Bush's rhetoric vs. reality

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do not square with his record in office.

"There's a disconnect between what he says
and what he does," says Frank Mesiah, president of the Buffalo, N.Y. Branch of the NAACP.
Mesiah remained seated during Bush's
address while many delegates around him
gave polite applause, some jumping to their
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"What he said is the right thing. People are grimning and smilling because he said the right thing." Mesiah said. "But he appoints judges to the federal bench who have histories of doing the opposite of what he said. Nobody can argue about No Child Left Behind.' But do they know that it was not properly funded?"

Mesiah's sentiments were the same as those voiced by a string of civil rights leaders.
"We not only need the right to vote, but the right to increased minimum wage," Jesse Jackson observes. "He also needs to engage, in a meaningful way, with civil rights leaders. He can meet with [Russian President] Putin and they disagree. He can meet with us and disagree."

agree."

Jackson, who has sought meetings with Bush, since his first term in office, has encountered what he describes as a "lock out of lead-

ership."

Al Sharpton did not attend the speech because, he says, "George Bush has not demonstrated in such a way that I wanted to sit and act as if his words match his deeds and his poli-

while Jackson and Al Sharpton have been excluded from some recent White House meet-

ings with Bush, NAACP President and CEO Bruce Gordon, the leader with the least civil rights experience, has been embraced by Bush and essentially serves as the point person when Bush wishes to meet with a select number of civil rights leaders. In fact, without Gordon's overtures to Bush, it is unlikely that the president would have spoken to the NAACP national convention for the first time since taking office.

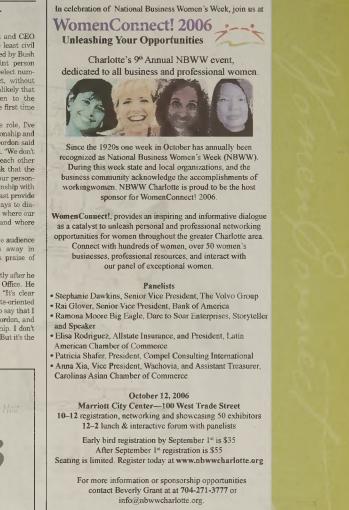
"The moment I stepped into this role, I've been working to cultivate that relationship and we've had candid conversations." Gordon said in an interview following the speech. "We don't always agree, but we understand each other and that's what's important. I think that the openness of our communication of our personal relationship as well as my relationship with other members of his staff can at least provide us comfort that we're looking for ways to dialogue and we're hoping to find ways where our principles and priorities intersect and where they do, we will work on it."

As Jesses Jackson sat glumly in the audience and Al Sharpton was 544 miles away in Atlanta, Bush was effusive in his praise of Gordon.

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Gordon.

"Tve gotten to know him. See, shortly after he was elected, he came by the Oval Office. He doesn't mince words," Bush says. "It's clear what's on his mind. He's also a results-oriented person. I'm pleased — I'm pleased to say that I have — I'm an admirer of Bruce Gordon, and we've got a good working relationship. I don't know if that helps you or hurts you. But it's the truth, I admire the man."



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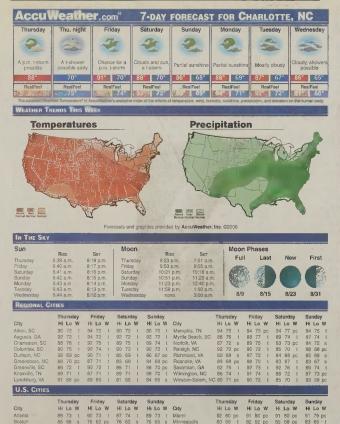
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