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A Persian Turk speaks out on Chickens, Iraq and the Hypocritical NAACP

There was a time when the NAACP stood for the oppressed, in the midst of injustice.

There was a time when the NAACP stood for all those who could not speak for themselves, regardless of popularity or cultural pressure.

Those days are long gone. It seems that they have more important matters to discuss.

In his Convention Address to the NAACP on July 11, 2004 in Philadelphia, NAACP Chairman of the Board of Directors, Julian Bond, began by citing Dr. W.E.B. DuBois' landmark study in 1899. Bond quotes DuBois, saying,

"Against prejudice, injustice and wrong the Negro ought to protest energetically and continuously, but he must never forget that he protests because those things hinder his own efforts and those efforts are the key to his own future." (The Philadelphia Negro, 389.)

Apparently, the leadership of the NAACP has forgotten.

On July 8, 2004, CNN ran the story that President Bush declined the NAACP offer to speak at its convention, becoming the first president since Herbert Hoover to do so. The President's team lamented the strained relationship between the president and the leadership of the NAACP. This is an understatement.

While President Bush increased the Ryan White Care Act AIDS Drug Assistance Program funding 41% during his administration, which exponentially increased the number of impoverished Americans with AIDS to receive medical help...we heard nothing from the NAACP.

When President Bush proposed a \$450 million program to mentor urban middle school students and children of prisoners...we heard nothing from the NAACP. President Bush has appointed the first African American Secretary of State and National Security Advisor. Still nothing from the NAACP except scorn.

What we have heard is vehemence unmatched in recent history by the NAACP spokesmen and leaders, against this president, against the Iraq war, and against this administration. The outrage in virtually every media outlet after the President declined the invitation was, for me, hypocritical.

Let me explain. Following my editorial two weeks ago, entitled "Hatriotism and Michael Moore," my e-mail was flooded with e-mails. Many were laced with vituperations, screaming that America had no right to invade an "innocent country like Iraq," since there was no proof that Iraq had actually bombed us....

Interesting logic.

Perhaps FDR needs to be dug up and burned in effigy, since our first action upon entering World War II was to attack Germany, and as we know, they were not the ones to bomb Pearl Harbor. But I digress.

The vast majority of the e-mails, numbering over six hundred, were from grateful Americans, many soldiers, who felt that their voices were not being heard. Mothers and fathers of soldiers who felt grateful that an article would run, supporting our troops from someone like me, a Persian Turkish immigrant and former Muslim.

Then I received an e-mail from an African American who condemned President Bush for rejecting the invitation to speak at the NAACP, a group that is offering a wholesale rejection of the man and his policies. He asked how could I support such a man?

I want you to pay close attention to my response.

I have chosen to support his President because, for my countrymen, President Bush is our Lincoln. He has freed our people from oppression, slavery and injustice. Therefore, I thought the NAACP would be in favor of our country's actions.

Notice the parallels: Both men chose to defend those who had no rights and very few freedoms. Both men took a highly unpopular stand, regardless of public opinion, in the midst of their first term, not because it was politically expedient, but because it was right. Both men extended the rights of education, equality and the freedom of speech and vote to a people who had lived under oppression for years. In the South, slave owners would whip, maim and kill those slaves who disobeyed them. Saddam Hussein gassed his own people, the Shi'a in the southern part of Iraq.

Neither man initiated any war. President Lincoln did not take action until the provisional Confederate army captured Fort Sumpter, three months after his inauguration. President Bush responded to the war brought to our shores only after the bombing of 9/11, eight months after his inauguration. Both men fully understood that taking such action endangered the chance they had for a second term. Both still acted, because it was the right thing to do.

Before someone objects and says, "Oh, but the Iraq conflict was on foreign soil, thus the point is moot," may I remind you that just two decades ago, the NAACP leaders were calling for American intervention in South Africa to free Nelson Mandela and end the horror of Apartheid. Funny, I do not remember South Africa bombing our towers...

So then, what does cause the NAACP to stand up? Against what injustices do their leaders speak out? Well, in the spirit of Patriotism, where political correctness outweighs truth, we find this nugget of information: In September of 2003, Kweisi Mfume, the president and CEO of the NAACP, sent a personal letter to the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) Chairman David Novak, which stated:

I am asking you to direct KFC's suppliers to stop breeding and drugging animals so that they collapse under their own weight or die from heart failure and to phase in humane gas killing, a method of slaughter that protects birds from broken bones and wings, electric shocks, and even drowning in scalding-hot tanks of water.

Apparently, the torture, electric shock, broken bones and death of chickens is more offensive to Mr. Mfume than the torture and death of Iraqi and Afghani men and women.

In the meantime, my countrymen are slowly learning the joys of freedom of speech in Iraq. My countrywomen are starting their second year of learning to read and write in Afghanistan. This is all because one president, one administration, and one mighty military force, decided that freedom is a right worth defending. President Bush is our Lincoln.

There is one final comparison. Against overwhelming hatred and bile, President Lincoln was reelected in 1864. I believe the great American heartland has reached its limit of "Bush bashing." If my theory holds true, I pray that after President Bush is reelected this November, someone remembers to send Michael Moore and Kweisi Mfume flowers of gratitude.

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