

# Clinton lost his temper: Great!

It's about time that somebody in the leadership of the Democratic Party had the backbone to stand up and confront the right wing drivet that passes for respectable news that is now cloaked in "am-Bush" journalism. The coverage of Bill Clinton's response to the questions about Osama bin Laden raised in his interview with Chris Wallace of Fox News has been replete with charges that "Clinton flew off the hook," "lost his cool" or was "unpresidential."

Totally understated was the truth of his message that he had attacked Bin Laden with more vigor than George W Bush and almost got him. But Republican critics charged that it was a "wag the dog" action to divert attention away from the Monica Lewinsky scandal. However, an old debating tactic I learned in high school is that sometimes when you can't attack the content of the message, attack the style in which it was delivered.

Just a cursory look at Clinton's record, however, reveals that in 1996 he proposed and led the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Act, partly in response to the bombing of the Oklahoma federal building by home-grown terrorist. Nevertheless, the bill had a healthy international focus, and some of the instruments were used after the bombing of the USS Cole, when he prepared battle plans to go after the Taliban in Afghanistan. But the action was canceled because the FBI and the CIA refused to certify that Osama Bin Laden was the source of the bombing and the military was unable to secure basing right in Uzbekistan.

Nevertheless, USA Today reported that this administration's use of reconnaissance satellites to record Bin Laden's phone calls prevented six more bombings of U. S. embassies after the Kenya and Tanzania bombings. And even in the last years of Clinton's administration, in May of 2000, he announced the addition of \$300 million more to the terrorism fighting units of the governments. I don't think that is a bad record, considering he had nothing like the unity of public support behind his policies that Bush had after 9-11.

Nevertheless, there is — or should be — a political effect of Clinton's defiant response to Chris Wallace. First, Republicans have been attempting to hang 9-11 around Clinton's neck, saying that his administration did nothing about terrorism, something the facts simply do not bear out. The point of this is obviously to shift the blame for the fact that the war in Iraq is going badly and Osama bin Laden has not been captured, potentially leaving a legacy for the Bush administration of failure all around.

Second, effectively rebutting Republican charges that his administration was ultimately to blame for 9-11 creates some running room for Hillary Clinton's presidential aspirations; she would surely have to address that issue. Right now, she has strongly supported her husband's forthright response to these charges, saying that he was right to strongly defend his administration and agreed that the Bush administration dropped the ball when it came into office.

Third, there is a need to shore up the base vote of the Democratic party for the fall general election and this is the kind of red meat that gets the blood flowing. Democrats have been rolled over by the aggressiveness of the Republican Party, beginning with their impeachment of Clinton.

Most recently, they have consistently flouted bi-partisan governance and run rough-shod over Democrats over elections, over the nomination of conservative judges, over the budget, over whether the war is either wise or just and Democrats just have not fought back.

Thus, I agree with David Gergen's comment that this might have just created a dynamic that is needed by the base of the Democratic Party in seeing a credible leader finally stand up to the Republican onslaught. Howard Dean, Democratic party Chair, has suffered rebuke from fellow Democrats when he has tried to lead in the direction of confronting Republicans. But party leaders were either outright timid or preferred a more moderate approach because they believed the American people were afraid of the topic.

But Clinton proved that he is not afraid of any topic. RON WALTERS is the Distinguished Leadership Scholar, Director of the African American Leadership Institute and Professor of Government and Politics at the University of Maryland— College Park.

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# When politicians sell out our interests

Wake up, black folks! The time has come, indeed, it is far past due, to "call the roll" or to identify, clearly, those among us who sell us out, either for personal-political gain and/or as agents supporting or perpetuating white supremacy-racism in this community. And state Sen. Malcolm Graham, unquestionably, is an example of a politically dangerous "sell out" of the interests of blacks in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Indeed, as history teaches us, some of slave traders in Africa, with black faces and apparently naive about chattel slavery, sold us out to Europeans who bought us here in chains, branded us like cattle, broke up our families, enslaved-brutalized us for nearly 250 years, exploited our "free" labor, while accumulating great wealth for themselves, providing the economic foundation for America-wealth passes on from generation to generations of whites-as disproportionate poverty was passed on to us.

Moreover, after chattel slavery ended in 1865, blacks remained enslaved economically through a quasi-slave system of share cropping and subsistence wages; that is, those of us who managed to survive the barbarism of massive lynching, urban pogroms, the dehumanization of racial segregation and/or related forms of domestic terrorism. And during these years, we also had a number of black "sell outs" or traitors who worked against the interests of the black masses for their personal-political gain.

Adding insult to injury, the dominant majority made it a crime to teach blacks to read or write during the era of chattel slavery—a public policy designed to keep us ignorant, noncompetitive and socio-economically subordinate on the bottom or dung heap of American society. And these dastardly, immoral public policies were followed by over 100 years of separate, grossly unequal mis-education of our people, misusing our tax dollars, as usual, for enrichment of the dominant majority. And these evil policies also were supported by some black "sell outs" or traitors.

Closer to "home," let us recall that the City of Charlotte recently abandoned any pretense to provide meaningful assistance to black or minority businesses by eliminating its already meager black or minority business program, while creating a so-called small business program, benefiting mainly whites, as usual. And let us not forget that it was Senator Malcolm Graham that provided the black face on this relatively useless or specious public policy. Therefore, we should not have been surprised that generally white members of "our" City Council supported Senator Graham during his election campaign to the N.C. Senate, while generally black council members supported his white opponent. Moreover, and naively in retrospect, I once supported Senator Graham's candidacy for the state Senate.

More germane, Senator Graham, with \$100,000 of state money, is now planning to promote a black leadership conference in early January of next year—an idea initially suggested by this author. Senator Graham, after promising to cooperate with me on this endeavor, subsequently betrayed, disrespected, and lied to me, having created a small clique of unknown supporters—most likely "sell outs." He excluded this author from an apparent series of "secret" planning meetings, where, among other featured speakers, "they" plan to invite Mr. Juan Williams to Charlotte, apparently another "sell out" of black interests.

And for those who may not know anything about Mr. Williams, I encourage you to read his book, "Enough Is Enough," where he attacks reparations for blacks, equating it to "begging" which reflects that "blacks are wards of the state because they are a broken people." And yes, to the degree that we ARE "broken" and broke (i.e., in poverty), it was done mainly by white racists in collaboration with their "meegro" allies or traitors. Moreover, on reparations, Mr. Williams has written: "Social ills in the black community would be exaggerated as black people, flush with one big check, decide they don't need school, don't need a job, and remove themselves from the vitality of mainstream American life"—outrageous nonsense, par excellence.

Finally and totally apart from the reality that most blacks, never, have been in the "mainstream American life"—with the Katrina disaster in New Orleans reflecting a recent case in point—many, if not most reputable black scholars and activists, past and present, have supported reparations, including the late Dr. Martin L. King Jr. Moreover, we strongly support the posture of Attorney Randall Robinson, author of The Debt, who reminded us that the race problem in America CANNOT be resolved in the absence of reparations. Therefore, I challenge Senator Graham and other political "sell outs" who thrive — like County Commissioner Bill James, on Blaming the Victim (Ryan, 1971) — to provide us with their solution(s) to our spiritual or so-called race problem in the absence of reparations. Indeed, if the so-called small business program promoted by Malcolm Graham while he was on the City Council is an example of one of his solutions, "God help us."

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# National voter ID poses threat

Just two months after overwhelmingly passing the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization of 2006, the U.S. House of Representatives recently reversed its commitment to ensuring the right to vote for all. Under legislation passed recently, they want U.S. citizens to show proof of their citizenship to vote and then show photo I.D. when they cast their ballots.

Introduced by Illinois Republican Rep. Henry Hyde, the bill, titled the Federal Election Integrity Act of 2006 (H.R. 4844), passed the House by a vote of 228 to 195. In the process, lawmakers are threatening to disenfranchise thousands of elderly, poor and minority Americans by burdening them with costly and inconvenient requirements.

Only a quarter of eligible voters have passports, which cost \$97 to obtain, and naturalization papers used to prove citizenship cost \$210 to be replaced. An estimated 6 to 12 percent of voters do not have government-issued photo identification, according to the U.S. Department of Transportation.

People of color, people with disabilities, the elderly, young, and people who live in poverty are among the groups least likely to have documents proving their citizenship. In certain parts of the United States, elderly African Americans and many Native Americans were born at home, under the care of midwives, and do not possess birth certificates.

According to a University of Wisconsin study from June, 2005, 23 percent of persons aged 65 and older in that state did not have driver's licenses or photo identification. It also found that less than half of African-American men in Milwaukee County had valid driver's licenses.

H.R. 4844, while appealing on the surface, poses one of the greatest threats to fair and equal voting rights today. We should be focusing on encouraging full participation of our citizenry, not finding new ways to hinder the precious right to vote. While it would be great if all citizens had documents such as a passport or a birth certificate readily available, the truth is that many do not, which means that they would have to pay for them in order to vote.

Four states — Georgia, Missouri, Indiana and Arizona — have enacted laws requiring photo ID to vote. In two of those states, federal courts have struck them down as unconstitutional. In 2005, a federal judge in Georgia characterized the requirement as a poll tax. I can't agree more. It's a 21st Century poll tax.

The bill's proponents maintain they're trying to crack down on voting fraud. But I would say they are perpetuating the greatest fraud of all. They're trying to prevent eligible Americans from exercising their most sacred and important civil right. Falsely claiming citizenship and voting fraudulently have long been federal offenses.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice, Americans are as likely to commit election fraud as they are getting killed by lightning. Since October of 2002, a total of 86 U.S. residents have been convicted of federal election fraud, while nearly 197,000 ballots have been cast in general elections.

In Ohio, a statewide survey found four instances of ineligible persons voting or attempting to vote in 2002 and 2004, out of 9,078,728 votes cast — a rate of 0.00004 percent. Cathy Cox, the secretary of state for Georgia, has admitted that she could not recall one documented case of voter impersonation at the polls during her nine years as the state's top election official.

It is obvious that our current laws against voting fraud work when properly enforced.

Even if voters have valid ID, many eligible voters will be turned away because H.R. 4844 would place an inordinate amount of discretion in the hands of overworked and sometimes poorly trained poll workers. Deciding whether a voter matches or does not match the photo in an ID card — which can be many years old — is a very subjective process and prone to mistakes.

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