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*Cover Story*  
***Dems Join GOP to Muzzle Black Speech***  
***Immunity Sought for Uncle Tom Behavior***  
***by BC Co-Publishers Glen Ford and Peter Gamble***

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Uncle Tom. Sellout. Race traitor. Minstrel. Self-hater. Sambo.

African Americans, who have known for centuries that living, breathing, groveling, shuffling characters walk among us who actually match these caricatures, have been put on notice that it is taboo to point out the obvious.

One would think white media and politicians would have enough to do, policing the racist statements of their own group. Yet instead of deploying their censorship squads to suppress explicit and implicit white supremacist speech – which flows like a daily tsunami from George Bush's Confederate/Republican Party and all its unofficial manifestations – corporate media and Democrats make common cause to suppress the free speech of Black writers and artists who dare to confront *other Black people* who have committed political offenses against African Americans.

How dare these bastions of white power and privilege attempt to act as arbiters of African American discourse! Seldom listening *to* Black people, they are quick to lecture *at* Blacks, insanely believing that white institutions – and this includes Blacks who serve those institutions – have earned even a subatomic particle's worth of moral authority in Black America.

The latest Dem/GOP/corporate assault on Black internal political autonomy targeted The News Blog, operated by Black New Yorker Steve Gilliard. Gilliard altered a photo of Maryland's Black Republican Lt. Governor, Michael S. Steele, a candidate for U.S. senator, to conform more closely to the historical archetype that Steele's reflexive subordinate behavior most resembles. "Simple Sambo wants to move to the big house," read the caption under what Gilliard had made to look like a flyer for Steele's one-man minstrel show.

Gilliard's blog, which he says gets about 15,000 visits per day, routinely lays waste to the high-and-mightily-evil Right. He has posted a photo of Bush cabal-embedded New York Times reporter

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Judith Miller, captioned: “The Face of Treason.” A picture of New Orleans cops beating a retired Black school teacher was altered to depict the policemen wearing Ku Klux Klan robes, explaining: “The nigger made us beat him. It's his fault.” Good stuff.

A few weeks before Gilliard put Lt. Gov. Steele in proper visual context, Black Republican Ohio Secretary of State Kenneth Blackwell – the vampire of 2004 who sucked the franchise out of that state’s African American voters – got The News Blog treatment.



**Ken "Sleep N' Eat" Blackwell speaking to fellow Republicans at country club talent show.**

The country club circuit is also what got Maryland’s Michael Steele on Gilliard’s dis-list. Steele’s running mate (read, boss) Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., held a fund-raiser at a country club that had never in its 127-year history admitted an African American – a non-problem as far as Steele was concerned. Rather, the senatorial aspirant, who may face former NAACP executive director and Democratic congressman Kweisi Mfume in the 2006 election, spends most of his “white” time badmouthing Blacks – the primary function of his ilk – in places like the Elkridge Club. Let the picture fit the crime.

"Generally, it is an accurate depiction of Steele's groveling, lackey behavior," said Gilliard, in an email to the Baltimore Sun. "It is 2005, and such an institution should not exist, nor should a governor with as many black people as the state of Maryland attend a function at such a place."

Lt. Gov. Steele, employing the monstrous flipping-of-the-historical-script strategy perfected at rightwing think tanks over the past decade or so, consulted his cue-card. Gilliard’s deformation of his picture was the "worst kind of gutter racism," he shrieked, through a spokesman. "Disgusting."

Even in feigned pain, the Right’s Black minions (minstrels) give themselves away. Black critics are guilty of “gutter racism,” while powerful whites who patronize apartheid institutions are allies, benefactors, running mates. As Gilliard told the Baltimore Sun:

"My point is that politicians like Michael Steele insult us, use us as whipping boys and then run to their white supporters to show how loyal they are. The suffering and problems of black Americans are beyond their concern. I find it wildly humorous that Lt. Gov. Steele calls me, a black man, racist, but then refuses to condemn the governor attending an event at an all-white country club."

***Democrats Act the Fool***

"This rogue attack on Lt. Gov. Steele is distasteful, despicable and degrading," said Derek Walker, a spokesman for the Maryland Democratic Party. "Democrats are ready to engage Michael Steele in a spirited discussion about the issues that matter to Maryland and to our nation. ... Hatred and bigotry are enemies of the Democratic principles of fairness and opportunity for all people."

Apparently, Steve Gilliard is the great enemy of "Democratic principles," a purveyor of "hatred and bigotry" – not the segregated country club or Steele's tirelessly Black-baiting Republican Party. When it comes to race, leaders of the Maryland Democratic and Republican parties pull their wagons into the same circle, like Boer voortrekkers in 1830s South Africa.

Hearing the cries of distress from across the border, Virginia Democratic gubernatorial nominee Tim Kaine pulled his campaign ads from Gilliard's blog – all \$350 worth. "It's a racist image, and we did not want our campaign ad appearing next to a racist image," said a Kaine staffer.

When white folks have the final say on what is and is not racist, we are in deep trouble. And when whites are allowed to referee an intra-Black argument, the cuckoo has flown.

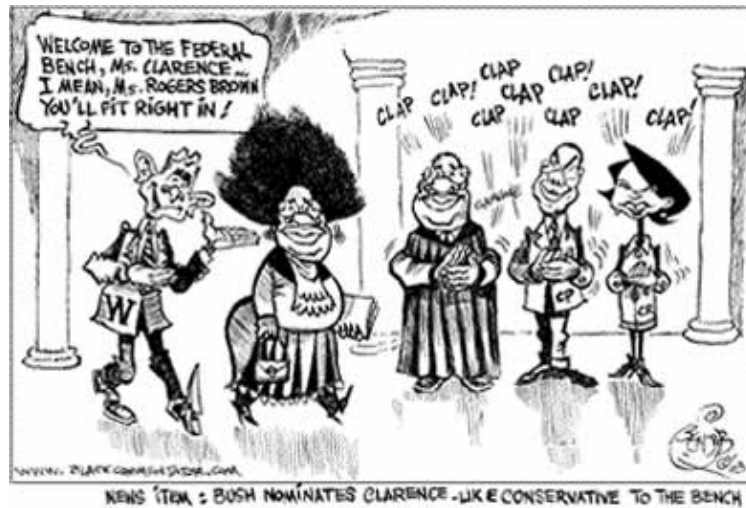
We can't show you the Lt. Gov. Steele-as-Sambo picture that appeared for a short time on Gilliard's blog. In a grand gesture of solidarity with the rich and powerful everywhere, the Washington Post, which had copyrights to the photo, forced Gilliard to remove it.

***Cartoons from Hell***

We at **BC** understand Gilliard's situation all too well – we've been badmouthed by an even "better" class of white Democrats. In October, 2003, Senate Judiciary Committee chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) maneuvered Senators Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Richard Durbin (D-IL) – all considered staunch "liberals" – into denouncing a **BC** cartoon as "despicable," "offensive," the kind of image that "has no place, anyplace in our society." (See **BC**, "Testi-lying to the People: The Janice Brown, Orrin Hatch Carton Furor," [October 30, 2003](#).)

Hatch all but put the condemnations in his Democratic colleagues mouth's, successfully transforming hearings on Janice ("the New Deal was socialist") Brown's nomination to the federal appellate bench into a nationally televised stoning of **BC**'s cartoon.

The offending drawing, by then **BC** cartoonist Khalil Bendib, dressed Clarence Thomas in drag, put a fright wig on his head, and called the character Janice Rogers Brown. Our point: Janice Rogers Brown is another Clarence Thomas.



[Click to view larger printer friendly version of cartoon](#)

The Republican chairman convinced the committee and most of the national press that Clarence-in-drag was, in fact, a “mammy” figure – despite the fact that both the cartoon’s “Clarences” were identical in all but attire.

Hatch: [Waving cartoon] “It’s a vicious cartoon filled with bigotry that maligns not only Justice Brown but others as well: Justice Thomas, Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. It’s the utmost in bigotry... I hope that everyone here considers that cartoon offensive and despicable. I certainly do. It appeared on a web site called [speaks slowly and deliberately] Black...Commentator...dot...com.”

Having given *BC* by far the most publicity of its young existence, Hatch proceeded to tar the Congressional Black Caucus and “liberals” in general with cartoonist Bendib’s brush – just as, two years later, Maryland Republicans would charge that Gilliard’s altered photo of Lt. Gov. Steele was part of a “pattern” of Democratic dirty tricks.

### ***Get Off My Black’s Back!***

The GOP’s fierce defense of *their* Blacks – the constant claims that Black Republicans are vilified for walking off the Democratic “plantation” – is relatively new. Until the mid-Nineties, the corporate Right had no grand strategy for Blacks. Clarence Thomas had to stand in for the other tokens as the most hated Black man in Black America, earning him a classic cartoon cover page in *Emerge Magazine*, November, 1996.



Thanks to corporate recruitment and campaign dollars, Clarence Thomas has lots more company now – and not just on the Republican side of the aisle. The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), which vets corporate contributions to the party, has purchased a chunk of the Congressional Black Caucus and threatens a wholesale subversion of African American politics down to the grassroots level. The DLC appears to be working in tandem with rightwing foundations and think tanks that are busily cultivating Black Trojan Horse politicians with the aim of imposing a “New Black Leadership” – politicians like Rep. Harold Ford, Jr.





[Click to view larger version of cartoon](#)

Harold Ford as Jester before King Bush

March 17, 2005

Unfortunately, there is a deep current in African American thought that refuses to countenance attacks by *Blacks against other Blacks* in high places. Although understandable from an historical perspective, this reluctance to confront the current massive rightwing infiltration and subversion of Black political institutions, is suicidal.

Would a Condoleezza Rice at the top of the Republican ticket represent a victory for Black people? There is a fraction of African Americans – maybe a large fraction – who are foolish enough to think so. It is the duty of progressive Black journalists, thinkers, writers and artists to disabuse our people of such wishful illusions. Cartoons are singularly useful tools.



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April 24, 2003

## The Black Commentator – Cover Story: Dems Join GOP to Muzzle Black Speech

White American journalists have never denied themselves the tools of mockery and ridicule. Why should Black journalists disarm, unilaterally? Indeed, the most revered political cartoonist in U.S. history, Thomas Nast, mercilessly pursued the post-Civil War personification of New York City corruption, Tammany Hall's Boss Tweed. Nast did not hesitate to portray Tweed and his gang as beastly predators.



Tweed Vultures

Harper's, 1871 "Let us prey."

Thomas Nast drew his potent pictures in powerful publications like the New York Times and Harper's Weekly – and ultimately undid Tweed and his gang. In Tweed's downward spiral, the Boss wailed: "'Stop them damned pictures. I don't care so much what the papers say about me. My constituents can't read. But, damn it, they can see pictures!'"

Well damn it, the public is going to see altered pictures and weaponized drawings from **BC**'s Khalil Bendib and the Artist Known As 29, Steve Gilliard, Aaron McGruder, Reginald Butler, and all the other scribblers, sketchers and photo-manglers who shock and amuse folks towards a place nearer to reality.

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There is a lengthening list of Black front men and women in the service of our historical enemies, backed by billionaires and, often, the power of the state. Our weapons are few, but we must use them. As **BC** wrote on October 30, 2003:

”Black people cannot keep these pretenders off the airwaves; we don’t control the media. We cannot by ourselves defeat their nominations on Capitol Hill; we don’t have the numbers. We can’t stop the rich from funding bogus Black front groups; it’s not our money. But we can heap scorn on the rascals, and thus deny them legitimacy as “spokespersons,” “leaders” and “role models” for our communities. We can confront them with our anger at every public and private opportunity, so that young people will think twice before considering a career in the enemy’s camp. We can stop giving them awards, or tolerating those who award them. We have the power to loudly reject the servants of Hatch and Bush and rich foundations, to expose their sources of funding and their true political allegiances.

”In the most egregious cases, we can render them pariahs, unwelcome and insecure among the people they have been paid to subvert. We have it in our power to devalue the 'alternative' Blacks in the eyes of their benefactors, who are paying for influence among African Americans, not infamy.

”We can embarrass them, because they deserve it. We can draw cartoons that hold them up to ridicule – a small penalty for treachery.”

Mockery and ridicule is what serious people do to their enemies, and to those who side with the enemy. If Black people can’t call each other names, then white folks of all political persuasions will control every conversation – including our own.

We pass on some words from blogster Steve Gilliard:

“I will never depict [Maryland Lt. Gov.] Steele in a dishonest way, which is to show him merely in a suit. Lawn Jockey, shine boy, something will come to mind. The current art has his face over money.

”I think it is important that black writers and artists feel free to express their opinions, regardless of the reaction.

”I also can say I have never been happier with the reaction to my article and picture, even if it had to come down. Black readers from Maryland were quite happy with the picture and the controversy, because it was an accurate depiction of their feelings towards Lt. Gov. Steele.

”It had an effect which was magnified, because Andrew Sullivan, the longtime promoter of the racist Bell Curve, thought he could make it an issue. When he found out I was black and refused to back down, well, he got a different reaction than he expected. The Steele campaign tried the same thing, and really didn’t have an answer when it was clear that I was black and held him in contempt.

”The Steele campaign does not want people to realize that his support in the black community is limited, while the contempt he was held in is widespread.”

No one will tell the truth about us, but us. And we are the people most in need of the truth.