

# The Charlotte Post

The Voice of the Black Community

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OPINIONS

## What does it mean when president won't listen?

In the last couple of months there have been some disturbing developments that tell us a great deal about the Bush administration and the danger that it poses to the world.

A bi-partisan commission—the "Iraq Study Group"—came out with a series of recommendations on how the U.S.A. can deal with the disastrous situation unfolding in Iraq. Drawing from noted Democratic and Republican officials, the Study Group's recommendations did not go as far as I happen to think that they should. What they did suggest, however, was putting an emphasis on a political resolution of the Iraq crisis. The Bush administration and its allies not only ignored the recommendations, but mocked them as not serious.

We were then treated to the surreal "State of the Union Address" where a very frightened and frightening President Bush essentially told the people. He was going to pursue the war his way and his way alone. Following the State of the Union Address, when his speech was treated to the wide spread criticism it deserved, he and his allies had the audacity to argue that if one did not like their plan of increasing US troops in Iraq and provoking a war with Iran, that they should come up with another plan.

Well, Mr. President, a bi-partisan commission did come up with another plan after months of study and you disregarded each and every aspect of that proposal, so what sort of plan are you looking for?

The answer, of course, is that there is no other plan than the one that the Bush administration wishes to advance, a plan that shows little chance of success and, even in the words of many of its own supporters, is nothing short of more of the same. Well, except for one thing: Bush's current plans may result in an expansion of the war in Iraq to a war with Iran, and from there, who knows?

So, given that we are dealing with a president who is convinced that he and only he knows what to do, what should people of conscience do?

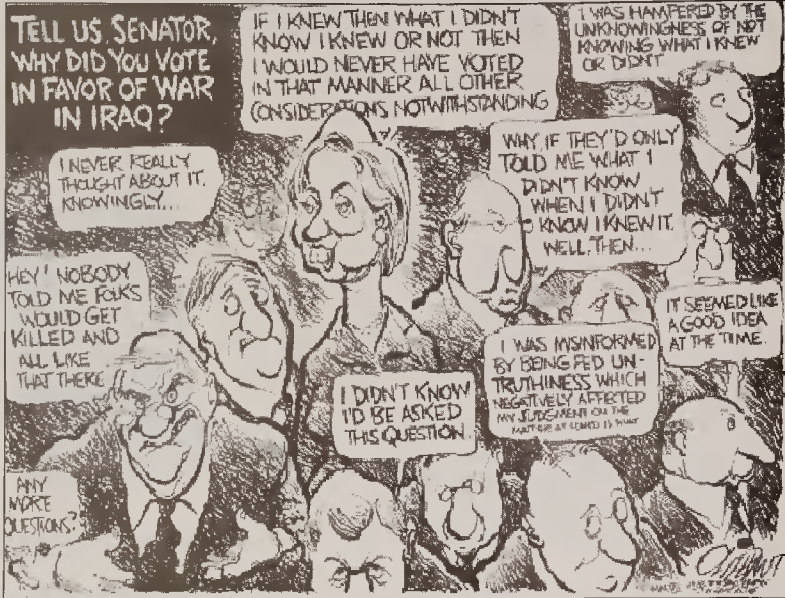
The first thing that we have to accept is that we truly are in a situation of no more business as usual. In other words, it is not enough to express outrage through occasional national demonstrations and then go home and expect that things will improve.

Don't get me wrong, national demonstrations are not only important but they are essential. It is just that they are not enough. We must combine national and local actions, including local demonstrations; letters and calls to local media to express our opinions; resolutions against the war signed by institutions with which we are affiliated; and one very big thing: an African-American Day of Respect and Opposition to the War. I have raised this in the past, and I will raise it again. African Americans need to stand up in opposition to policies that led to the Katrina catastrophe and the on-going catastrophe in Iraq. They are intimately related.

The same administration that is prepared to put billions into an illegal war and occupation of Iraq was prepared to ignore all the warning signs leading to the Katrina disaster and pay precious little attention to the recovery. To add insult to injury, President Bush could not find the time or the willpower to include any mention of the on-going Katrina disaster in his State of the Union Speech. Dissed, once again Black America! We must take the lead and call a national day where we withdraw our services and funds in protest over what has been taking place. There is no better way to make a political point than through our opponent's pocket book.

In having a president who completely ignores the will of the people, including the views of some of his most trusted allies and advisors, we are dealing with a situation of arrogance bordering on tyranny. In such situations pretending as if conditions are normal is absurd. If the president cannot hear our concerns, then we must shake things up in such a way that even he can no longer ignore them.

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## A super ending for the Super Bowl

Tony Dungy has finally done it. On Sunday, he became the first African-American coach to win a Super Bowl.

As everyone on this side of mars knows by now, Dungy's Indianapolis Colts defeated the Chicago Bears, coached by Louie Smith, a Duny protégé.

Considering that no African-American head coach had led a team to the Super Bowl throughout its four decades of existence - most of them without blacks as head coaches - it was a story worth following. It was notable that both coaches, this time around, were African-Americans.

However, all of the attention on race ignores some fundamental facts that are more important than the race of each coach. Both Dungy and Smith are exceptionally smart tacticians. They obviously know their business. In addition, each found success by breaking the typical NFL coaching mold and proved that nice guys can finish first.

Unfortunately, only one coach could win on Sunday and I am happy it was Dungy. Lovie Smith will eventually join the ranks of Super Bowl winners, but on Sunday, it was Dungy's turn

and nothing could be more fitting.

On Sunday, as in the previous playoff nail-biter against New England, the Colts started in the hole. After falling behind 21-6 against the Patriots, Dungy persuaded his team that they could win. "It's our time," he said, making believers out of misbelievers.

"Tony is one calm customer, no matter what the circumstance he has a way of making you believe," quarterback Payton Manning said later. "We're stressed out, and he's parading back and forth telling us we're going to win. That rubs off on the younger players, even the older players. It made a difference."

That's not the only way Dungy has made a difference.

We hear a lot about the coaching disciples of Bill Parcells and others. Yet, Dungy's record and nose for talent has to be one of the best in the NFL. It was Dungy, as head coach of Tampa Bay, who gave Smith his first opportunity to coach. And here they were - teacher and pupil - facing each other on the sidelines. En route to his Super Bowl victory, Dungy had to defeat Herm Edwards, the Kansas City Chiefs coach who had been an assistant with him at Tampa Bay. Pittsburgh hired yet another Dungy pupil, Mike Tomlin, to become its head coach. Dungy's influence isn't limited to African-

Americans. Another assistant, Rod Marinelli, is now coach of the Detroit Lions.

What a judge of talent. After his coaching days are over, teams should hold a bidding war to acquire the services of someone with such an eye for spotting talent. In retrospect, it is clear that in hiring those black assistants, Dungy was looking at far more than their skin color.

In his own quiet way, Dungy demonstrated that as head coach, he wasn't afraid to hire other talented African-Americans. Without that first job from Dungy and others might still be waiting for their first break, just as Dungy did for years.

"Lovie Smith and I are not only African-Americans, but also Christian coaches showing you can do it the Lord's way," Dungy said at the trophy ceremonies. "We're more proud of that."

In all the euphoria over Dungy and Smith, we shouldn't lose our perspective. A report co-authored by the late Johnnie Cochran concluded in 2002 that the NFL had a "dismal record of minority hiring."

Approximately 70 percent of the players in the NFL are African-Americans. Yet, since the NFL was formed in 1920, more than 400 coaches have been hired, according to the report. Of those, only six were Black - five of them hired since 1989; only one Black has been added since the report.

And things are even worse at the college level, the feeder system for the NFL. Almost half of Division I-A players are Black - 46 percent; five of 119 coaches were Black.

One longtime complaint of black football coaches is that in some areas, blacks are no better off now than they were under segregation. In an earlier era, blacks had their own "classics" and bowl games.

Jake Gaither of Florida A & M... Grambling's Eddie Robinson and John Merritt of Tennessee State were common and larger-than-life fixtures on the sidelines; it was not considered unusual when one squared off against the other.

And no one questioned whether an African-American had the smarts to play quarterback or middle linebacker. There were 11 slots on offense and defense and none were allowed to go unfilled.

In one sense, Tony Dungy and Lovie Smith showed White America what African-Americans had known all along: Blacks can perform successfully at any level - if provided the opportunity.

**GEORGE E. CURRY** is editor-in-chief of the NNPA News Service. Web site: www.georgecurry.com.



GEORGE E. CURRY



Robinson

## From boys to men, or boys to boys?

We have all probably heard of the singing group, Boyz to Men, right? Sounds like a logical sequence of growth, don't you agree?



JAMES CLINGMAN

Well, it seems we have another trend going for our Black males today, and that is growing from "men" back to "babies." While they physically grow in stature, instead of growing in mentality as well, many Black men are regressing into children even as they reach physical maturity.

Physically grown men, especially fathers, who dress, talk and act like teenagers and even younger boys, are misguided at best. Check them out as they walk along with their sons; both have their caps turned to the side, both are wearing those short pants, which remind me of the little boy with the snotty nose that Martin Lawrence used to portray, and they wear the obligatory basketball or football jersey. If it were not for their physical size, you wouldn't be able to tell father from son.

Of course, we know that many of today's parents are really children themselves, not having shaken off the "street" mentality. They are still ensconced in partying

and hangin' out. They have not yet "put away childish things." In addition, a trend that has, in my opinion, done more harm than good to our Black men is the power of words. Historically, Black men have been called "boys" by White folks, which in the 1960s was like signing their own beat-down warrant, at least in my neck of the woods.

I remember the first day I reported for duty in the Navy. I walked out on deck for morning muster and the Boatswain Mate said, "Where you been, boy?" I was already 21 years old; it was 1966; he was a southern racist; and I was an angry about being there anyway. Not a great way to have started my career in the U.S. Navy. I was immediately put on report because I responded by saying, "Who are you calling a boy? I am a grown man." From that day forward, for the next two years I spent on that ship, all the White guys knew the boundaries they could not cross when it came to the words they used to address me.

Out of 750 men on that ship, there were only about 50 blacks. We knew we had to stand up for ourselves, especially in the mid-60s when many of the men in the Navy were really White "boys" themselves, most of who came from the southern states and had no respect for Black people and the skills

we brought to the table. During that period, the Navy was not many years removed from Blacks only being allowed to work as cooks and stewards.

The main thing was our willingness to stand up for ourselves and be men rather than boys, even in the face of sure and swift punishment from the captain of the ship, who was just below God in status. We were willing to fight, against the odds when someone said the "magic word" we now call the "n word." We were unwilling to be defined by someone else, especially a bunch of red-necks who found pleasure in ordering us around like we were still enslaved to their fathers.

Today, as I have stated many times, we allow others to define us, and as grown men, many of us have become nothing more than little boys, in our dress, our language, and in our demeanor. I assert that some of what we see is the long-term result of our parents, especially our mothers, referring to baby boys as "my little man." We dress them in adult clothing, and when they hurt we tell them to "take it like a man."

In the later years, when boys are supposed put away childish things and start acting like men, the mothers start calling them "my baby." The girlfriends and the wives refer to their mates as

"baby." When grown men hurt, they are held and hugged by their ladies and mothers who comfort them by saying such things as, "It will be all right, baby," or "I know, baby," or "What's wrong with my baby?"

Grown men being called "baby" may seem innocent enough, and you may be asking, "What's the big deal?" But I think we are seeing the negative results of the misuse of a word, just like the other words we have been called and have called ourselves, to the degree that a whole generation of parents and children are really confused about who they are and what their proper roles are.

That confusion has turned us around, put us in reverse, and caused many of our Black males to end up as boys rather than men. Rather than going from "Boyz to Men," they have gone from "Little men" to "Big Baby Boyz."

So what, you say? Words create imagery followed by action. We must teach our male children who and what they are as early in life as possible, so that as they physically grow into "men" they will also grow mentally.

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