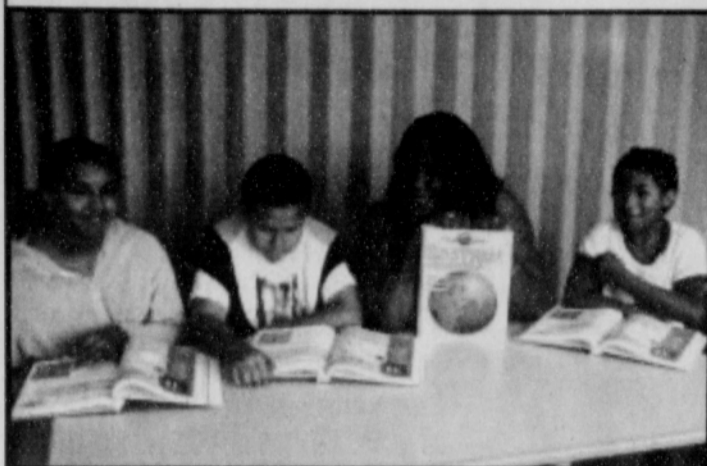


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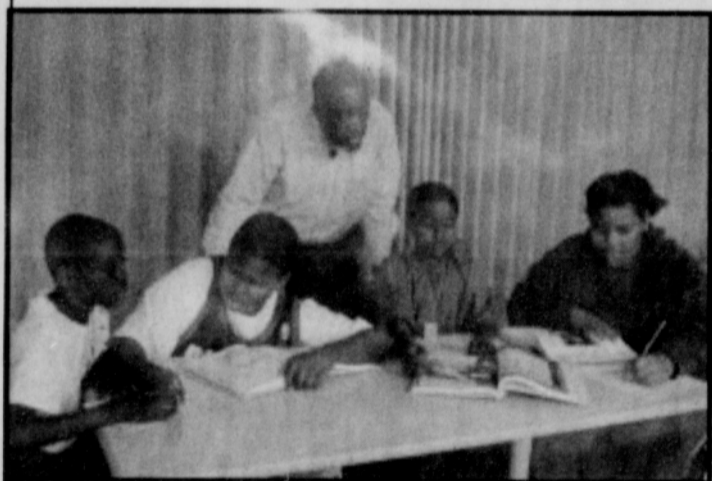
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OPINION

Opinion articles do not
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The Presidential Snub

Minorities, middle class ignored by Bush

BY U.S. REP. STEPHANIE
TUBBS, D-OHIO

The Congressional Black Caucus and the Democratic Members of the House and Senate recently hosted the 2nd Annual African American Leadership Summit.

The summit is part of an on-going effort by Democrats and the CBC to reaffirm our shared values with the African American community and continue to build upon our longstanding relationship. Over 200 participants were present, representing a variety of different professions and backgrounds including business leaders, ministers, mayors, state representatives, former cabinet officials, youth leaders and legal scholars.

We are committed to promoting



public policies that value equality, opportunity and justice for all Americans. Through this forum, we have been able to have discussions with leaders in the African-American community about the issues that are important to them including voting rights, access to capital and housing, healthcare, international relations, and jobs and the economy. More importantly, from these discussions have come suggestions and solutions for addressing these issues within the African-American community.

When President George W. Bush first came to office, he made a lot of promises. Among the most important of these promises, was to work

for "all" Americans. On Jan. 31, 2001, President Bush had his first meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus. The president said, "This will be the beginning of hopefully, a lot of meetings. I hope you come back, and I'll certainly be inviting." Over three years later, we are all still waiting on that second invitation.

Unfortunately, the attention the president has given the CBC seems to directly mirror the attention he has given middle-class Americans across this nation. Over the past three years, we have seen the African American community and middle class America as a whole, left further and further behind by this administration.

"Over 9½ million African Americans are now out of the labor force, an increase of over half a million from a year ago. In December 2000,

the unemployment rate for African Americans was 7.3 percent. Today, the unemployment rate for African Americans is 10.1 percent.

As we mark the 50th Anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, and the 40th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, our national policy agenda must reflect the concerns and priorities of all Americans. That is why we, as members of the Congressional Black Caucus and House and Senate Democrats, are committed to keeping lines of communications open with the African American community so that we can create policies that will reflect their interests. We look forward to continuing these efforts in the near future.

Stephanie Tubbs Jones is the first African-American woman elected to the U. S. House of Representatives from Ohio.

Checks and Balances

War does not trump fundamental rights

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

One of the foundations of our democracy is the system of governmental checks and balances. The experiences of many of our nation's founders, which led them to flee to America, included kings who ruled with no questions asked and countries in which the citizens were presumed guilty unless proven innocent. With all of this fresh in their minds, the writers of the U.S. Constitution crafted a system where the executive branch, the legislative branch and judicial branch balance each other.

In two landmark decisions on the rights of detainees in the war on terrorism at the end of this year's court session, the U.S. Supreme Court reminded the president and the nation about the fundamental rights provided in our Constitution. And, it reminded us that even war does not trump these rights. "It is during our most challenging and uncertain moments that our Nation's commitment to due process is most severely tested; and it is in those times that we must preserve our commitment at home to the principles for which we fight abroad," the Court wrote.

The fact that this is by no means a liberal Supreme Court, with the majority of the justices having been appointed by Republican presidents and with a number of conservative opinions already delivered, made its findings on these two cases even more powerful. After all, it was

this same court which selected the president in the contested 2000 presidential election.

In one of the two cases, a U.S. citizen, Yaser Esam Hamdi, was captured in Afghanistan and designated an "enemy combatant." His father petitioned the government, citing the most basic of American legal rights - a citizen's right to know what he is accused of and to receive a fair trial. An almost unanimous Supreme Court agreed and said, "a state of war is not a blank check for the president and that the

of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, where hundreds of them have never had a trial or hearing. The Court ruled that they, too, have the right to access federal courts.

One organization that argued this almost from day one is the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City. CCR is a scrappy non-profit organization which is dedicated to preserving the constitutional rights of Americans. During the civil rights movement, CCR was very much a part of the legal front which challenged the nation's

of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay, where hundreds of them have never had a trial or hearing. The Court ruled that they, too, have the right to access federal courts. Moreover, the justices reminded the president that he is "commander-in-chief of the military, not of the country," referring to a prior Supreme Court ruling during the presidency of Harry S. Truman, when the court overturned the president's seizure of the American steel industry during the Korean War.

The New York Times columnist Paul Krugman wrote recently that Attorney General John Ashcroft is the worst Attorney General in our nation's history, citing numerous reasons, including his many restrictions of civil liberties after the 9/11 attacks. Clearly the U.S. Supreme Court agrees that the administration's pendulum has swung too far and that the balance has been lost.

The decisions of the Supreme Court have not always been just (their Plessy v. Ferguson decision established "separate but equal" segregation laws in 1898) but they have always had great impact on life in our nation. This Court's decision reminds us once again of the importance of the role of the Supreme Court and should give every American a reason to vote this fall.

Bernice Powell Jackson is the executive minister for justice and witness ministries for the United Church of Christ.

The administration's pendulum has swung too far and the balance has been lost.

detainees must be able to challenge their detention before a judge or neutral decision maker. Justice O'Connor wrote, "History and common sense teach us that an unchecked system of detention carries the potential to become a means for oppression and abuse of others." She added that given the fact that the administration has said its war on terrorism might stretch over generations, the "indefinite detention could last for the rest of his life."

The second case was brought before the court on behalf of some

courts to protect the civil rights of African Americans. It has often taken on unpopular cases during its lifetime and Ron Daniels, the CCR president, said in a recent interview that they had received dozens of death threats and threatening calls after they began to challenge the administration's position on civil liberties. But CCR's whole purpose of being has been to press the U.S. to live up to its Constitutional mandate and its leadership in forging human rights legislation for the nation and the world.

Justice Souter reminded the na-