

## Joe Lieberman's Conservative Politics

By: Ron Walters

Joe Lieberman recently trashed the Left of the Democratic Party, arguing that the rise of the Left is a danger to winning future elections. He supports the Iraq war and rails against the position of candidates such as Howard Dean, Dennis Kucinich and Al Sharpton, who have opposed the war; and Bob Graham for saying that George Bush lied in order to get America into the war. Lieberman also opposes anything close to universal health care and opposes raising taxes in an atmosphere in which Bush has bankrupted the federal treasury through a series of devastating tax cuts.

Lieberman is a throwback to an earlier time. I remember when the Democratic Party was divided because it was encumbered by Southerners who did not really believe in civil rights, but benefited from the working-class policies of the party. Southerners were alienated because Blacks took the Civil Rights Movement inside of the party and fought for party positions and public policies that represented their interests—and they were largely successful by the end of the 1970s.

But Southern Democrats felt disenfranchised and by this time had become comfortable enough with the Republican Party to consider becoming a part of its coalition. The 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan was that opportunity, and they took it. This helped to cloud the problem of who was a Democrat.

More recently, another segment of Democrats, who were frustrated that the party lost the elections of 1984 and 1988, formed the Right-wing Democratic Leadership Council (DLC). It was predicated on the fact that the Democratic Party needed to move to the "center," that is, it needed to become more conservative and downplay social policies. People like Bill Clinton and Joe Lieberman became leaders of the DLC, and when Clinton became president, he instituted a corporate-oriented, moderate on civil rights set of policies that also marginalized organized labor by passing the North American Free Trade Act. But people supported him because he was all they had.

People also supported Clinton because of the economic good times. However, few understood that part of the way this happened was through a traditional Democratic approach of raising taxes. The DLC overlooked that fact because it has favored the Republican view that government has little business in funding and running social programs and where it has the responsibility, it should give public money to support private control of these funds.

Lieberman would support this DLC approach, as well as the Clinton strategy of making small policy changes. For example, he does not support universal health care, saying that it would bankrupt the country like the Bush tax cuts are doing. Instead, he supports expanding the Child Health Insurance Protection Act to cover more children. John Kerry, Dick Gephardt and other candidates criticize the Lieberman approach and propose to expand health care much more by offering every American the opportunity to buy into the best health care plans.

I believe that the Black community substantially defines its position on the Left of the Democratic Party and insofar as Lieberman opposes the Left, he should not get the Black vote. This time around, there are many candidates running for office in the Democratic Party whose views are much closer to the needs and the view of Blacks and many of them have a credible chance to win the party's nomination for president.

The Lieberman candidacy, which trades winning for traditional Democratic Party positions on issues, should be rejected. What does it matter if he is elected and gets in a position to institute Republican-styled policies. The support of Lieberman depends on your view of the urgency of the Black condition and the need for a politics of change. I judge it as urgent and would challenge any party to stand for issues that merit the Black vote. I would rather win or lose this way.

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## Activist's Arrest Raises More Questions Against Michigan Police

By: Wazir Ali Muhammad

Special to the NNPA from The Final Call

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (NNPA)—Residents are questioning the arrest of a community activist just days after he spoke out during an angry community forum regarding the mysterious May 22 death of Thames M. Hawkins and the mini-riot that followed. The forum centered on the concerns of frustrated Black Southeast-side residents with their local White law enforcement officials.

"My client spoke out at the community meeting June 12 at the Neland Avenue Christian Reformed Church," said Stephen R. Drew, a noted civil rights attorney. "He spoke out against police harassment in the community, and the next day police were sent to his home," Mr. Drew said of his client, Lance M. Mallett, a Black contractor.

According to his attorney, neighbors said police came to Mallett's home looking for him the day after he spoke, but he wasn't in. The following day, officers returned and arrested him, allegedly for failing to appear in court for housing code violations. Mallett had been ordered to show cause as to why he did not appear for a jury selection in regards to the violations on June 5, a week before the community forum.

However, Drew said Mallett did appear in front of the judge that day along with his other attorney.

"There are a couple of concerns," Drew told The Final Call. "Did the sending of police to arrest him that next day have anything to do with the fact that he spoke out?" he said.

Drew also said his other concern is excessive force.

According to witnesses, officers slammed a handcuffed Mallett onto a police car and pepper-sprayed his face.

"There are questions as to whether the level of force was used to send a message (and) we are looking into it from a First Amendment standpoint, and we are looking at it from an excessive force standpoint," Drew said. "Mr. Mallett ended up spending three days in jail, and that following Monday, when he was finally arraigned, as far as being in jail for the alleged bench warrants, he was released."

When asked about the Mallett arrest, a spokeswoman for the Grand Rapids Police Department advised they could not comment pending an internal investigation of the matter.

Maxine, a Southeast-side business owner who wished to withhold her last name, said she doesn't feel it is right for law officers to retaliate, or to even allow the appearance of retaliation, against those speaking out against alleged abuses at their hands. She also said the Black community must speak with one voice to prevent others from setting the agenda.

"I felt that before (the residents) had that meeting, they should have had a meeting among themselves in order to come up with issues and talking points first," she added.

"My feelings are the meetings are much needed," Mallett told The Final Call, "However, if this is to occur, it must not be hindered and the people must not be made to feel afraid to speak what they really feel. Also, the media should not perpetuate that fear by making it seem that if you speak, you will be 'dealt with.' That's wrong," Mallett said.

## 'James Crow, Esquire' In The Newsroom

By: George E. Curry

It was one of the most eagerly awaited speeches of the summer. Former New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial had been elected president and CEO of the National Urban League and people wanted to know his vision for the organization.

In his first convention speech, Morial said that he wanted to lead an "empowerment movement" that would eliminate inequality in five key areas: education, the economy, health and quality of life, civic engagement and civil rights and racial justice.

So how did his hometown paper, the New Orleans "Times-Picayune," cover this momentous speech?

Rather than focus on how Morial plans to reinvigorate the civil rights group, the newspaper became obsessed with a brief section of the speech in which Morial said that his new empowerment drive "is a movement to defeat a new villain...James Crow, Esquire. As Dr. Robert Hill [author of a chapter in the league's annual "State of Black America" report] says, 'James Crow, Esquire' represents the new, sometimes not so obvious structural inequality that persists 40 years [after the onset of the modern Civil Rights Movement]."

In a 4,377-word speech, that is what they chose to focus on?

This is just one example of why so many people distrust the White-owned media. Some things, such as this coverage, can't be justified.

Not only did that story run under the headline, "Former mayor makes fiery national debut," a second story the following Sunday carried the headline, "Skeptics denounce 'blame-white' tact."

The newspaper tried to repackaging Morial—the first Black mayor of New Orleans to win a majority of the White vote—as some kind of flaming militant. And they did so by saying that Harry Edwards, the University of California sociologist who encouraged track stars Tommie Smith and John Carlos to give raised-fist "Black Power" salutes at the 1968 Olympics, coined the term "James Crow, Esquire" in 1982.

First, let's define the term. Hill, a well-respected scholar, noted in his report: "There has been a strong shift from Jim Crow—the overt manifestation of racial hatred by individuals in white society—to James Crow, Esquire—the maintenance of racial inequality through covert processes of structure and institutions."

Second, by giving credit to Harry Edwards for coining the term, the "Times-Picayune" demonstrates its own ignorance of the Civil Rights Movement, ignorance that can't be glossed over by using LexisNexis data base searches.

As a reporter, I heard former NAACP Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks use the term in the 1970s, long before Edwards supposedly created it. I heard Jesse Jackson use "James Crow, Esquire" in the 1980s. I heard Al Sharpton use it in the 1990s. And NAACP President Kweisi Mfume and others have used the term this decade.

Instead of "blaming white"—an anachronistic expression itself—the paper ignored Morial's comment that, "I commit that we will work harder than ever before to build multi-racial coalitions to solve the challenges of the 21st Century."

There are other digs in the story.

"The League, being tax-exempt, is supposedly nonpartisan..." It is, in fact, non-partisan.

And there's this: "Although the Urban League is a nonpartisan organization, it is a nonpartisan organization that is overwhelmingly Democratic. James Crow, Esquire, it may safely be assumed, is a registered Republican."

As any Journalism 101 student should know, it's not safe to assume anything. Ever. The National Urban League has never polled its members on their political affiliation, therefore the "Times-Picayune" can only "assume" that it is overwhelmingly Democratic. And those who referred to "James Crow, Esquire" over the years, have used it to characterize Democratic and Republican officials. By the way, the chairman of the Urban League's board of directors is a registered Republican.

While it can be argued that Morial's hometown newspaper provided a textbook example of James Crow, Esquire, there is evidence that old Jim Crow thinking is still around. Fairness and Accuracy in the Media (FAIR) provides some telling research on Fox News Channel's host Bill O'Reilly.

In April, referring to an inner-city charity in Washington, D.C., called Best Friends, O'Reilly remarked: "Does anyone know where the Best Men are? I hope they're not in the parking lot stealing our hubcaps."

Earlier this year, he used the derogatory term "Mexican wetbacks." And on Feb. 25, 1999, he said: "Will African-Americans break away from the pack thinking and reject immorality—because that's the reason the family's breaking apart—alcohol, drugs, infidelity. You have to reject that, and it doesn't seem—and I'm broadly speaking here, but African-Americans won't reject it."

What African-Americans and everyone else should reject is all forms of racism, whether it is Jim Crow or James Crow, Esquire.

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