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***Freedom Rider
Andrew Young and Vote Theft
by Margaret Kimberley***

(Use the back button on your browser to return to the previous page)

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In May of 2000 thousands of eligible voters in Florida were removed from the rolls. Governor Jeb Bush and Secretary of State Catherine Harris used Florida's rules that bar felons from voting to wrongly remove eligible voters. Black voters were disproportionately affected and Al Gore lost that state and the presidency because of this chicanery.

In 2004 Ohio Republicans used a simpler ruse to keep blacks from getting anywhere near voting machines. They simply didn't send enough voting machines to polls in black precincts. Voting machines were kept in storage on the day of a presidential election. In Ohio and many other states provisional ballots went uncounted. Electronic voting machines that lacked paper trails produced dubious results.

There is no mystery about what ails the American voting system. There is no guarantee that eligible voters will be able to vote and voters have no guarantee that their votes will be counted. Instead of addressing the obvious problems, politicians have instead decided to create new problems and disenfranchise more people than they have already. The Commission on Election Reform has given them the out that will do terrible harm.

Former president Jimmy Carter has spent the last twenty years observing elections all over the globe. His role as the commission's co-Chair at first seemed logical, but James Baker's participation is utterly illogical and an insult to anyone who values the franchise.

Baker is the Bush family factotum who was instrumental in stopping the Florida vote count in 2000. Congressman John Conyers expressed his dismay at Baker's participation:

Specifically, I am concerned about the inclusion of Mr. James Baker, III as a Commission Member. For many of us, Mr. Baker will be forever remembered for his ultimately successful efforts to shut down the counting of votes in the 2000 Florida election and I am concerned that his involvement in that election may present a conflict with the goals and initiatives of your Commission.

The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Andrew Young and Vote Theft

The Commission's report proves that Conyers had every reason to be concerned. The commission addresses problems that don't even exist. Their worst recommendation would make photo identification a requirement for voting. The commission rationale for promoting such nonsense is insulting and bizarre.

Photo IDs currently are needed to board a plane, enter federal buildings, and cash a check. Voting is equally important.

No, voting is not as important as check cashing or traveling. It is more important. We don't have the constitutional right to board a plane and no one fought and died to get the right to fly. It should be easier to enter a voting booth than it is to enter an airport.

It is obvious that poor black people would be hardest hit by this requirement. There are thousands of American citizens eligible to vote who do not have identification and are unable to get it. That is precisely why Republicans and co-opted Democrats think it is such a good idea.

Andrew Young is among those corrupt Democrats in sheep's clothing. The vote thieves always say, Andrew Young, who marched with Dr. King, sees nothing wrong with identification requirements. Carter insulates himself from criticism by quoting Young. It was very encouraging to us that Andy Young, for instance, says this will help minority voting instead of deterring it.

It is difficult to see how that assertion could possibly be true. Right now people can vote who don't have identification. If the Carter/Baker proposals become law, people who currently vote without incident will suddenly have an obstacle in the polling place.

It is immaterial that Young marched with Dr. King. In fact, his early history makes his support of disenfranchisement all the more shocking. Young is not just being used to cover Carter's and Baker's backsides, he is now praised by the Wall Street Journal, proof of wrongdoing if it ever existed.

"I accept the recounts that show George Bush won" and says it's time for fresh thinking. "[Let's] ask what we do about low voter turnout and whether it's the result of racial discrimination or not," he told me. "I don't think it is, since everyone is equally inconvenienced by how we vote."

No, Rev. Mr. Young, everyone is not equally inconvenienced by the way we vote. White Ohioans had enough voting machines in their polling places and black Ohioans didn't. White Floridians did not have to fear being labeled felons when they went to the polls, black Floridians did.

If Young's history is being used to shut us up, we must ask very critical questions about him. Why did Andrew Young work with King in the first place? Was he a righteous man who wanted to end injustice, or did he only want a seat at the table for himself?

Young came from a middle class family in New Orleans, the son of a dentist and a teacher. He is an ordained minister with degrees from Howard University and Hartford Theological Seminary. Those accomplishments were of limited use to him in a segregated nation.

The sky should have been the limit for him, but for Young and every other black America, there was always a ceiling, and it was set at a very low level. Andrew Young profited from the civil rights movement and now allows himself to aid and abet people who would undo its accomplishments. When Young's association with King is noted it must also be noted that he now makes a mockery of that relationship.

A seal of approval from an opportunist shouldn't keep anyone from speaking out. Young's allegiance is not with black people and he shouldn't be allowed to claim otherwise. He is a turncoat and no one should be shy

The Black Commentator – Freedom Rider: Andrew Young and Vote Theft

about saying so.

The ability of Andrew Young and his ilk to move into circles of privilege may benefit them as individuals. If we think we must pay them homage no matter what they do, it will be harmful to all of us as a people.

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