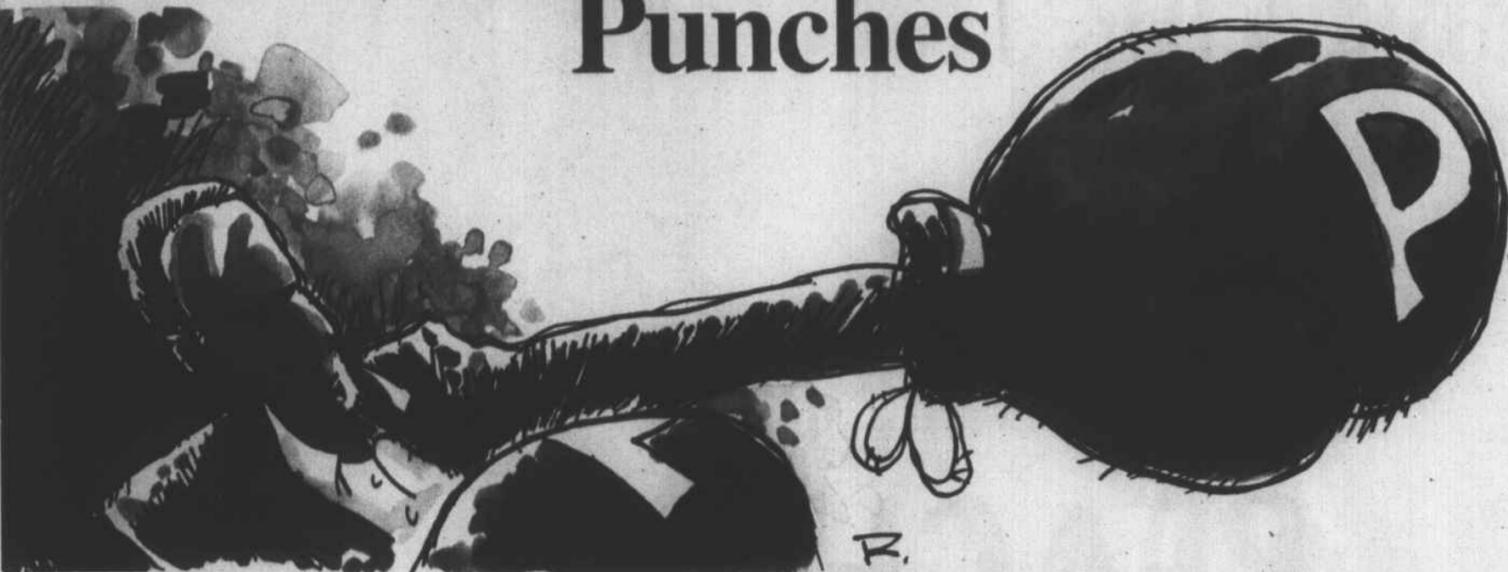


# FORUM

## Time to Throw Some Political Punches



Ron Rogers Illustration for The Chronicle



**James Clingman**  
Guest Columnist

For the past 50 years, most of our conversations and efforts have been centered on politics. Reminiscent of the Reconstruction Era, when Blacks occupied political office for the first time, many of our politicians are just figureheads, toothless tigers and lackeys for the establishment.

Many of them are simply "employed" and are only concerned about keeping their "jobs." Many Black politicians actually work harder on behalf of others than they do for their own brothers and sisters. We must change our conversation from politics to economics.

Before you political hacks get angry, let me say that we must continue to be involved in politics. We must run for office and we must leverage our votes, by all means. But we cannot afford to stop there. We saw what happened in 2008 and 2012; both times Black folks were told to "go out and vote." We were told we must vote in even greater numbers in 2012 than we did in 2008. We did it, and we still cannot even get a hearing on reparations. A few years ago, P Diddy told the young people to, "Vote or die." They voted and yet, when it comes to economic empowerment, they, and we, are nearly dead. Like I said in a previous article, where is the "Start a business or die" campaign, the "Pool our

money or die" campaign? Black people must realize that while our relatives fought and died for voting rights, those folks didn't die so we could spend the majority of our time "playing" politics. They wanted us to take our participation to the next level. Similarly, Black folks, your relatives and mine, also lost their lives because they chose to go into business. Where is the rallying cry today

principle: Quid pro quo. We should be leveraging our votes; otherwise, why participate at all? It really doesn't matter what color the politician is. What matters most is what Black folks are getting from the system, and Black folks are getting the shaft from most of our politicians. You know it, I know it, and they know it. It's bad enough that the leadership in the two major parties really doesn't care about us.

**"The old game of Black folks being all or nothing to either party has proven to be our political demise."**

**-James Clingman**

for entrepreneurship? Black politicians who do absolutely nothing for Black folks come out every couple of years to tell us how good they have been and what they support on our behalf. What a load of fertilizer that is. Even stranger is the fact that Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives do the same things. We may duck the "right" cross, but we still get hit by the "left" hook. In other words, we have nothing coming from either political party, and they have proven that to us time and time again.

Since our vaunted voting "power" is so important to the two major political parties, we should be using it in ways that support the most important political prin-

One is throwing Mike Tyson right crosses and the other is throwing Joe Frazier left hooks at us, causing us to be off-balance, out of sync, and off-kilter, as we try to avoid their vicious haymakers.

The political "leaders" who continue to tell us that all we have to do is vote to change things should be voted out of office. This voting for all Democrats or all Republicans by Black folks is nothing short of political suicide. Carter G. Woodson said, "Any people who would vote the same way for three generations without thereby obtaining results ought to be ignored and disenfranchised."

The old game of Black folks being all or nothing to either party has proven to be our political demise. We give our all and

get nothing in return. Eighty years ago, nearly all Blacks voted Republican. Now, it's just the opposite. Neither scenario has worked, so why do we continue that insanity? Black folks have been getting hit with right crosses and left hooks since we got into this political game, and now we need to start throwing some punches of our own.

The hardest punches we can throw are economic punches. We must be willing to take off the gloves and go with bare-knuckles into the marketplace and let our presence be known by withholding and redirecting our dollars. We must put our money where our mouth is and contribute to politicians who speak and act on our behalf. The only things that count with politicians are dollars and votes - in that order. We must leverage both to get what we need from either the "Demopublicans" or the "Republicrats."

As the right crosses and left hooks continue to be thrown by crooked, immoral, and unethical politicians, both White and Black, let's get busy economically and start punching back, before we get knocked out.

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## The Waco biker riot reveals the lexicon of racism



**Black**



**Lee Daniels**  
Guest Columnist

Question: When men (and a few women) belonging to gangs known to law enforcement agencies for criminal behavior explode in a rampage - using guns, knives, clubs, and chains in trying to kill each other, and police officers, too, that leaves nine dead, nearly 200 injured and hundreds arrested, is that a "riot?"

Answer: Apparently not if the overwhelming majority of the gang members are White.

America's present-day "racial divide," has never been more strikingly displayed than in the refusal of much of the mainstream and conservative media to describe the May 17 biker

riot in Waco, Texas as a riot.

The riot, which occurred at a popular restaurant amid dozens of innocent bystanders and, according to police, involved members of five different gangs, was one of the most extraordinary outbursts of mass criminal violence in recent memory. Further, almost immediately after Waco police arrested the bikers, rumors swirled that other members of the gangs were heading toward the city to both continue the battle against their rivals and carry out death threats made against Waco police officials.

Yet, scanning the newspapers, the universe of online publications, and the network and cable television news programs, you'd have scarcely come across any description of what occurred in Waco as a "riot." Nor would you have likely found any reference to the bikers, clad in their distinctively grungy biker garb, as "thugs" - or, as one newspaper reader put it: "murdering thuggish rioters."

MediaMatters, the watchdog group, pointed out the contrast in how Fox News, for example, covered Waco versus Baltimore and Ferguson.

It noted, "After African-American communities in Baltimore and Ferguson, Mo. came together to demonstrate against the deadly and racially disparate policies of law enforcement, Fox News branded the protests a 'war on cops.' But when the story became a mostly white Texas biker gang plotting to kill police with grenades and car bombs, the network took a decidedly less sensationalist approach in its reporting."

CNN Political Commentator Sally Kohn wrote, "In fact, in much of the coverage of the Waco shootings, the race of the gang members isn't even mentioned. By comparison, the day after Freddie Gray died in the custody of police officers in Baltimore, not only did most coverage mention that Gray was black, but also included a quote from the deputy police commissioner noting Gray was arrested in 'a high-crime area known to have high narcotic incidents,' implicitly smearing Gray and the entire community."

The disparity in coverage did not go unremarked upon on Black social media, in a host of progressive publications, and in numerous online reader-

responses to mainstream-publication stories. (Many also noted the Waco police responded to the deadly shootout with none of the heavily militarized equipment and body armor that immediately marked police responses to peaceful protests in Ferguson and Baltimore.)

Indeed, the differences in the language used underscore that the way words and phrases are used to talk about race and racial events has its own meaning. In this instance, it's that such words as "riot" and "thug" are part of the lexicon of America's continuing racial divide that, among other things, individualizes White crime and White flaws while it indicts all Black Americans for the flaws and crimes of individual Blacks. Some years ago a journalist friend of mine described this dynamic as "the chains of collective guilt."

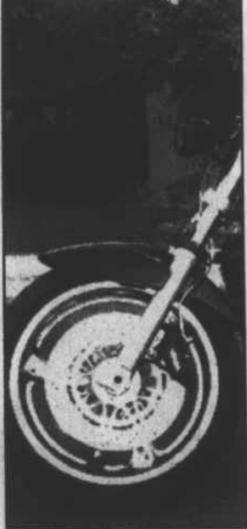
The phenomenon isn't new, of course. Once, the lexicon of anti-Black collective guilt helped justify the actual chains of Negro slavery and the legalized racism that followed. Now, it's usually employed in more subtle ways.

Except when it's not: As in the revealing discoveries over the past two

months of racist, sexist and homophobic tweets and e-mails by cops in the police departments of San Francisco, Miami Beach, and Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

In each case - all are still in early stages of investigation - police officers, some with long years on their force, were found to have exchanged from dozens to hundreds of social-media messages disparaging with vile slurs against Blacks, Hispanic-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, Muslim Americans - and, of course, President Obama. Law enforcement co-workers and innocent civilians alike were denigrated along with Black criminal suspects. The bulk of the messages in all these instances, which cover from 2010 to the present, focused on Black Americans.

The discoveries have led to the resignations of some of the officers, and disciplinary actions, including firing, against the others. Even more important, prosecutors and police officials in the three cities are reviewing cases of defendants in which the officers were involved either as arresting officers or witnesses at trial. In San Francisco, prosecutors have already dropped eight



**White**

cases connected to some of the officers there.

One Miami Beach cop tried to excuse his behavior by describing it as just part of the police department's longstanding "culture." Unfortunately, the same could be said for the mainstream and conservative media's refusal to use the most accurate descriptions for the Waco biker riot.

It's those similarities that are worrisome.

*Lee A. Daniels is a longtime journalist based in New York City. His essay, "Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Great Provocateur," appears in "Africa's Peacemakers: Nobel Peace Laureates of African Descent" (2014), published by Zed Books. His new collection of columns, "Race Forward: Facing America's Racial Divide in 2014," is available at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).*