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. His most recent book is "The Best of Emerge Magazine," an anthology published by Ballantine Books. He can be reached through his Web site, georgecurry.com.

Throw-Away People

By James Clingman

Blackonomics

There are two categories of leaders in our communities, especially when it comes to issues and activities related to economic empowerment. According to historian Carter G. Woodson, "Negroes ... sometimes choose their own leaders but unfortunately they are too often the wrong kind. Negroes do not readily follow persons with constructive programs. Almost any sort of exciting appeal or trivial matter presented to them may receive immediate attention ... and liberal support." That has never been more pronounced than it is today.

There are so-called Black leaders who, despite their unseemly tactics, their portrayals of themselves as "honest" brokers, and their shadowy deal-making and sellout prowess, seem to be exempt from exposure by our people. While Black folks have always had to deal with these scoundrels, we have been reluctant to call them out – to expose them for what they really are.

On the other hand, we have leaders among us who are totally dedicated to the collective economic advancement of African-Americans. These are the ones who are usually sacrificed by Black people – thrown out because they are a threat to the establishment or because they are "too Black." That frightens some people and, sadly, we play into that fear by participating in the demise of the very people who would help pull us out of our economic doldrums.

I have witnessed the "death" of brothers and sisters who go all out for their people, who don't take sell-out bribes, who don't back off when it comes to speaking up for Black people, and who are unafraid to be Black. These conscious brothers and sisters are virtually thrown-out, in many cases simply because someone from the establishment thought they were crossing the line and getting out of their place. They are let down by the very brothers and sisters they have helped. Through our acquiescence and apathy many of us turn our heads, afraid to speak up for the ones who speak out for us.

I have, on the other hand, seen certain folks stroll through our communities and be held up as paragons of Black liberation, all the while filling their pockets with the filthy lucre from their sell-out deals with the powers that be. They lurk in the shadows, afraid to come out in the open, and use lackeys to promote their causes. They have their hands in every deal, every program, every transaction, and every scenario that involves Black people, making certain that they will be the first in line to be paid. They rob the community and blame that same community for not moving forward. How can we move forward with crooks like these among us?

These are the ones we should throw away. These are the ones from whom we must run. These are the very ones who will continue to hold us back because they will sell us out for their individual benefit and acclaim. The saddest aspect of this reality is that we accept it. For years we have seen the same persons in our

neighborhoods and our communities selfishly plot and scheme to fill their pockets and then make some shallow overture to their brothers and sisters who ignorantly hold them in high esteem.

We have seen these people move up, economically, while those they are suppose to be helping are pushed further away from the realization of their economic dreams. We have also seen the brothers and sisters in the opposite category fade into oblivion. And then, more times than not, we sit around and reminisce about not having listened to them and not having followed their prescriptions for collective economic success.

We must learn, as a people, to identify, respect, and follow our true leaders. Heed the words of Carter G. Woodson and do not be swayed and mesmerized by charisma and rhetorical ranting. Fake leaders are very good at the things that will not take Black people where we need to go, especially economically. They will not and cannot put the collective first because they are too wrapped up in themselves. It makes me wonder if they ever think about death, responsibility, legacy, and accountability. They may not have to account for their actions to us, but one day that accountability will come. Most of us would be fearful of that day. But these fake leaders not only have no consciousness, they have no conscience.

So what do we do about these people? The first thing to do is look at what they have done for our people – not what they have said, but what they have done. Look behind the deals they bring you; see who else is in support of them. Check them out completely before you place your confidence and trust in them. If they are using you to do their dirty work, afraid themselves to come out in the open and speak, be wary of them. They mean you no good.

If you see their fingerprints on everything that has money attached to it, none or very little of which is being used to truly empower our people, watch out. It's very likely they are getting theirs off the top (and probably off the bottom as well) leaving very little for you. Look for the common thread that always leads back to this person. After a while you will be able to discern the nuances and modus operandi of this person because he will do the same things, say the same things, plan the same things, and always have his hand out for his cut.

Let's begin to throw the scoundrels out, as they say in political circles. Those who are dedicated to serving rather than merely appointing themselves as leaders (or being appointed by White folks), are the "keepers." Follow them; protect them; revere them.

James E. Clingman, an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department, is former editor of the Cincinnati Herald Newspaper and founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce. He hosts the radio program, "Blackonomics," and is the author of the book, "Economic Empowerment or Economic Enslavement—We have a Choice." He can be reached at (513) 489-4132, or by e-mail at jclingman@blackonomics.com.

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