

The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

1531 Camden Road Charlotte, N.C. 28203

Gerald O. Johnson CEO/PUBLISHER

Robert L. Johnson CO-PUBLISHER/GENERAL MANAGER

Herbert L. White EDITOR IN CHIEF

MATTERS OF OPINION

Clowning the culture

Snoop Dog, Combs selling out for the almighty dollar

By Darryl James.

NEW PITTSBURGH COURIER

"MoccaCoca. Ikashizzle. I got the hookup, Nephew."

—Snoop Dogg

"I'm not sure what you just said."

—Lee Iacocca

I used to love Snoop. His sing-songy rhymes laced with the countriness of a second generation Arkansas transplant fit so well over the beats made by Dr. Dre, that no neck could keep from making heads bob in slow syncopation.

And I just knew that as he rose in his game that he would also elevate his content. Sadly, I was right, but in a different way.

Snoop has elevated his content from white America's favorite gangsta rapper, to corporate America's favorite coon. Yes, I said it—Snoop is cooning. What else can be said when viewing his latest commercial venture—for Chrysler no less—in tandem with that corporation's former chief executive officer, Lee Iacocca?

In the commercial, Snoop is unleashing as much coon gibberish as he can in sixty seconds, while the distinguished corporate statesman is rendered unable to decipher the language of the strange dark man. I have to be honest—there is something that white people love about Snoop that is making me lose my love for him. Imagine—squeaky clean Corporate America and big bad Snoop.

It's not as though he's some bad boy actor who is simply playing a role. Snoop purports to have a real life claim to gangster fame.

Think I'm tripping? Well, Ludacris, who is also a hot Rap star, was kicked off the Pepsi brand ad campaign based on explicit lyrics in his album. But with Snoop, here's a coon who admittedly sold drugs and gang banged, was charged with murder and maybe even slapped his wife, representing one of the largest corporations in America—in essence, selling cars to 60-year-old white men and blue-haired white women. Explain that one, Nephew. He got the hookup fa' sho'.

They need us so much that they'll take anything. Did I say they "need us"?

The simple truth is that America understands our ability to hawk a product better than we ever did. And even if they have to go to the most disgraceful of us to pander to the nation's love affair with black culture, they will. With Snoop, they did, garnering one of the most popular, who is also one of the most disgraceful.

Corporate America understands how it works, even though most of us never give it a second thought. Popular culture is based on black culture. Whatever we do, if it becomes popular, they will take it mainstream. The biggest problem is that when it goes mainstream and generates revenue, very few of us will partake of the rewards. Another problem is usually what goes mainstream is a

caricature of who we really are.

That caricature of who we are is a small portion of our existence, but once it is packaged and sold back to us and the rest of the world, the impression is that the caricature is all we are really about. Sadly, we often get that impression ourselves.

For example, the world thinks we are all thugs based on the images sold most prolifically through rap music and the bastardization of Hip Hop culture. Once that image was sold back to us, our sisters began looking for a man with a little thug in him, and our brothers began to act like thugs. And we began to think that using the word "Nigga" was a revolution.

A handful of us will clown our culture for a punchline and/or a paycheck, but Corporate America is using us, not celebrating us, and they don't give half a damn how we look in the process. Fa' shizzle, my nizzles.

Another modern day Stepin Fetchit, Puff Daddy, P-Diddy, McGriddle, The Riddler, or whatever he's calling himself these days (The Buffoon formerly known as Sean), spear-headed America's embrace of the gas-hogging, ridiculously oversized Hummer.

In the world's richest nation, which has some of the poorest people, it took this embarrassment to black nationalists everywhere to make it cool to be excessive, with the poorest and the dumbest of our people standing first in line. So, why did Nike have a problem with Kobe? He's an admitted adulterer and accused rapist, but so what? He's black and he was more than willing to run and jump for the boss. Hell, if OJ's knees weren't shot, he'd still be willing to run through the airports for Hertz. But alas, America convicted him for sleeping with a white woman...I mean...you know what I mean.

But the problem with Kobe and OJ is that they aren't anyone's bad boys. They tried to be nice guys and while they didn't represent the race, they didn't go out of their way to make the race look bad, either. And Corporate America needs a black person to dance, sing or tell jokes for every white version of a commercial featuring white people who are dignified.

They order the pizza for their family based on a discount—we rip and dip. They call for the Kool-Aid man, while we predict personalities based on what fruit each person takes in their drink. They ask: "Can you hear me now?" We ask: "Where you at?" They advise: "If you can find a better car, buy it." We advise: "If it's mo' fly, then you must buy."

The problem is that black people in America have an image problem. And it won't get any better as long as we willingly participate in our own denigration. Fa' shizzle!

DARRYL JAMES is an author and relationship coach. He can be reached at djames@theblackgendergap.com.

THE CAMPAIGN YARD
SIGN I'D LIKE TO SEE...



George E. Curry
Copyright © 2005

Roberts outmaneuvered Democrats

GEORGE E. CURRY



John G. Roberts will be seated as chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court next week after depicting himself as an open-minded jurist, dismissing past controversial positions by saying that he was merely carrying out the orders of his superiors and politely refusing to answer questions that would have provided insight into his judicial philosophy.

Roberts was so effective shadowboxing with Democratic members of the Senate Judiciary Committee that in the end, three of them voted for him: Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont and both Wisconsin senators, Russell D. Feingold and Herb Kohl. Even more Democrats are expected to support Roberts when the full Senate votes on the nomination this week.

While Roberts' artful testimony before the Judiciary Committee may have left the impression that he is not a rigid conservative, his words and record provide a different portrait. For example, Kenneth L. Manning, a political science professor at the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, presented a paper on Roberts earlier this

month to the American Political Science Association. Titled, "How Right Is He: A Quantitative Analysis of the Ideology of Judge John G. Roberts," the paper examined 190 decisions made during Roberts' short tenure as a federal appeals judge and compared those averages to other federal appeals judges across the country.

In looking at Roberts' record, it is important to remember that Republican-appointed judges dominate the federal judiciary at all levels. Therefore, his record was measured against a group that tilts to the Right.

"I find that Roberts is very conservative in his decision making in criminal justice disputes, and the data suggest that he is exceptionally conservative in civil liberties and rights cases (though the limited number of cases in this area restrict the ability to draw a firm conclusions)," Professor Manning wrote. "In labor and economic disputes, however, Judge Roberts has been more liberal than the appellate court average."

A closer look at the research shows that Roberts cast a conservative vote in 67.1 percent of the cases that came before him, compared to a 58.9 percent group average for court of appeals judges. He cast liberal votes in 32.2 percent of the cases, almost 9 percent less than the 41.1 percent average for appellate

judges.

In addition to his voting record, we also have Roberts' written words. And contrary to his assertion that he was merely carrying out the wishes of his conservative supervisors in the Reagan Justice Department, Roberts' writings reveal that he often advocated positions that were to the right of the department's most ardent ideologues.

On Dec. 9, 1981, Roberts wrote a 27-page memorandum asserting that it was legal to remove the Supreme Court's ability to consider cases that involve school desegregation, abortion and school prayer under the so-called "exception clause" to Article III, section 2 of the Constitution, the section governing Supreme Court jurisdiction. Another lawyer, Ted Olson, who would later become solicitor general, wrote that Roberts' view "misperceives the proper role of constitutional interpretation" and offered a "greatly oversimplified and misleading view of the Constitution."

In a memorandum on employment suits filed against Clayton and Gwinnett counties in Georgia, Roberts objected to a proposed settlement agreement that offered jobs and back pay not only to actual victims of discrimination, but to those that could show that they were deterred from

applying because of discrimination. Roberts called that proposal "staggering." He took the preposterous position that even if an employee had a "blanket policy of rejecting all blacks simply because they were black" they would not be violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act unless it could be proven that the rejected Blacks "were more qualified than white applicants who were hired." Of course, federal employment laws do not require that African-Americans be "more qualified" than Whites in order to be hired.

Despite Supreme Court rulings to the contrary, Roberts argued in a Feb. 15, 1984 memo that federal courts could be stripped of their power in school desegregation cases to reassign students to other schools or to order bussing as a remedy to correct unconstitutional segregation. That, too, was an argument to the right of Ted Olson and other department conservatives.

Now, 23 years later, it is not an issue of conservatives kowtowing to liberals. Rather, it is progressives lacking the backbone to stand up to conservatives.

GEORGE E. CURRY is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service and BlackPressUSA.com. He appears on National Public Radio as part of "News and Notes with Ed Gordon."

The political far right is closed-minded

I have to let you in on a little secret: the political right has not appreciated what I have had to say about the Katrina disaster. My guess is that they have not appreciated what you have been writing or saying either.

I felt, for example, that it was essential to defend rapper Kanye West's comments at the NBC fund raiser for Katrina where he lashed out at the slow pace of aid to the survivors and questioned Bush's concern about the poor and the African-American. As far as I was/am concerned, West not only had every right to speak his mind, but his comments were completely appropriate in the middle of an unmitigated disaster that could have and should have been addressed in an urgent fashion by all levels of government. In a separate column I addressed the structural issues in U.S. capitalism that have trapped the poor and the African-American in the Gulf Coast in what is the equivalent of the sinking Titanic.

The political right did not appreciate this. In addition to being called everything but a child of God, they struck back heaping most of the blame for the Katrina disaster on the mayor of New Orleans and the governor of Louisiana (the people of Mississippi seemed to have been forgot-

ten in all this). As far as the political Right was concerned, Bush was blameless.

Now, leaving aside that President Bush rhetorically takes responsibility for the foul-ups following the disaster, it is worth understanding what is going on in the minds of the political right and what they see as the future for the Gulf Coast.

First, they blame the people themselves. The e-mails I

received often put the blame for the sorrow and tragedy on the people of the region, and particularly those unable or unwilling to leave New Orleans. Conservative columnist Linda Chavez announced that the poor of New Orleans were so used to waiting for people to do things for them that they were sitting around waiting again. In other words, the poor of New Orleans had some sort of death wish. The political right has decided to ignore the fact that provisions were not made—though they were anticipated—for the evacuation of those who would be unable to leave on their own. There is absolutely blame here for the state and municipal authorities, but not blame for the people

themselves. Second, the political right says that President Bush needed to be asked to get involved. There are a few problems with this, among others, following the 9/11 terrorist attack, we were informed that there would be closer coordination between federal, state and municipal authorities in addressing a disaster. That did not happen. It was also the case that everyone had at least two days notice of the disaster approaching, so what were the federal authorities doing? The bottom line is that this was not a priority. I must also add, and this may seem like a silly point, that we do not live in a confederacy, i.e., that there is a role for the federal government in addressing disasters that goes beyond addressing crises in time of war.

Third, the political right seems to ignore what happened to people immediately after the storm. Why, I asked my right-wing critics, did the federal government not carry out air drops or helicopter drops of supplies to survivors on bridges, overpasses and other areas? Why did police, quite literally, not allow survivors out of New Orleans and into neighboring communities?

The political Right is intent on keeping the heat off of President Bush. With his

ratings at the lowest point in his two terms, with the Iraq war/occupation growing in unpopularity, with the complete lack of leadership displayed at the time of the Katrina disaster, the political Right does not want to let on that the light is on but no one is at home.

Instead, the political right, after attempting to shift the blame for the disaster response to everyone but the federal government, is now dreaming up the future of the Gulf Coast. This should get us all to hold onto our wallets. They are quite brazen in their vision of a New Orleans minus black people. They are quite brazen in advancing the notion that the reconstruction of the Gulf Coast will be done with no or certainly limited input from the survivors themselves. Instead, right-wing think-tanks are working overtime—to draft plans for the reconstruction of the region such that it fits the schemes of Bush & company for a Gulf Coast-as-theme park and yacht club for the rich, rather than as a home for the millions who have been injured, suffered damage or been displaced.

BILL FLETCHER Jr. is president of TransAfrica Forum, a Washington think-tank which raises awareness about issues facing Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America.